

POMPEII'S FALL TOLD BY PLINY

Excavation Work by Italy
Recalls Narrative by
Eyewitness.

New York.—As the work of excavating Herculaneum officially began under the auspices of Italy's king the other day, old Vesuvius stirred and started into life, hurling blazing rocks and smoke clouds high into the air as if in protest at the unearthing of a city it had buried 1,849 years ago. But, according to scientists, there is little danger of Mount Vesuvius repeating the terrific outbursts of 79 A. D., and so the celebrating throngs made merry, even into the night, when brilliant fireworks lighted up the Bay of Naples, vying with the bursts of flame high up in the volcano's crater.

It is a different picture that Pliny the Younger draws—a picture of terror-ridden days and nights, presaged by violent earth tremors that leveled many houses before the awful spectacle of fire was dimly seen through a rain of blazing stone and ash by a doomed humanity. Yet concerning the disaster he writes with a philosophical detachment that makes one wonder at his powers of observation and presence of mind in such a panicky time.

Eighteen at Time of Disaster.
Pliny the Younger was only eighteen at the time of Mount Vesuvius' eruption, yet remarkably precocious and devoted to study. Born to riches in an honorable family, the early death of his father led to his adoption as a son by the elder Pliny, his uncle. Caius Plinius Caecilius Secundus was the youth's name, his mother being Plinia, the elder Pliny's sister, and his father, Caius Caecilius, of a plebeian family that nevertheless numbered consuls and other men of note in its ranks. The father's health, however, probably was responsible for the fame his son achieved, for the elder Pliny, renowned naturalist and man of letters, saw to it that his adopted son was given the best of education and schooled in the literary and philosophical learning that meant so much to him.

Vespasian, first emperor of the Flavian dynasty, came to the end of his worthy rule over Rome in the year tragedy stalked in the Bay of Naples. The dissolute times of Nero had been followed with the bloodshed of civil wars under the Emperors Galba, Otho, and Vitellius before Vespasian was placed at the empire's head to restore good times. He passed on to his son, Titus, the rule of Rome, and the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum. In the first summer of Titus' short reign, was one of three tragedies that marred his otherwise excellent disposition of Roman government. A fire in Rome nearly as bad as that of Nero's day and a time of plague which followed it were the other two.

No Indication of Eruption.
To the Romans clustered along the beautiful shores of the Bay of Naples in villas and close-built cities in 79 A. D., there was no indication that Mount Vesuvius might erupt. Earthquakes were not uncommon in the region; in fact, one in 63 A. D. had been of a devastating nature. The Roman towns grouped along the crescent-shaped bay shore, starting at the northern promontory, were: Misenum, Baias, Puteoli, Neapolis, Herculaneum, Pompeii and Stabiae.

At Misenum existed a naval station, Baias was a popular bathing resort, Neapolis was one of the largest Roman metropolises, Pompeii was a more or less commercial center, and Herculaneum the summer resort of the wealthy. For this reason the task of digging it from beneath 100 feet of lava and volcanic mud is expected to reveal finer literary and art treasures than those uncovered at Pompeii in the past.

Pliny the Younger, in 79 A. D., was spending the summer with his uncle and mother near Misenum, the elder Pliny being in command of the Roman fleet stationed there. To the south and east rose the vine and tree-clad mountain slopes, completely covering Vesuvius in such manner that there was no suspicion of volcanic forces slumbering there.

Saw Death of Uncle.
Here Pliny, who began practice as an advocate a year later, witnessed the eruption and saw his uncle go to his death in an effort to rescue people caught on the bay shore closer to the volcano's mouth. Pliny's description of the disaster the world owes to the historian Tacitus, who some years later wrote asking for the details surrounding the elder Pliny's death and for an account of the dangers which the youth himself escaped.

"On the 24th of August," Pliny first wrote, "about one in the afternoon, my mother desired him (the elder Pliny) to observe a cloud which appeared of a very unusual size and shape. He had just taken a turn in the sun, and, after bathing himself in cold water, and making a light luncheon, gone back to his books; he immediately arose and went out upon a rising ground from whence he might get a better sight of this very uncommon appearance.

