

MANAM ISLAND VOLCANIC ERUPTION.

Extracts from Inspector's Journal by C. C. Marr, March, 1937.

Leaving again at daylight, we sailed for Manam Island (Madang) reaching it at a village called Tavele, at noon. During the afternoon a survey of the country in the immediate vicinity was conducted, to ascertain what damage, if any, was done or resulted from the recent volcanic eruptions in October, 1936.

There was no sign of any damage having resulted, though it was noticed that the ground everywhere—more particularly on open places, as around villages, and on roads—was covered with a thin layer of grit, resembling charcoal, in some places 2 inches deep and in others only $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to 1 inch.

It was reported that taro gardens were spoiled owing to the withering or shrivelling of the leaves due to the heat, and in many places the crop rooted out, subsequently, and replanted. Many Kapiak trees (bread fruit) were noticed with their leaves perforated by many small holes, and it is thought that this resulted through the peppering received from falling gravel and grit from the mountain crater.

However, the trees were still in a healthy condition and commencing to bear prolifically.

Tobacco.

The crop which suffered most and the loss of which the natives felt more keenly than anything else was tobacco. This crop was apparently ready for harvesting at the time the explosion occurred, and although many plants were harvested, the loss must have been considerable.

On this island, tobacco is a crop which is used extensively for trade purposes with the mainland natives, and as the leaf on this island is of much better quality than that obtained on the Sepik, it is desired by many white traders.

It is fitting to mention here the method employed by these natives in the cultivation of this crop.

Seed is selected in the field from the best plants, is wrapped up and stored in natives' houses until ready to be sown. A rough seed bed is prepared wherein the seed is sown, and the resultant germinated seed pricked out and planted in the field.

After a period of about seven weeks the old leaves at the base of the plant are pulled, and ten leaves—counting from the bottom up—left, the bud being then pinched off. After a further six weeks or so, the stem is broken a few inches above ground, and the plant hung up in a house to dry by the aid chiefly of smoke from an interior fire.

The remaining stems in the field are then allowed to ratoon from which a further small quantity of leaf is obtained.

It will be seen from the above that the methods employed by these natives differ little from present-day European methods, and are therefore interesting.

The natives denied, on questioning, having ever received European tuition re the growing of their crops and the only reason supplied was that it was the "fashion belong papa before".

NOTE.—Evan R. Stanley, F.G.S., reporting on *The Salient Geological Features and Natural Resources of the New Guinea Territory*, (see appendix B., page 52, Report to the League of Nations on the Administration of the Territory of New Guinea 1921-1922), states Manam (Vulcan) Island, Madang, is about 18 miles in circumference and roughly conical in shape. It has four distinct rifts or breaches reaching almost to the apex. Huge landslips have occurred in the steeper portions of the cone near the summit exposing a dull brown bedded mass of ejectamenta with some layers of lava. The heavy rains have carried the debris down the ravines and spread it out in the form of a fan running into the sea. It appears as though the breach running north from the crater opened up first, probably caused by an explosive outburst followed by a lava flow. Later, and probably simultaneously, the breaches on the east and west sides were formed and finally the southern breach. It was probably during this latter disturbance that the other craterlets, three in number, were formed on upper portions of the northern breach. There are really four craters, several minor vents, and one small lava spire on the eastern breach near the summit. The natives tell me that the crater has erupted many times, usually four times a year, but their stories, although in a measure true, are to a great extent unreliable because they do not, as a rule, possess a knowledge of time in the sense we understand it.