

THE MYSTERY OF ASPHALT LAKE

Trinidad's Wonder — Apparently Inexhaustible Bed of Asphalt a Valuable Commercial Asset to Island.

The island of Trinidad is chiefly famous for its possession of a great natural wonder—the so-called pitch or asphalt lake of La Brea. This extraordinary physical phenomenon, which lies to the southwestern part of the island about thirty miles from Port of Spain, is in reality not a lake at all, but the crater of an extinct mud volcano, says a writer in Munsey's.

To the visitor, at first glance, there is nothing at all impressive in its appearance. It looks like a large, round pond about a hundred acres in extent, which has been substantially dried up, with little rivulets of water irregularly intersecting its bed, and here and there patches of vegetation, while in the centre rise bubbles of gas.

Like Elephant's Skin.

The surface of the lake is not a uniform expanse of asphalt—or pitch, as it is called locally—but is creased in great folds, between which rain water gathers. It has been compared to the skin of an elephant, with the irregular creases representing the folds in his hide. Along the edges it is covered with grass, but in the central part there is no vegetation. Shrubs and small trees occur in a few cases, and are known as islands. These patches of vegetation move from place to place with the displacement of the pitch, which is in constant motion.

The asphalt is of a blackish brown color, somewhat resembling coal. It may be taken out in pieces of from forty to fifty pounds with a pick. If left exposed to the sun for any length of time these pieces will very slowly blend and adapt themselves to their support, like dough.

Walking on Velvet.

If one walks upon the surface of the lake the feeling is as of walking on velvet. If one stands still for a few minutes one's shoes begin to indent the asphalt. Donkeys are not more than two hundred feet from the edge of the lake.



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resting, in standing upon it for ten or fifteen minutes, during the heat of the day, will sink nearly over their heads. One may sometimes see a negro placed at each leg of a donkey to keep the animal from struggling and hurrying itself while its hoofs are being picked out of the asphalt.

The soft pitch may be taken up and handled with impunity. It is as pliable as putty, and may be manipulated without any of it sticking to the hands. The old proverb that cannot touch pitch without being defiled does not hold good in this instance.

Petroleum Springs.

Science attributes the origin of the pitch to petroleum springs far beneath the surface. Centuries ago the oil welling its way upward, came into contact with a huge mass of volcanic matter, the chief component of which is clay in a colloidal condition. This means that the clay is so fine that it remains indefinitely suspended in the bitumen.

One unique characteristic of the Trinidad asphalt is that when a hole is dug in the lake, and the asphalt is removed for shipment, within twenty-four hours or less the cavity is filled up again. A space of perhaps sixty by forty feet, and to a depth of three or four feet, will be dug out during the day. The last thing you see, when you leave at night, is that large hole in the blackish brown asphalt.

When you return in the morning there is the hole there. The space that was excavated may appear a little rough, but it is filled up and approximately level with the rest of the lake. In a few days all trace of that particular hole will have vanished.

RESENTS 'FLU BEING CALLED "SPANISH"

Madrid Doctor Says There is No Scientific Reason for Designation.

(Montreal Gazette)

A famous physician and lecturer from the University of Madrid is staying at the Place Viger, in the person of Professor Labrara, who in connection with his visit to Montreal will deliver an address before the medical faculty of the University of Montreal. He is the author of numerous books and treatises, some of which have been translated into several languages, including English.

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the professor intimated that Spain was producing the greatest painters of today. The University of Madrid is for Spain what McGill University is for Canada. It is the centre of learning in the country. Its students are gathered from all over the Spanish dominions, South America, and other parts of the world. They have a normal enrollment of about 600. As elsewhere in the world, the professor says there is, perhaps, an over-inclination for the politer studies—law, medicine, &c., and too little attention to scientific work, which has to do with the basic industries of life. For instance, he suggested that agriculture was comparatively neglected, and that agriculture was most fundamentally concerned in the welfare of the kingdom. In Spain, as elsewhere, also, they had many economical problems to solve. The increased cost of living had equally become a problem there, housing, food and clothing being very dear.

Health and Crime.

Prof. Labrara thought, however, that the greatest good of humanity was not concerned with economical questions, but had more to do with the matter of health. He thought the government should aim to instruct the people in physiological and hygienic knowledge. The greatest evil, he thought, which Nature was promulgating, was that man should know himself. He argues that this is not the concern of physical health only, but that there is a connection between the physical and mental which is manifested in abnormalities of mind. For example, he argues that the man who is really healthy is mentally well, and that criminality is a question of health and education, but more particularly of health. Some of the works he has written have to do with these and kindred subjects.

The professor conveyed a sense of entire disagreement with the medical investigators who thought they had traced the origin of the war plague to his country. He was unable to agree that there was any scientific reason for calling it Spanish influenza, suggesting that it might as well have been labelled humanity's influenza, or the "war influenza"; in fact, he stated that his opinion was in accord with that of a noted London physician, recently expressed in Montreal, that the disease was traceable to causes due to the war.

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mining enough coal to supply their own requirements, they were now producing a small surplus; and he suggested that there were great undeveloped coal measures in the country which could be exploited if transportation were brought to them and that the region of Leon produced a coal equal to the best in the world.

Spain, he said, had lost 80 ships in the war, and had thus far received no indemnity. The country was giving attention to ship building, finding the material in their own mines and steel works. They were also sending great quantities of steel abroad. They shipped large quantities to England in the shape of billets and had it sent back to them in manufactured articles.

On the whole he intimated that Spain was prosperous, and mentioned that there was three billion in gold in the Bank of Spain. King Alfonso, he said, was brave, generous and generally popular with the people.

Three mining men in an automobile having a hard time in the sandy "wash" of Dripping Springs Valley, Arizona, were overtaken by a cloudburst which pumped out the machine and resumed lifted the machine and carried it along

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