

WONDERS OF LAVA

This Molten Rock is a Most Peculiar Substance.

REDHOT SNOW SANDWICHES.

Curious Effect on Mount Vesuvius Produced by the Lava's Amazing Properties as a Nonconductor of Heat—Deadly Volcanic Ashes.

Vesuvius, the most famous volcano in the world, with its mighty vomitings of lava and dust, is guilty of many queer freaks. Mighty rainstorms have set in motion the lava dust and lava cinders that lie on its sides, and torrents of muddy lava have overwhelmed towns and villages as it swept down to the sea. The resulting effect from this has been so great that it changed the face of the coast line by forming a new promontory.

Lava is one of the most curious of substances. It is simply rock melted by a heat so intense that it flows like this gruel. When Vesuvius is in eruption thousands of tons of it are squirted up the "pipe" and out of the crater. As it flows out over the edge it soon cools and leaves a thick, rosy coating, which spreads over the entire countryside.

But it is only on the top that it really cools. A few inches below the surface of the lava is often red hot. Visitors are often invited to light their cigarettes in the chinks of a bed of lava that has been lying out in the open air for twenty years or more.

It is the most wonderful nonconductor of heat known. Borings made through some lava beds have shown that they are made up of layers of lava and layers of unmelted snow. As successive torrents of lava came pouring down the surface that lay on the snow cooled at once, and the surface open to the air also cooled at once. But between the two surfaces there was blazing heat; so if you bored down through some lava beds you would find a cool upper surface, a redhot inside, a cool layer, snow, a cool layer, a redhot one, a cool one and then snow again.

In fact, a layer of lava will let neither heat nor cold through. If you built a house entirely of lava on a scorching summer day you would still have 35 degrees inside when there was snow outside. If you built it in the winter ice would form in your parlor in July.

This clearly demonstrates what an extraordinary nonconductor lava is.

There is, indeed, on the slopes of Vesuvius a little lava hut into which summer visitors put bottles of wine to get them chilled.

When a volcano throws its lava out with such tremendous force that it jets high into the air it very often falls in the form of dust, owing to the explosive power of the high pressure steam that spurts out with it. It bursts into a fine spray and falls as dust—dust far finer than any other dust known.

It is so fine, indeed, that sometimes years elapse before it settles. When the mighty island volcano of Krakatoa blew itself nearly into bits in 1883 with a crashing sound of cannonading that smashed windows hundreds of miles away the lava dust was so thick in the air that for hundreds of miles round midday was as black as night. Volumes of infinitely fine dust sailed round and round the earth in the upper atmosphere and made England's sunsets of that year unusually splendid. It was three years before the upper air became quite clear again.

Lava dust has the same properties as lava. Shepherds on the slopes of Vesuvius sprinkle patches of snow in the winter with lava dust so that they may have it when the scorching days of summer arrive.

It was lava dust turned to mud by torrents of rain such as usually come with volcanic outbursts, that, nearly 2,000 years ago, destroyed the famous pleasure city of Herculaneum, and it was showers of volcanic ashes that overwhelmed Pompeii. Herculaneum still lies nearly forty yards from the open air.

There are rivers of lava mud that are blotting out towns and villages now. A curious point has always been noticed when Vesuvius is in eruption, and that is the strong odor of washing day that hangs around the mountain.

One might wonder why the slopes of such a mountain are so thickly populated when there is always danger of eruptions and of avalanches of lava mud. Well, the reason is that volcanic soil is always very fertile. Some of the best wine of Italy comes from Vesuvian vineyards, and people are ready to take the risks.—London American.

Putting Him on His Mettle.
"The doctor says you have but an hour to live."

"Give me pen and paper," said the dying man feebly.

"To make your will?"

"No; I am going to give the doctor my note for thirty days. He will have to keep me alive at least that long to collect it."—Judge.

Helps Trade.

"Do you believe in love at first sight?"

"Sure. It boosts my business."

"How so?"

"I'm a divorce court lawyer."—Detroit Free Press.

The world is all gates, all opportunities, strings of tension waiting to be struck.—Emerson.

READY FOR A JOKE.

