

its greatest unwholesomeness ; a black alluvial mould ferments there with the deadly travail of Nature within herself, composition and decomposition. It has compelled the abandonment of the rich town of Bantam, which is now a pile of ruins. Superb Batavia is one tremendous cemetery. In less than thirty years of the last century (1730–1752) it devoured a million of men, and in one year (1750), sixty thousand. It is less terrible to-day, the air being to some extent purified.

But over all these terrors rises the sublime horror of the volcanoes. They have the air, says Michelet, of being *persons* ; and the old inhabitants of the island, regarding them as gods, sought to appease them by erecting temples in their honour, and statues, and altars. Fear inspired art. Sculptures still extant bear witness to the dread of the Malay, his skill, and manual ingenuity.

All these “giants of fire” differ from one another. They have, too, their separate names, some borrowed from the Hindu gods and the heroes of the Râmâyana ; others, apparently, the names of the aboriginal divinities of the island. Gunung Tengger yawns with a monstrous crater, 20,000 feet in diameter, where four Etnas smoke and vomit, at the bottom of a frightful precipice of 2200 feet. One of these, called Bromo, has but recently ceased ejecting lava. Another kindles its flames in a strange desert, encrusted by saline springs. One belches periodically ; another boils with sulphurous waters which, even after they have cooled in little lake-like basins, exhibit a feverish agitation. Another pours out a milky flood of phantasmagorical whiteness.

Moreover, the entire region is honey-combed with copious saline springs, of which the largest sports and dances, growling and thundering, underground. It plays at ball with enormous pellets of earth, balls twenty feet in diameter, which crack, and burst, and scatter on every side. The Arjouna and the Rao roll torrents of smoke and acrid boiling water. The Idjen, waking up, one sunny morning, poured out a river.