

FREAK SHADOWS.

A Peculiar Phenomenon That Has a Simple Explanation.

In the crude oil producing regions in California there are scores of large ponds of this material. After being pumped to the surface the petroleum is emptied into depressions in the earth, where it remains for a time. Later the crude oil is placed in barrels, in large metal cans or else in big reservoirs. These oil ponds are known as "sump holes."

There is one peculiar thing about these "sump holes," and that is in the way of producing what are known as "freak shadows." These are real shadows, but notwithstanding this fact they are decidedly "freaky." If the sun is brightly shining and a person stands for a few moments on the margin of the "sump hole" so that his shadow falls on the surface of the petroleum and he then quickly changes his position the dim shadow remains just where it was originally cast. In other words, the "shadow does not follow the substance."

This may seem like a paradox, but it is true. The instant a person shifts his position his shadow is again cast in a new place, yet the former shadow remains unchanged. The longer a person stands in one particular spot the longer will the former shadow be visible.

Hundreds of experiments have been made along these lines, and every time the same results have been produced. The simple explanation for this phenomenon is that under the hot sun gas is being constantly generated down in the body of the petroleum, and it rises to the surface in the form of little minute bubbles. So very small are these bubbles that they are scarcely visible to the naked eye. Millions of these wee bubbles are rising to the top all the time, when the bubbles break and the gas is liberated, passing into the air.

Both the gas and bubbles are so very supersensitive to the temperature that even one's shadow cast for a moment across them is affected. The temperature is lowered. Whenever the substance quickly changes position the shadow remains until the rays again warm up that spot and the shadowy outline slowly fades away. Of course the "freak shadow" may be seen for only a very few seconds.—Scientific American.

A FLAME OF PAIN.

The Shock That Comes With the Bite of the Electric Ant.

When you happen to sit down to rest or take notes near a colony of electric ants some wandering hunter is sure to find you and come cautiously forward to discover the nature of the intruder and what ought to be done. If you are not too near the ant town and keep perfectly still he may run across your feet a few times, over your legs and hands and face, up your trousers, as if taking your measure and getting comprehensive views, then go in peace without raising an alarm. If, however, a tempting spot is offered or some suspicious movement excites him a bite follows. And such a bite! I fancy that a bear or a wolf bite is not to be compared with it. A quick electric flame of pain flashes along the outraged nerves, and you discover for the first time how great is the capacity for sensation you are possessed of. A shriek, a grab for the animal and a bewildered stare follow this bite of bites as one comes back to consciousness from sudden eclipse.

This wonderful electric ant is about three-fourths of an inch long. Bears are fond of it and tear and gnaw its home logs to pieces and roughly devour the eggs, larvae, parent ants and the rotten or sound wood of the cells, all in one spicy acid hash. The Digger Indians also are fond of the larvae and even of the perfect ants, so I have been told by old mountaineers. They bite off and reject the head and eat the tickly acid body with keen relish. Thus are the poor biters bitten, like every other biter, big or little, in the world's great family.—John Muir in Atlantic.

Too Smart to Be a Lawyer.

B. Davis Noxon was one of the ablest lawyers in central New York. A young man entered his office as a student and was given Blackstone to study. At the end of a month he asked Mr. Noxon what he should read next. "Do you understand Blackstone?" "Yes," was his answer. "Read Kent," was the order. In another month he announced that he had finished Kent and "What next?" "Have you read Blackstone and Kent?" "Yes." "Do you understand them?" "Yes." "Well," said Mr. Noxon, "you had better go at some other business; you are too smart to be a lawyer."—Boston Herald.

Always Busy.

"And you are really settlement workers?" interrogated the housewife as she handed each of the wanderers a wedge of pie. "Yes, mum," responded the dusty spokesman, with a low bow, "we work every settlement we come to."—Chicago News.

The Way He Took It.

Kindly Landlady (to the new boarder)—How did you find your bed, Mr. Inlate? Mr. Inlate (taken aback)—Oh, dash it, ma'am! I was not as bad as that.—London Tit-Bits.

Nothing Lost.

"I bear she doesn't like me with a mustache." "Going to shave it off, I s'pose?" "Oh, no. She never liked me."—Kansas City Journal.

Neither should a ship rely on one small anchor, nor should life rest on a single hope.—Epictetus.

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