"A cloud, from which mountain was uncertain at this distance, was ascending, the appearance of which I cannot give you a more exact description of than by likening it to a pine tree, for it shot up to a great height in the form of a very tall trunk, which spread itself out at the top into a

sort of branches, occasioned, I imagine, either by a sudden gust of air that impelled it, the force of which decreased as it advanced upward, or the cloud itself, being pressed back again by its own weight, expanded in the manner I have mentioned; it appeared sometimes bright and sometimes dark and spotted, according as it was either more or less impregnated with earth and cinders.

Youth Stays to Study.
"This phenomenon seemed to a man of such learning and research as my uncle extraordinary and worth further looking into. He ordered a light vessel to be got ready, and gave me leave, if I liked, to accompany him. I said I had rather go on with my work; and it so happened he had himself given me something to write out. As he was coming out of the house, he received a note from Rectina, the wife of Bassus, who was in the utmost alarm at the imminent danger which threatened her; for, her villa lying at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, there was no way of escape but by sea. She earnestly entreated him therefore to come to her assistance. He accordingly changed his first intention, and what he had begun from a philosophical he now carried out in a noble and generous spirit.

"He ordered the galleys to put to sea, and went himself on board with an intention of assisting not only Rectina, but the several other towns which lay thickly strewn along that beautiful coast. Hastening then to the place from whence others fled with the utmost calmness and presence of mind as to be able to make and dictate his observations upon the motion and all the phenomena of that dreadful scene.

Burning Rocks Fall on Ships.
"He was now so close to the mountain that the cinders, which grew thicker and hotter the nearer he approached, fell into the ships, together with pumice stones and black pieces of burning rock; they were in danger, too, not only of being aground by the sudden retreat of the sea, but also from the vast fragments which rolled down from the mountain and obstructed all the shore. Here he stopped to consider whether he should turn back again; to which the pilot advising him, 'Fortune,' said he 'favors the brave; steer to where Pomponianus is.'"

The brave elder Pliny, his nephew told Tacitus, won his way to the shore where he greeted his friend Pomponianus, maintaining a cool front in the face of nature's cataclysm for the benefit of the latter by ordering a bath and lying down to sleep as night came on and the turbulent waves prevented them from sailing away. Pliny continues:

Nearly Hemmed In.
"The court which led to his (the sleeping Pliny's) apartment being now almost filled with stones and ashes. If he had continued there any time longer, it would have been impossible for him to have made his way out. So he was awakened and got up, and went to Pomponianus and the rest of his company, who were feeling too anxious to think of going to bed. They consulted together whether it would be most prudent to trust to the houses, which now rocked from side to side with frequent and violent concussions as though shaken from their very foundations; or to fly to the open fields, where calcined stones and cinders, though light indeed, yet fell in large showers and threatened destruction."

The trapped Romans finally decided for the fields and went out "having pillows tied upon their heads" for protection, and after going to the shore of the bay the elder Pliny suddenly fell and died. The opinion of his nephew was that death came from suffocation from the fumes in the air, but it is probable that a sudden attack of illness was responsible, since Stabiae, whither he had gone, was about ten miles from the volcano's mouth. Pliny's account of his uncle's death was followed by another letter to Tacitus in which he described his and his mother's escape.

Earthquake Felt First.
"There had been noticed for many days before," he wrote, "a trembling of the earth, which did not alarm much, as this is quite an ordinary occurrence in Campania; but it was so particularly violent that night that it not only shook but actually overturned, as it would seem, everything about us."

Pliny and his mother were both awakened from uneasy sleep after the elder Pliny had gone and fled the house to sit in an open courtyard. There the youth began nonchalantly to read "Livy," as he says, either in "courage or folly," and he continued, although a friend of his uncle's reproved him. The tottering buildings finally persuaded them to leave the town.

Escapes With Mother.
After this a black cloud of ashes came upon them, and Pliny led his mother by the hand to a place away from the main road, so that they would not be trampled by the panic-stricken mobs in flight. He vividly describes the cries made by parents and children separated and lost in the blackness of artificial night and the oft-expressed fear that the end of the world had come.

