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NEW AND CURIOUS.

Tauric acid, a new chemical discovery, obtained from tauric moss—a lichen or fungus, usually found growing upon rocks and the roots of trees throughout the country—has been found to possess properties which will render it invaluable as a solvent of metals. Gold, silver, steel, aluminium and lead, when immersed in the acid, become pliable and ductile as putty. The advantages it presents for workers in metal, more especially jewellers, are readily apparent. Designs can be molded by the hands alone, without the use or assistance of heat. Strange to say, however, the acid has no effect upon iron.

**

The experiment of making a railroad dust-proof and water-proof by the use of crude oil has been tried during the past year in the East with success. Oil was sprinkled in the center of the track and on the outside of the rails for about five feet. One application of the oil keeps the track free from dust for about one year. The number of hot-boxes on trains is considerably lessened, and the comfort of passengers is greatly enhanced. An additional advantage found in treating the track with oil is that moisture will not then penetrate through the oiled outer crust. Instead, the water runs off the track into the ditches at the sides. Vegetation along the track is destroyed by the use of oil.

***

The use in Italy of firearms to protect the vineyards from hailstorms is described in a late number of the Literary Digest. The firearm used is a cone-shaped mortar, and when a hailstorm threatens, one of these guns fired in the neighborhood will produce a downpour of rain instead of hail. One mortar, it is said, will protect a space 1600 to 2500 feet in diameter. "Il Coltivatore," a prominent Italian agricultural journal, says that in Styria and Carniola, where this method of protection was first tried, the vineyards have not been injured by hail for three years.

***

Some odd book titles of Reformation times are clipped from an exchange: "The Great Shipwreck of Fools, who are in the Hold of Ignorance, swimming in the Sea of the World; of great Effect, Profit Utility, Value, Honor and Moral Virtue, for the Instructing of Everybody: which book is adorned with a great number of Figures, the better to demonstrate the Folly of the World"; "The Little Dog of the Gospel barking at the Errors of Luther"; "The Royal Post to Paradise, very useful to those who wish to go there".

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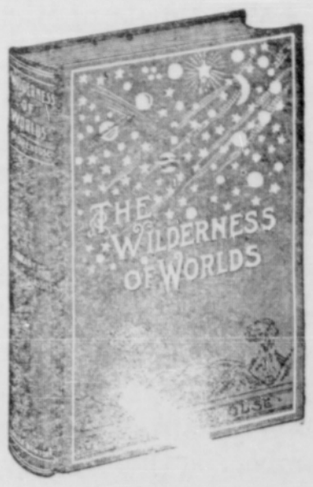

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