

AN AFRICAN POISON STORY.

Strange Phenomenon Witnessed in the Northeast of the Dark Continent.

Charles M. Stern, of Chicago, who lately returned from a journey through Northeast Africa, told of a curious meteorological phenomenon which he observed in the district called Gwallah, reports the New York Mail and Express. "The vegetation in that region is very luxuriant," said he, "and the plant life must give off an unusually large quantity of carbonic acid gas. At least, that was the conclusion I reached after seeing three natives die and four or five dogs.

"The moment the animals put their noses close to the ground they would fall over and gasp, and die in about five minutes. The natives who died slept on the ground instead of in hammocks, as others did. My theory is that a stratum of the deadly gas covered the ground for a depth of three or four inches, and any living thing breathing in that area was asphyxiated.

"I could not understand, however, how the gas was not distributed in a thinner layer, and what kept it in one place for a whole day. Nothing like it had ever been known there before. The deaths of the men and the dogs all occurred within 24 hours. Then the gas, if it was really gas, seemed to be dissipated. It was a very strange occurrence and I might have been induced to make a more exhaustive investigation if my presence had not excited distrust. I got away as quickly as possible rather than be accused of being the cause of the sudden deaths. The natives are superstitious, and attribute most of their misfortunes to witchcraft, so I thought it the part of wisdom to get away."

SUBSTITUTE FOR COAL.

A Smokeless Fuel That Seems to Be Gaining in Popularity.

In the future we may be exporting masut instead of exporting coal, says the Chicago Inter Ocean. Masut is a by-product in the distillation of raw petroleum. It is also manufactured from a cheap brown coal found in Saxony. There has been, until recently, great trouble in finding a furnace suitable for burning it. It is now blown by steam into a special furnace, on the principle of the Lucigen light, and used without difficulty. It is 40 or 50 per cent. cheaper than coal, and is 20 per cent. better as a heat raiser. Steam can be got up quicker and kept at a higher pressure, and more work can be done by the machinery. From a naval point of view these are vitally important facts. No sign of a ship under full steam will be shown in the sky, for masut is a smokeless fuel. Russia and Italy are using it in their navies, and Germany has lately made some valuable experiments. At Kiel, Wilhelmshaven and Danzig are tanks from which it can be pumped into ships. Its specific gravity being so much less than that of coal, a ship's buoyancy is greatly increased when the bunkers are filled with it. Heavier armor or cargoes can be carried. The heating capacity being greater, the ship can travel faster or

farther. It is yet to be learned what improvements the Germans have introduced into their furnaces, and what are the disadvantages of masut.

OLD TIMES IN HAWAII.

Reverence for Royalty Was Once a Marked Characteristic.

One of the most marked characteristics of the ancient Hawaiian religion was the extreme reverence for royalty indicated, says the Philadelphia Press. It was a crime punishable with death to pass through the king's shadow or sit higher than his head. His person was sacred and protected by a strict system of "taboo." In the royal palace the "taboo" stick, with which the king announced his excommunications, is exhibited. It is a wand with a carved stone cap. If this stick was lowered on the approach of a courier he was compelled to withdraw immediately and was considered in deep disgrace.

The king's will was absolute; but the majority of the Hawaiian monarchs seem to have been of a kindly disposition and to have made no improper use of their extreme power. It was due to one of them that the taboo system was abolished. This bore with grievous weight upon the women. They were forbidden the use of some of the most common articles of diet, such as bananas and certain kinds of fish, on pain of death.

Smallest Electrical Battery.

The smallest electrical battery ever constructed was the work of an electrician in the employ of the Boston Telephone company. It consisted of an ordinary "glass head" through which two wires, one of copper and the other of iron, were looped and twisted so as to prevent their coming in contact. The wires acted as the electrodes, and all that was necessary to cause a current was to place a drop of acidulated water in the head. Certainly such a minute battery furnished but an infinitesimal current, but it could be easily used in a delicate telephone; in fact, it is said to have actually served in signaling a distance of nearly 200 miles.

Inured to Cold.

When asked if he was not afraid of a temperature of ten degrees below zero the late Telman Willey, of Boston, said: "Where I was born, sir, my father one Sunday took me into a meeting house which sat on four stone posts with no other underpinning. I sat in the church and listened to a sermon on hell for 60 minutes, with the wind howling underneath the church and blowing 40 miles a minute, with no fire in the stove and the mercury 40 degrees below zero. Do you think I was born in a sugar box and nursed on heliotropes?"

Novel Sport in France.

The running of auto-mobiles, or horseless vehicles, has become a national sport in France, and clubs devoted to it have been formed in the larger cities. One of the sights along the French roads this summer will be the addition of many motor wagons to the great number of bicycles.

SHUNNED LIKE LEPERS.

A Colony of Degenerate Human Freaks Who Live Like Beasts.

A most revolting form of human degeneracy is to be seen on Snake creek, in the Indian nation, Indian territory, says the Cincinnati Enquirer. A small colony of human freaks, with dirty, whitish hair, and white, glassy eyes, eke out a miserable existence in the midst of the most filthy surroundings, being ostracized from the companionship of the other Creeks. These degenerates are the result of frequent intermarriage among a class of mongrel whites, negroes and Indians, and the degeneracy has kept dropping down the scale of human intelligence until it is said these people eat snakes, toads and other reptiles. They use a peculiar jargon, many expressions resembling the clucking of hens and the unpleasant noises made by belligerent geese. Their hair is somewhat kinky, but stands out nearly straight, giving them a very frightful appearance. They live out in the open air, except in very unpleasant weather, when they crawl into rude caves or dugouts, reeking with filth and vermin. Many of them are afflicted with sores, and are deformed or cross-eyed. They are too lazy to be mean, but the very sight of them is sickening, and they are shunned like lepers. A subagent has been asked for to look after their annuities and to secure for them something like human comforts. They have many children, and their offspring are most pitiful looking objects.

The White House.

The steady growth of the nation has rendered necessary a great expansion of the capitol at Washington, but nothing has been done to increase the size of the white house, says the Washington Post. The latter remains as it was when first occupied by President John Adams, at the beginning of the present century. Its narrow quarters have caused a vast amount of embarrassment to its tenants from time to time. For example, when the prince of Wales was here the utmost difficulty was found in making room for him and a few persons of his immediate suite, even when a part of the office quarters was utilized for sleeping purposes. There is an urgent demand for more rooms for the entertainment of distinguished guests of the nation on such exceptional occasions.

Exiles at St. Helena.

Mr. Chamberlain, in his capacity as British secretary of state for the colonies, has just caused it to be known that the English government has resolved to release the son and two brothers of the famous Zulu king, Cetewayo, from their captivity at St. Helena, and to restore them to their own country. Years ago they were exiled to that dismal island, where Napoleon died a prisoner, on the mere suspicion of being engaged in organizing a revolt against British rule in Zululand. They have always protested their innocence, and, inasmuch as their guilt has never been proved and they have never been convicted by any court of law, their liberation is but a tardy act of justice.