When light at last returned Pliny and his mother went back to Misenum to await the sad news of his uncle, and he closes his letter to Tacitus with the modest declaration that his narrative is "not in the least worthy" for inclusion in history; a fact which literature today vehemently disputes, inasmuch as Pliny's story remains the world's most thorough and enlightening description of a disaster nearly nineteen centuries ago, and the only written account by an eyewitness.

Honeymoons by Air Popular in England

London.—Many more women use the airplane service between England and the continent than men. There has been a large increase in the number of young honeymooners who travel by air rather than put up with the discomforts of cross-channel steamer travel. Close observers say that the women seem much more at home several thousand feet in the air than the male passenger. Increased facilities for flying now make it possible for the wealthy woman to leave Croydin in the morning, fly to Paris for shopping, and be back in England in time for dinner. Several well-known society women have made several such trips this season.

GET POWER FROM CURRENTS OF STRAITS OF GIBRALTAR

Spanish Economist Sees Vast Possibilities in Harnessing Powerful Stream.

Madrid.—The currents passing from the Atlantic ocean into the Mediterranean sea, and vice versa, produce an enormous power that could be used and transformed into electricity, according to Don Emilio Zurano Munzo, prominent Spanish economist, who has completed a preliminary study of the question, and submitted it to King Alfonso XIII.

Zurano calculated that one current going through the Strait of Gibraltar, coming from the Atlantic ocean and carrying a yearly volume of 26,000 cubic kilometers of water, at an average speed of ten kilometers per hour, and the other current crossing underneath from the Mediterranean into the ocean, with a yearly volume of 3,000 cubic kilometers saturated with salt, can be turned into a formidable continual electric power of over 30 milliards of horse power.

In the document addressed to the king, Zurano said the maximum power lies in the bay west of Algerias, but that power is also available in other points on both sides of the strait.

Explaining the course of energy there, Zurano pointed out that to get an appropriate idea of the water flowing every year into the Mediterranean sea, one must imagine a huge cube of water three times and one-third higher than Mount Everest running at 800,000 cubic meters of water per second. Adding the subcurrent which furnishes 95,000 cubic meters of water per second, the constant electrical power obtainable reaches 36,600,000,000 horse power.

Kiss in the Dark Gets Freedom for Prisoner

Paris.—A kiss in the dark got a Frenchman out of prison the other day.

The prisoner, Fritz Gabriel, had been behind the bars for two years and had several more to serve. His wife came to see him. At the leavetaking in the dark corridor Gabriel and his wife embraced with especial warmth, the parting kiss being so movie-like in length that the guards noticed it and were moved.

Gabriel had a slip of paper in his cheek. It passed his wife's lips during the embrace. On the paper was written:

"Tomorrow, during the recreation hour, I will jump over the wall. Have a vehicle waiting for me on the other side of the moat."

Mrs. Gabriel had the vehicle. Her husband got away and hasn't been heard of since.

Odd Styles Feature Weddings in Africa

Boma, Belgian Congo.—Natives of the remote Kasai region of Africa have taken a liking to the fashions of civilization.

"The first converted native couple I married," said Father Achille de Munster, a missionary in the district for the last 20 years, "wore nothing but a loin cloth. But you should see them now. Recently I married 15 couples. They all sported white suits and the brides wore shoes and hats and their black faces were literally powdered white."

"Some had on one white shoe and one black. They seemed to think that was the height of chic."

One bridegroom, Father Munster said, fainted from the heat and his costume of two pairs of trousers, two shirts, two vests, two coats and a tight collar.

Cattle Become Wild on Alaskan Island

Kodiak, Alaska.—Three hundred and fifty shorthorn cattle browse over the mountainous surface of tiny Chilikof island, 200 miles out in the northern Pacific ocean from Kodiak.

More than 40 years ago the Alaska Commercial company, a development concern long since extinct, stocked the island with a few head of tame cattle for experimental purposes. On the little isle with a surface of only 20 square miles, the cattle have degenerated from inbreeding and have become thoroughly wild, but the herd continues to thrive. Alaskans say the experiment at least has proved that cattle can be grown in the region.

LATEST VESSEL TO SKIM OCEAN

Half Ship, Half Plane, It
Will Use Gas Derived
From Sea.

