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OUR SENSITIVE PLANET.

Constant Changes in the Shape of the Earth's Crust.

One naturally thinks of the earth's crust as being exceedingly solid and stable, except perhaps in volcanic regions where earthquakes are of frequent occurrence. As a matter of fact, however, the shell of our planet is extremely sensitive and most delicately balanced, so that under the influence of causes that seem altogether insignificant in comparison with the gigantic bulk and weight of the earth it yields and fluctuates in a most amazing manner.

To an eye so placed as to be capable of taking in at one comprehensive glance the whole round outline of the globe it would not appear of precisely the same shape during an entire day or even an hour. Most of the changes referred to are, of course, very slight when compared with the size of the earth itself.

The operation of atmospheric and oceanic and other similar causes is continually bringing about changes in the shape of the earth's crust. One of the most interesting of the agencies whereby such alterations are effected is the carrying power of rivers. When a great quantity of sand and gravel is being brought down from the interior of a continent and poured into the sea, as, for instance, along the northwestern coast of Europe or the gulf coast of the United States, the weight of the earth's crust is slowly increasing, and the consequence is seen in the gradual subsidence of the shore.

Such a sinking has been going on for thousands of years along the North sea coast and on the continental side of the British channel. A similar depression is occurring on the eastern edge of our own country and along the gulf of Mexico. It has been estimated that the gulf coast is sinking at the rate of nearly two feet in a century.

Corresponding elevations must, of course, occur elsewhere. And to these slow changes in the level of the earth's crust earthquakes are due as well as to the more violent local disturbances created by volcanic action.—Harper's Weekly.

AIDED THE REVOLT

The Destruction of Portland, Me., in Colonial Days.

ACT OF AN ENGLISH OFFICER.

A Royalist Woman's Wiles Caused the Annihilation of the City and Saved Portsmouth, N. H., For Which Portland's Fate Had Been Planned.

One of the causes of the Revolutionary war, and quite as important a one as the stamp act, was the wanton destruction of the city of Portland, Me., then part of the town of Falmouth.

It was said that the patriots might have forgiven Lexington and Concord, but that the razing of this town, which had been peaceably inclined until then, increased the colonies beyond measure. One prompt result was the immediate formation of a Maine regiment which was added to the meager forces of the Continental army.

Not so generally known, however, is the tradition that it was due to the fascinations of a beautiful woman that Portland was destroyed and another town preserved.

When the British commander, Captain Mowatt, on board his flagship, the *Canoe*, anchored with his fleet in Portland's inner harbor, he did not reveal to her citizens that the unscrupulous little god of love had been his pilot. Instead, on a bright October morning in 1775, he ran up the royal ensign on his fleet and at 9 o'clock began a bombardment that lasted uninterruptedly until 6 o'clock at night. Portland was unprepared for such a visitation, and there was no attempt at defense, the inhabitants simply swarming the streets with their ox carts and horses and attempting to seek safety by flight to the open country back from the water front.

So close did the assailing vessels approach that under cover of the bombardment they landed sailors who pervaded the town, setting fire to such buildings as had escaped damage from the exploding bombs. Before Captain Mowatt had completed the sacrifice he desired to lay before love's shrine three-quarters of the town was totally destroyed, including the municipal buildings, churches, public library, fire engine houses, warehouses, wharfs and shipping.

All that he left was a handful of the poorer hovels, every residence of importance being bombarded or set on fire and 6,000 inhabitants left shelterless at the approach of winter.

To make it practically certain that aid could not come to the seaport by water he destroyed all but one wharf and took with him on his departure all the vessels anchored in the harbor that had been spared from the torch.

Truly he had a glorious bonfire and in explanation he exhibited instructions which read: "Come opposite the town with all possible expedition, and there burn, sink and destroy," but the gossips of the time said that these orders originally related to Portsmouth, N. H., and that it was due to a woman that they were not carried out as written.

