

1 small of his back. I sat very safely. He commenced singing and dancing with 170 lbs on his
2 shoulders on this fearful inclined plain. I was considerably alarmed, fearing he would tip over,
3 but he did not. Riding first one and then the other, I found myself safely at the apex of the
4 mountain. A dense vapor filled the crater and, rising in huge billows, rolled over the edge and
5 passed off in a fleecy, white cloud. The girls were expecting to see a grand display of fire works.
6 But finding only a vast cauldron with a white fog in it, they were a little inclined at first to feel
7 somewhat disappointed. The guides led us around on the narrow rim to give us a better view
8 of the interior. When a change in the wind brought the hot sulphur[e]ous cloud directly upon
9 us, there was a very sudden reverse movement of the entire party, and in our hurry to get out
10 of that, it was a little fortunate that a guide had hold of each one of us and kept any one from
11 stepping off on the wrong side. The inside walls of the crater was inclined on an angle of about
12 45 degrees. We could at times see them to a depth of 50 or 60 feet. They were covered with a
13 crust of brimstone. The guide rolled in some small boulders which we could hear thumping
14 their way down long after they had passed out of sight in the smoke. The guides then poked
15 our walking sticks into a fissure, and in a few moments they were in a blaze. They were then
16 handed back to us in their charred condition, proving that where there is so much smoke, there
17 must be some fire. During our ascent, we had quite a shower of rain and some of us felt a little
18 damp and cool in this altitude (4300 feet above the sea) at this season of the year – and I
19 suppose it is the same height at other seasons, but you can't always be sure about it in this
20 country, where the land is heaving and settling. Now we were to descend by a different path.
21 It was simply a straight, smooth pile of ashes, Mrs. Van and the two English ladies in their
22 chairs. I had a guide each side of me. The girls preferred to try it alone. The descent was very
23 easy and very rapid. We had halted to take a rest when about half way down when Julia, losing
24 her balance, came plunging headlong into the crowd, blacking her face and nose with the
25 ashes, but sustaining no injury. I did not blame them for romping a little. It was rare fun to go
26 down from 6 to 10 feet at a stride and sink to your knees in the ashes at every step. The
27 descent is made inside of 10 minutes and can be done in a great deal less time if you ain't
28 careful. After paying out the francs pretty freely to the party that assisted us, and particularly
29 to the fellows that had me on their shoulders, we all mounted our horses and returned safely
30 to our carriage at the observatory, passing on our way a large cross. We were informed that
31 the cross marked the spot where a party of several persons lost their lives in 1872 during the
32 great eruption, their curiosity having upset their prudence. The names of this unfortunate
33 party are engraved on a marble slab and fixed in the wall of the observatory and is a very
34 suggestive hint to all subsequent sight-seers to be cautious. We found our carriage very
35 comfortable after our fatiguing excursion and arrived safely at our hotel about 5 o'clock. We
36 informed our guide that he need not call for us before 2 o'clock to morrow as we were
37 apprehensive that some one of the party would feel stiff in the morning.

38 Jan'y 12th. Retired early last night and all of us feel well this morning. Mrs. Van determined on
39 changing our boarding house, started off with the girls to call on some acquaintances made on
40 our trip from Rome. They found them nicely situated and a party about to vacate a couple of