Paris.—A French naval engineer named Jean-Paul Michel has invented an ocean liner that is half ship and half airplane.

The new ocean vehicle, which is called The Greyhound of the Sea, is guaranteed to have a speed of 50 miles an hour and to cross the Atlantic in 60 hours.

It is unlike any other boat or airplane that has ever been built, although an Italian company at Genoa is now constructing a "mystery boat" along somewhat the same lines.

Driven by Two Air Propellers.
The Greyhound of the Sea will be driven by two big air propellers at the bow, just like an airplane or seaplane, and instead of riding through the water like a ship it will glide over the top of the waves. There will be an air rudder and also a water rudder, but there are no under-water propellers. The ship has large skids underneath to help it slide across the waves.

"I know exactly how it will perform when it is finished," Michel, who is a graduate of the leading French technical school, explained the other day.

"I have been testing out different models for almost fifteen years, and I finally found one that fulfilled all my expectations."

"The first big experimental ship, which is about 150 feet long and has accommodations for thirty persons, is now being built in my shipyard near Toulon. It is more than half finished, and the first thing I am going to do when it is all ready is to take a trip to New York. I am going to make it in two days and three nights."

"I think my invention will upset all existing ideas about navigation, and particularly the propulsion of war-ships."

But the strangest thing about The Greyhound of the Sea is that it will carry practically no fuel aside from a little oil for an emergency motor.

Michel also has invented a process of extracting sodium from the sea, transforming it on board ship into a gas and using this gas to run a special motor he has adapted to it, but the details of the invention are carefully guarded.

The most important room on board his new ship will be a big laboratory near the stern, where a chemist will be constantly on duty to supervise this chemical process.

He claims there is such an abundance of this fuel in the ocean that he could travel on it as long as a pre-ship held together, but just as a precaution he is going to install a little Diesel motor and take on a little fuel oil, this precaution being omitted after the new system has been fully tried out.

In appearance The Greyhound of the Sea will look something like a submarine, with horizontal fins at the sides, riding the surface of the water.

Top Will Be Entirely Enclosed.
The top will be entirely enclosed except for a promenade deck near the stern. The ship will be smokeless, of course. It will not be able to fly, although at high speed it should simply skim across the whitecaps.

It is being built of very thin steel, in order to be as light as possible, and it is difficult to foresee how it will behave in a heavy sea.

The high speed will be attained by reducing friction with the sea rather than powerful motors.

Northwest to Celebrate Fruit Industry Jubilee

Yakima, Wash.—The Pacific Northwest fruit industry this autumn will celebrate its diamond anniversary. It was in 1852 the first apple, plum and pear trees were planted in the Pacific states and they came from a nursery in Iowa.

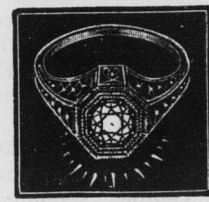
In that year a traveling nursery brought from Henry county, Iowa, grafted trees which were set out near Milwaukee, Ore. From these the present orchards were gradually developed.

The fruit trees and shrub train consisted of two wagonloads of Iowa dirt in charge of Henderson Luelling. Many of the original orchard trees set out in Oregon 75 years ago are growing and bearing fruit.

Lures Humming Bird With Bottled Sugar

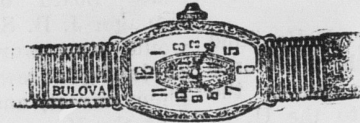
McGregor, Iowa.—With an artificial flower and a bottle of sugar, Miss Althea R. Sherman, ornithologist, has transformed the elusive ruby-throated humming bird into a constant and friendly visitor to her garden. She has discovered, by attracting humming birds with artificial nasturtiums and tiger lilies, that the birds often absorbed in a day more than twice their weight in sugar dissolved in water and that they preferred the artificial nectar to that of flowers. More than a dozen humming birds came in quest of the sweets where formerly they called singly or in pairs.

A Diamond Ring



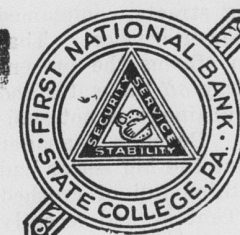
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