The Customs Official Had a Sense of Humor Himself.

In the smoking room of the Hotel des Iles Britanniques at the lovely resort of Mentone, on the French Riviera, some three years ago two Englishmen met. After half an hour's conversation the Englishman from Manchester said to his new acquaintance from London:

"I say, old fellow, would you mind taking a small parcel for me to Paris and have it sent to this address there? I'm leaving for Milan in the morning."

The Londoner willingly consented to do this much for one of his countrymen.

"Awfully good of you. I'll have the boy take the parcel to your room in the morning," acknowledged the Englishman bound for Milan.

In the morning the package was left at the other's room.

"So that is what he calls a small parcel," he exclaimed. "And what might it contain? A package of such size the custom officers would certainly want opened. What—cigarettes and 3,000 of them! Is it possible that any one could have the audacity to ask such a favor—to smuggle 3,000 cigarettes into France! That chap shall pay for this, for I shall declare these cigarettes and leave them to be called for when the duty is paid."

The Londoner left Mentone that afternoon. The following day he was in Paris at the Gare de l'Est, his luggage ready for examination.

"Anything dutiable?" asked the customs officer.

"Nothing," replied the Englishman, "excepting in that parcel there."

"What does it contain?"

"Three thousand cigarettes," said the Londoner, with a smile upon his face—a smile of embarrassment at having such a parcel with him.

The Frenchman raised his hands in the air and laughed heartily. He, too, was as ready for a good joke as any one, and on each piece of the Englishman's luggage went his O. K. cross.

Hardly realizing what had happened, the Londoner found himself riding in a taxicab along the streets of Paris with the parcel of 3,000 cigarettes under his arm and nothing left to do but to deliver it as he had been asked.

BEAT THE BANK.

A French Naval Officer's Daring Expedition at Monte Carlo.

Those who have visited Monte Carlo have heard of if not seen the pitiful ruin of many an unfortunate person who has lost his last franc in playing at roulette in that palatial gambling den. All are not so fortunate as to have an armored cruiser at their disposal, as was the case with a French naval officer some years ago. He had gone ashore in the morning with naught in his pockets but his own earnings. By noon it was all gone.

If he but had another 500 francs he was sure of winning. During those morning hours of failure he had worked out a system, and with just a few francs more success was certain. He would use the ship's money. Perhaps it was not just the right thing to do, but in another two hours he would be able to return it, would have recouped his own loss and have won who knows what fortune besides.

At sunset he returned to his ship a ruined man. The system, like all systems of the sort, had failed. What was to be done? To return home would mean a dishonorable discharge, lifelong disgrace, if not even more severe punishment. Death seemed the only alternative. But no; he would make one final attempt to save himself. He would force the authorities of Monte Carlo to return to him what he had lost or he would blow up their gambling palace!

As soon as he was again on board his order was: "Clear decks for action. Raise the muzzle of every gun and let them point toward the heights of Monaco."

Whatever the sailors might think of such an order mattered little; obey they must. With all haste a messenger was sent ashore with a note, and the captain meanwhile paced the deck in silence awaiting the reply—a reply which meant life or death to him.

Finally the messenger returned carrying a bag of gold coins. That night the French cruiser weighed anchor and quietly steamed out into the Mediterranean, her captain happy that he had fared no worse and the authorities of Monte Carlo only too glad to be rid of so dangerous a visitor.—Washington Star.

Virtuous Indignation.

"The reporter who came to see about the fancy ball was a horrid creature."

"Why?"

"He asked for my picture to publish with the account, and I told him indignantly I did not care for such notoriety. Then I had to go out of the room a minute and forget my picture, which was lying on the table near where he was standing, and—"

"He took it and put it in?"

"No; he left it there."—Baltimore American.

Bossing the Boss.

"Your clerks seem to be in a good humor," remarked the friend of the great merchant.

"Yes," replied the great merchant.

"My wife has just been in, and it tickles them to death to see somebody boss me around."—Philadelphia Record.

On Her Side.

"I didn't know you had any idea of marrying her."

"I didn't. The idea was hers."—Lippincott's.

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