

FREAKS OF NATURE.

There are weather prophets and weather prophets, but there is a stone which it is asserted unfailingly foretells changes in the weather. This stone was found in Finland many years ago by an explorer, and has been watched by scientists with great interest. It is known as the samakuir, and presents a white mottled appearance in sunshine, gradually turning from grey to black as a rainstorm approaches. The samakuir is made up of clay, nitre and rock salt. In dry weather the salt in the stone is prominent, but when the air is filled with moisture, the salt absorbs the moisture and turns black, thus acting as a barometer.

The natives of Java have a natural poison to aid them in avenging themselves against their enemies. It is a strong fluid found in the bark of the upas tree. The bark is over an inch thick, and is very spongy. A drop of the fluid on the skin causes intense irritation. A private revenge is satisfied by hiding a cup of this fluid in the room of the enemy, and then the avenger flees, for well he knows that by morning his victim will have crossed the high divide. The fluid produces stupor, which finally ends in death.

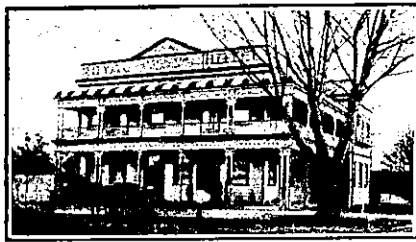
Two contrasting freaks of nature are the Island of Fire and the Lake of Snow. The Island of Fire is called the Home of Hot Devils. It is situated in the midst of a large lake of boiling mud in the Island of Java. The steam and gases which arise from the sticky mud form themselves into bubbles attaining the diameter of five or six feet and sailing high up in the air like balloons, carried hither and thither by the wind and finally exploding with a loud crash.

The biggest snow lake is seen from the summit of Hispar Pass, in the Karakoran Range. It is more than three hundred square miles in area. In Switzerland the sea of ice might better be called the sea of snow, as the surface is broken up by solar heat, which makes a minute fissuring in the ice, giving it the appearance of snow.

There is a huge natural magnet in Upper Burma, India, covered with great blocks of iron ore, which travellers notice has a tremendous attraction which renders compasses and watches useless. In Spain there is a spring of water said to cure lovesick people. Another queer spring is situated in Mexico, the waters of which cure alcoholic cravings, so the legend runs. Hinter Mountain, near Fort Davis, Texas, produces an effect which would counteract the good work done by the Mexican spring, with none of the evil effects. People go up this mountain and they suddenly become conscious of a sort of anaesthetic which takes possession of them and makes them act as if intoxicated. If a traveller reaches the top he staggers like an old toper, and many have been known to fall in a stupor on the rocks. This mountain has a following, which returns season after season to enjoy this harmless dissipation.

A man who, after being addicted to drink, had taken the pledge, was persuaded to attend ambulance classes. The Bishop of London, who told the story at a meeting recently, soon afterwards called on the man's wife and asked her how her husband was. "He's a changed man, sir," said the wife. "Instead of spending his evenings in the public-house he stops at home every night and bandages the cat!"

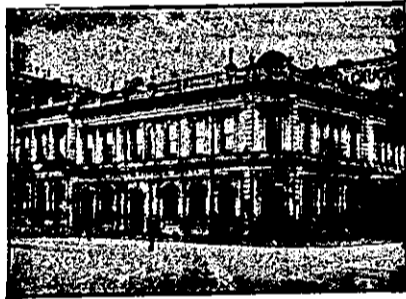
HOTELS—AUCKLAND PROVINCE.



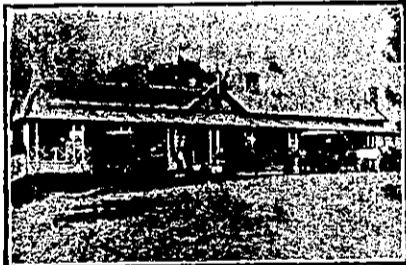
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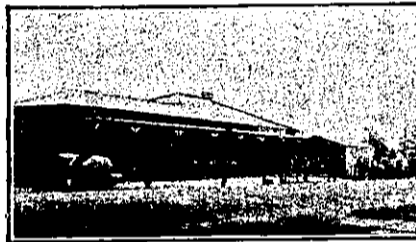


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