Captain Mowatt and his fleet had anchored off Portsmouth harbor some time previously to his assault upon Portland, and while there he had gone quietly on shore and secretly visited the family of the royalist (or Tory, as the colonists called them), Nathaniel Sparhawk. Nathaniel had a daughter, a girl of eighteen, famed the country round for her beauty as her father was famed for his obnoxious loyalty to King George, and when the sailor captain saw her he proved an easy conquest (like most sailors where pretty women are concerned), and he found it necessary to be roved from his ship many times in order to spend the evenings with attractive Mary Sparhawk.

Her wit, beauty and brilliancy of conversation fascinated him and through her influence, it is said, the intention of bombarding Portsmouth was abandoned, and Portland suffered in the stead of the town which held the charming little loyalist.

So what one historian termed "a wanton, indefensible assault upon an undefended and peaceful city" came about through a woman's smile, and every volley from the fifty guns of Mowatt's fleet doubtless carried his thoughts back to the lass who had won his heart. The smoldering wharfs and the flaming houses were his burnt offering to his ladylove.

The Sparhawk house, where the captain lost his heart still stands; but, alas, the romance ended as so many romances do, for after the Revolution was over the fair and fascinating belle married a physician and a patriot.—Detroit Free Press.

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SOAP BUBBLES.

Thickness of the Gray Hued Film Just Before They Burst.

What is a soap bubble? Nothing but a film of water molecules held together by the cohesive power of soap in solution. A soap bubble's size and strength depend upon the right composition of the mixture that furnishes its material. The colors in a soap bubble are due to what is known in physics as the interference of light, and depend upon the varying thickness of the film of water.

The observer who watches a bubble as it is blown will notice that the colors rapidly chase one another over the filmy globe. He will also see that they vary in hue, growing less and less bright at the top of the bubble because there gravity stretches it downward and makes the film thinner.

It is a singular fact that the last color to appear on a soap bubble just before it breaks is a gray tint. The thickness of the film when this tint appears upon it is less than the one hundred and fifty-six-thousandth of an inch.

Were a soap bubble to be magnified to the size of the earth and the molecules magnified in proportion, then the whole structure would be as coarse grained as a globe of small leadshot touching one another at their surfaces.

In the blowing of a soap bubble there is presented the spectacle of the stretching of a liquid to the extreme limit of its capacity. In this way we come nearer to a sight of the invisible molecules of matter than could be got in any other way no matter how elaborate the experiment.—Exchange.

AN EAST INDIA AMULET.

In India a variety of gems and stones are used as amulets. The most common is the salagrama, a stone about as large as a billiard ball and which is perforated with black. This is supposed to be found only in Gandaki, a river in Nepal. The person who possesses one of these stones is esteemed highly fortunate. He preserves it in a clean cloth, from whence it is sometimes taken to be bathed and perfumed. He believes that the water in which it is washed, if drunk, has the power to preserve from sin. Holding it in his hand, the dying Hindu expires in peace.

The Reels.

"Your novel is pretty good," said the publisher to Scribley, "but, after all, it needs just a little more thrill. Can't you put something stirring in it?"

"Why, I might," said Scribley, "though just how to stir things up I don't know."

"Well," smiled the publisher, "suppose you try just a little more spooning. Nothing like a good spoon for stirring, you know."—Harper's.

He Didn't Tell.

"Geel! Now tell me as man to man what you would do if you were married to that woman?"

"You tell me what you would do. I am married to her."—Houston Post.

Considerate.

She—Why did you ask Belle to go with us? He—I saw she was going anyhow, and I didn't wish her to feel mean over it.—Smart Set.

A Fault Finder.

"You were always a fault finder," growled the wife.

"Yes, dear," responded the husband meekly; "I found you."

CANADIAN PACIFIC RY.

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She Flew.

Miss Fulloson (of a poetical turn)—Which are you of opinion one should say, professor, "Summer flies" or "Summer flees?"

Absent Minded Professor (great on entomology)—The two species, my dear young lady, are entirely distinct. Now, the common busily—(Then he wondered why she suddenly opened a conversation with the young man on her right.)—London Sphere.

Quotations.

"You don't use many quotations from Shakespeare."

"No," replied Senator Sorghum. "Quotations of that sort would command more respect nowadays if Shakespeare were listed on the Stock Exchange."—Washington Star.

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