

DESERET EVENING NEWS.

Wednesday, September 29, 1894.

THE SODA LAKE OF MEXICO.

The lake of Tescoco, a short distance from the capital of Mexico, and communicating with the city by means of a canal, is one of the greatest natural curiosities of that country. In the centre is a barren island, with a hill composed of volcanic rock and known as El Penon de los Banos, or rock of the baths, rising from the surface. This desolate place is famous for the manufacture of crude soda, or tequesquite, a manufacture not more remarkable for its primitive method than for its vast resources. The earth of the valley adjoining the lake is impregnated with a species of soda, and Lake Tescoco itself is a concentrated solution of soda. In contains an immense deposit of salts of sodium and the carbonate of soda. The lake has a great surface and small depth, and with a rainy season of four months and a dry season of eight, its range of expansion and contraction is from 200 square miles at its maximum to 80 square miles at its minimum. A calculation of the contents of the lake was made in 1851, when the lake was considerably contracted, and the portion of solid matter was ascertained to be not less than 18 per cent. The Penon soda stills are not numerous, but illustrate the rude principle at work all around the lake. They are mounds of accumulated dark, bluish mold, on which large holes are made here and there. In these holes bags are placed, and in the bags the impregnated, frosty looking earth found every morning along the lake. Over this earth water is poured, and the liquor which sinks through the dirt, is drained from the bag, and passes into a vessel below. The solution thus caught is evaporated over a fire, and tequesquite is the result. This is the whole process, which is the same that was used in the days of Montezuma. With this primitive system of manufacture, the lake, according to the estimate of the School of Mining in the City of Mexico, produces annually 1,680,000 pounds of crystallized or pure soda, and 3,695,000 pounds of tequesquite or impure soda.

ANECDOTE OF WEBSTER.

Daniel Webster was a firm believer in Divine revelation, and a close student of its sacred pages. On one occasion, a small company of select friends spent an evening at his house. Tea over, the Bible, and the relative beauties of its several parts, became the topic of conversation. When the turn came to Webster, he said: "The masterpiece of the New Testament, of course, is the Sermon on the Mount. That has no rival—no equal. As for the Old Testament writings, my favorite book is that of Habakkuk, and favorite verses, chapter iii, 17, 18: 'Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the field, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' This," continued Webster, "I regard as one of the sublimest passages of inspired literature. And often have I wondered that some artist, equal to the task, has not selected the prophet and his scene of desolation as the subject of a painting. When in Paris, some years ago," continued Mr. Webster, "I received an account of a French infidel who happened to find in a drawer of his library, some stray leaves of an unknown volume; although in the constant habit of denouncing the Bible, like most infidel writers, he had never read any part of it. These fugitive leaves contained the above prayer of Habakkuk. Being a man of fine literary taste, he was captivated with its poetic beauty, and hastened to the club house to announce the discovery to his associates. Of course they were anxious to know the name of the gifted author, to which inquires the elated infidel replied: 'A writer by the name of Hab-ba-kook, of course a Frenchman.' Judge of the infidel's surprise when informed that the passage he was so enthusiastically admiring was not produced by one of his own countrymen, nor even by one of his own class of free thinkers, but was penned by one of God's ancient prophets, and was contained in that much-depised book, the Bible."—*Lutheran Observer.*

THE SOUR LAKE IN TEXAS.

About six miles from Houston, in Texas, in a low, wet prairie country, but itself on quite high and dry ground, and surrounded by a fine little forest, is a small lake whose diameter may be counted by rods, the waters of which are so sour that it is almost impossible to drink them. A number of wells have been dug in the immediate vicinity, and the water of these contains iron, alum, magnesia, and sulphuric acid. Notwithstanding the difficulty of reaching the place and the poor accommodations, large numbers of invalids go there from the Southern States to drink the water of the wells and bathe in the lake; and they experience immediate and remarkable benefit. The effect of the baths is sedative, and persons who have not slept comfortably for weeks, after taking a bath in the lake in the evening, enjoy a refreshing night's rest. The water becomes more pleasant to the taste after a few glasses, and may be bottled and put in wooden casks without losing its strength. The soil is so strongly impregnated with the same qualities as the water, that if the mud be dissolved in pure water and a little soda or saleratus put into it, it will foam and effervesce, and will be as sour as lemonade. Before the war a number of gentlemen were considering plans for building a large hotel at the place; but since then the project has been postponed. A number of gentlemen bought the property of a man who died about twenty-five years ago; but according to the laws of Texas a man cannot sell his homestead without the consent of his wife, and a lady of Chicago, claiming to be the former owner's wife, has brought a suit to recover it under the law. The matter is still in agitation.—*N. Y. News.*

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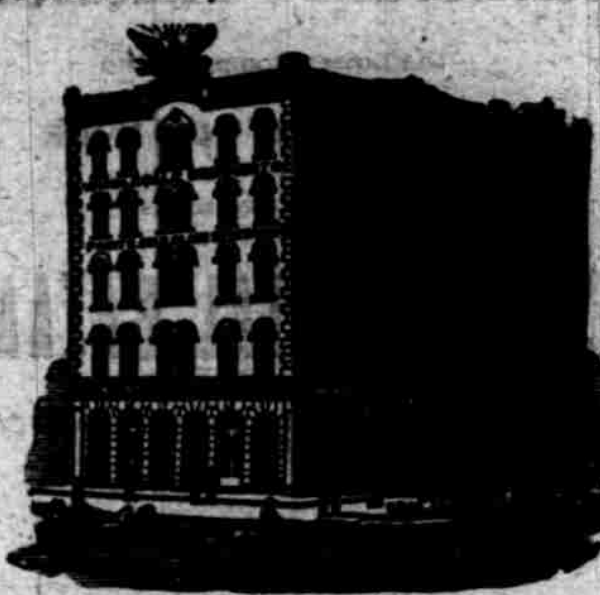
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