

caused a continuous increase in the price, and this has been further inflated by the formation of a large trust amongst those who control the supply. Immense fortunes, that would make the little piles of nuggets and gold-dust of the most successful diggers look insignificant, have thus been amassed by those who own the wells from which the oil is obtained in America.

Another mineral that has met with an increasing demand in recent years is nitrate of soda or nitre. This is now used by farmers and gardeners as a fertiliser. Beds of it occur in the desert country that lies on the coast of Chili, and is shipped from that country in vessels, the officers of which have to exercise great vigilance and caution owing to the explosive nature of their cargo. From the same district are shipped large quantities of guano, another valuable manure.

Strangest perhaps of all the mineral products of America is to be found in the West Indies. In the island of Trinidad there is a lake of pitch, from which is obtained a supply of asphalt, that nowadays is put to so many uses, such as the making of pavements, of damp-proof courses for houses, and also for waterproof roofing and flooring.

THE MISSOURI IRON MOUNTAINS.

THE iron region of Missouri, eighty miles south of St. Louis, embraces Pilot Knob, Iron Mountain, and Shepherd's Mountain. These are eastern spurs of the Ozark