

KILAUEA AGAIN ACTIVE.

It may be of interest to the readers of SCIENCE to know that the fire has again returned to the world-renowned volcano Kilauea in the Hawaiian Islands after an absence of thirteen years. The citizens of Hawaii, who are intensely interested in this volcano, had well nigh despaired of witnessing another season of activity. The fresh lava appeared the last week of February, heralded by a slight earthquake. On the twenty-fifth instant it was not observed—smoke filling the pit. Two days later it is reported that a lava lake was on exhibition, two hundred and fifty feet long and one hundred feet wide. On March 10 the Volcano House reported that the lake is not so large as at first stated; but the crater is absolutely free from smoke. "Heavy rumblings and explosions indicate that another outbreak is imminent." Thus there seems to be a restoration of the old-time activity—such as will cause a large increase in the number of visitors.

Observations with a good spectroscope are needed. Professor Libbey used one there to good purpose a few years since, but did not name all the substances indicated. We especially need more information about the hydrogen flames, as well as the hydrocarbons. The latter substance is so commonly of organic origin that the best of evidence is required to fully establish a belief in its presence in this incandescent magma fresh from the realms of Pluto. It is hoped that some one who is skilled in the use of the spectroscope will utilize this opportunity to determine the nature of the substances now being emitted from this famous volcano. C. H. HITCHCOCK.

HANOVER, N. H.,
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SPECIAL ARTICLES.

THE PRAIRIE MOUNDS OF LOUISIANA.

WHILE it may not generally be appropriate to discuss the content of a paper on the basis of a mere abstract report by the secretary of a society, I venture to make some comments on the paper read by A. C. Veatch on the 'Natural Mounds of Louisiana,' at the late meeting of the Geological Society of

Washington, as given in the last issue of SCIENCE; since I have made a number of such excavations as are called for by him.

I have briefly discussed these mounds in my final report on the geological reconnoissance of Louisiana made by me 1869, published in 1873. I dug into a number of them on the Opelousas prairie, and also on the Calcasieu prairie. Having just previously investigated the mud-lumps of the Mississippi Passes, my first conjecture was that of mudspring origin; but the total absence of the characteristic 'onion' structure of such mudspring cones at once made me abandon this hypothesis. The total absence of any regular structure or stratification, such as characterizes all dune or other wind-drift structures, equally excluded these; as well as water erosion, since the soil and sub-soil of the surrounding prairie are quite distinctly in horizontal layers. I, therefore, as shown in the paper alluded to, considered their ant-hill origin as the only reasonable explanation; raising the question as to how the once teeming population of these vast areas came to be destroyed. Climatic changes suggested themselves to me, but the present existence of ant villages in the adjoining state of Texas seemed to negative this assumption also.

A number of years afterwards I was forcibly reminded of the inutility of supposing climatic changes to have occurred, when having camped in the Yellowstone valley after nightfall on a convenient elevation above the sodden ground, I was put to precipitate flight by an army of large ants issuing from beneath my rubber mattress. Daylight observation revealed to me the counterparts of the Louisiana mounds, only as a rule less thickly grouped than on the Louisiana prairies; and on excavating some of these mounds which had been deserted by their aggressive inhabitants, I noted precisely the same structureless earth I had seen in the Opelousas prairie, only this time traversed by half-obliterated burrows, which in the Louisiana mound-fields were almost wholly imperceptible, or at least undistinguishable from old root-tracks.

It therefore seems to me that the question of the Louisiana mounds resolves itself into a biological problem, viz., what kind of ant