

What Are Sun-Spots?

The great atmosphere of the sun whose breath is flame, is yet, says Mr Proctor, so cool compared with his intensely glowing surface that it absorbs a large proportion of his light as well as of his heat. But while the general absorptive action of the sun is wonderful, the story is still more wonderful which the spectroscope has to tell about the specific absorptive effects due to its constitution. We find that whereas our air the vapor of water is present (condense into water drops and form clouds at certain levels, and to change to ice crystals and form cirrus at high levels), in the sun the atmosphere is laden with the vapors of iron, copper, zinc, sodium, magnesium, and like elements, to form clouds of metallic drops great gatherings of metallic crystals, while the rains that pour down toward the concealed true globe of the sun are mighty showers of molten metal. When a hurricane occurs in the sun, the clouds which form the sun's surface are swept along, or whirled around, not at the rate at which we measure our storms, but with a velocity compared with which their swiftest motion is at rest. The solar tornadoes rage, not over a few hundred square miles, but over regions as large as the whole surface of the earth, over hundreds, even thousands of millions of square miles; and they travel over these enormous regions at a rate not of so many miles per hour or per minute, but of many miles, sometimes more than a hundred miles, in every second of time.

Such storms are in progress now, when we see the spots upon the sun. Such storms tell us of the activity of that great central engine whose throbs are the life-beats of the solar system. We measure the sun's work, therefore, by our own forms of work. We speak of his emission of light and heat as corresponding to what would result from the burning of eleven thousand millions of millions of tons of the finest coal in every second of time. But what mind can conceive the vitality of that mighty orb which seems so silent and so still in our skies? The throbbing of the great engine which beats out light and life to the whole family of planets can only be seen by the mind's eye, and as yet that eye is no more capable of seeing the sun's work as it really is than is the bodily eye of seeing the distant millions of suns which the great gauging telescopes of the Herschels bring within our ken. Nor can the mental ear hearken to the uproar and tumult with which the works of the great central engine is accomplished, or imagine what would be heard if one could visit that spot which looks like a tiny speck on the sun's surface, and, passing below the limits of the solar air so that sound waves could reach him, could find (as assuredly he would if he could live at a temperature which turns the hardest metal into vapor) all forms of noise known to us—the roar of the typhoon, the crash of thunder, even the hideous groaning of the earth—thru—surpassed a million fold by what takes place within every square mile of that disturbed region.

Endurance of Women Upon the Stage.

The only wonder over actresses and prima donnas is that they are so hardy and bear exposure so well. In winter weather that has turned half the usual audience into coughing, sneezing and otherwise suffering persons, these ladies appear on the stage and stand in all its draughts with bared throats, shoulders and arms. The men of the company are well protected in the usual broad-cloth, and the audience may sit in overcoats and shawls, while the fair singers and players may get overheated or not by their efforts, but still are dressed as for a summer night or a ball-room. There are very few artists but are able to undergo an extraordinary fatigue as well as exposure. Madame Nilsson's sore throat in the West, and Miss Mather's pneumonia in Boston, are among the few instances where exposure had the same results that would have happened in private life.—Boston Post.

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