

CURIOUS FACTS.

The Soldanella Melts Ice.

It is rather startling to hear of a plant giving out heat just like an animal. But it has now been proved conclusively that some at least do so. A tiny, fragile-looking flower which grows on the edge of the great Alpine glaciers is the surest test.

This plant—the soldanella it is called—begins to grow before the ice has melted but by its own warmth it actually melts its way through several inches of solid snow and hard ice, and raises its pretty flowers uninjured above the surface.

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Cliffs Burnt by The Sea

Fancy the waves of the sea setting fire to the cliffs they break on! Yet this is what did really happen at Ballybunion, on the western coast of Ireland. These rocks, which the great Atlantic rollers had for centuries been slowly breaking down, and piercing with great caverns, contains in their depths masses of iron pyrites and alum. At last the water penetrated to these, and a rapid oxidation took place which produced a heat fierce enough to set the whole cliff on fire. For weeks the rocks burnt like a regular volcano, and great clouds of smoke and vapour rose high in the air. When at last the fire died out, great masses of lava and clay burnt to brick were seen in every direction.

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Fireproof Trees

There are lots of different kinds of trees, such as ebony ironwood, and such-like tremendously solid timber, which fire takes a long time to get hold of.

But, as far as is known, only one sort of wood in all the world is in its natural state absolutely fireproof. This vegetable salamander is a native of South America, and rejoices in the name of "rhopala." Small, distorted, and scraggy, it grows on the great grassy savannahs which are swept by fire every year during the heat of summer.

Its bark—which is thick, tough, stringy, and always full of a sort of fire-resisting sap—is its protection, and the result is that the prairie fires instead of injuring it, actually do it good, for they kill off its bigger and harder competitors and leave the ground free for the development of this curious shrub.

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Hills That Rise and Sink.

I don't mean volcanoes, or hills that earthquakes raise or lower. No, most

of the hills in the world are constantly varying in height. Very little, it is true, but still enough to be easily measured. And it is in a very wet season that the average hill grows most. This was discovered at the Observatory at Armagh, in Ireland. The building stands on a hill of soft soil and rock, and this hill evidently absorbs water like a huge sponge. The result is that after a few days of heavy rain, the top of the hill, and the observatory with it, has risen over a foot above the dry-weather level. After a long-dry summer the sinkage is almost equally great.

Hills also, when made of solid rock, rise and fall a few inches every twenty-four hours, from the contraction and expansion of cold and heat. The hot sun during the day makes them rise, the night frost brings them down again. This is very noticeable at the Santiago Observatory, in Chili, where the day and night temperatures vary a good deal.

HUH PIOTYAH.

See dis pietyah in my han?
Ain't she purty? goodness lan!
Huh name Sal.
Dat's de very way she be—
Kin' o' tickles me to see
Huh a-smillin' back at me.

She sent me dis photograph
Jes' las' week;
An' aldough hit made me laugh—
My black cheek
Felt somethin' a-runnin' queer;
Bless yo' soul, it was a tear
Jes' f'om wishin' she was here.

Often when I's all alone
Layin' here,
I git t'inkin' 'bout my own
Sallie dear;
How she say dat I's huh beau,
An' it tickles me to know
Dat de gal do love me so.

Some bright day I's goin' back,
Fo de la!
An' ez sho' 'z my face is black,
Ax huh pa
Fu' de blessed little miss
Who's a-smillin' out o' dis
Pietyah, lak she wan'ed a kiss!

—Paul Lawrence Dunbar, the negro poet.

WOMEN'S WORK IN GERMANY.

It is officially stated that there are in Germany three women employed as chimney sweeps, thirty-five as slaters, seven as gunsmiths, nineteen as brass and bell founders, fifty as pavers, 147 as copper-smiths, 379 as farriers and nailers, 309 (including girls) as masons, eight as cutters and 200 in marble, stone and slate quarries.