

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1895

AROUND THE WOODPILE.

ONE OF THE FEATURES OF A NEW ENGLAND WINTER.

Well Drawn Pen Picture of Country Life in the Forest Regions—How Material for the Generous Wood Fire is Procured and Stored for Use.

There is a prosperous and hospitable look in a great woodpile at a farmhouse door. Logs with the moss of a hundred years on them, breathing the odors of the woods, have come to warm the inmates and all in comers. The white smoke of these chimneys is spicy with the smell of seasoned hard wood, and has a savor of roasts and stews that makes one hungry. If you take the back track on a trail of pitchy smoke, it is sure to lead you to a squalid shed with its starved heap of pine roots and half-decayed wood. Thrown down carelessly beside it is a dull axe, wielded as need requires with spiteful awkwardness by a slatternly woman, or laboriously upheaved and let fall with un- with uncertain stroke by a small boy.

The Yankees who possess happy memories of the great open fires of old time are growing few, but Whittier has embalmed for all time, in Snow-Bound, their comfort and cheer and picturesqueness. When the trees of the virgin forest cast their shadows on the newly risen roof there was no forecasting provision for winter. The nearest green tree was cut, and hauled, full length to the door, and with it the nearest dry one was cut to match the span of the wide fireplace; and when these were gone, another raid was made upon the woods; and so from hand to mouth the fire was fed. It was not uncommon to draw the huge backlogs on to the hearth with a horse, and sometimes a yoke of oxen were so employed. Think of a door wide enough for this; half of the side of a house to barricade against the savage Indians and savage cold! It was the next remove from a camp fire. There was further likeness to it in the tales that were told beside it, of hunting and pioneer hardships, while the eager listeners drew to a closer circle on the hearth, and the awed children cast covert, scared glances at the crouching and leaping shadows that thronged on the walls, and the great sam- kettles bubbled and seethed on its trammel, and the forgotten johnny-cake scorched on its tilted board.

As conveniently near to the shed as possible, the pile of sled-length wood is stretching itself slowly, a huge vertebrate, every day or two gaining in length; a joint of various woods with, great trunks at the bottom, then smaller ones, gradually growing less to the topping out of saplings and branches. Here is a sugar-maple, three feet through at the butt, with the scars of many tappings showing on its rough bark. The oldest of them may have been made by the Indians. Who knows what was their method of tapping? Here is the mark of the gouge with which early settlers drew the blood of the tree; a fashion learned, likely enough, from the aboriginal sugar-makers, whose narrowest stone gouges were as passable tools for this purpose as any they had for another. These more distinct marks show where the sugar of later years made its wounds. The old tree has distilled its sweets for two races and many generations of men, first into the bark buckets of Wabanakis, then into the ruler troughs of Yankee pioneers, then into the more convenient wide-bottomed wooden sap-tub; and at last, when the march of improvement has spoiled the wilderness of the woods with trim-built sugar houses and patent evaporators, the sap grips with resounding metallic tinkle into the dials of shining tin. Now the old maple has come to preform its last office, of warming and cooking the food for a generation that was unborn when it was yet a lusty tree.

Beside it lies a great wild cherry-tree that somehow escaped the cabinet maker when there was one in every town and cherry wood was in fashion. Its fruits mollified the harshness of the New England rum of many an old-time raising and husk- ing. Next is a yellow birch with a shaggy mane of rustling bark along its whole length, like a twelve-foot piece of the sea serpent drifted ashore and hauled inland; then a white birch, no longer white, but gray with a coating of moss, and black with belts of old peelings, made for the patching canoes and roofing of shanties.

With these lies a black birch, whose once smooth barkage has scaled and furrowed, and robbed of all its tenderness and most of its pungent, aromatic flavor. Some of it yet lingers in the younger top-most twigs which the hired man brings home to the little folks, who fall to gnawing them like a colony of beavers. By it is an elm, whose hollow trunk was the home of raccoons when it stood on its buttressed stump in the swamp. Near by is a beech, its smooth bark wrinkled where branches bent away from it, and blotched with spots of white and patches of black and gray lichen. It is marked with innumerable fine scratches,

the track of the generations of squirrels that have made it their highway; and among these, the wider apart and parallel nail-marks of a raccoon, and also the drilling of woodpeckers. Here, too, are traces of man's visitation, for distorted with the growth of years are initials, and a heart and dart that symbolized the tender passion of some one of the past who wandered, love-sick, in the shadow of the wood. How long ago did death's inevitable dart pierce his heart? Here he wrote a little of his life's history, and now his name and that of his mistress are so completely forgotten one cannot guess them by their first letters inscribed in the yesterday of the forest's years.

Above these logs, rolled up on skids or sled stakes, are smaller yet goodly bodies of white ash, full of oars for the water and rails for the land; and of black ash, as full of barrel hoops and basket splints, the ridged and hoary bark shagged with patches of dark moss; and a pine too knotty for sawing, with old turpentine boxes gashing its lower part, the dry resin in them half overgrown, but odorously still; and oaks that have borne their last acorns; and a shredded hickory that will never furnish another nut for boy or squirrel, but now, and only this once, flail handles, swingles, and ox bows, and helms for axes to hew down its brethren, and wood to warm its destroyers, and smoke and fry ham for them; and a basswood that will give the wild bees no more blossoms in July, hollow-hearted and unfit for sleigh or toboggan, wood straight ritted and so white that a chip of it will hardly show on the snow, but as unprofitable food for fires as the poplars beside it, which, in the yellow-green of youth or the furrowed gray of age, have shivered their last.

Still higher in the woodpile are white birches, yet in the smooth skin of their prime, that is fit to be fashioned into drink- ing-cups and berry-baskets, or to furnish a page for my lady's album. Here are hard- backs, some with grain winding like the grooves of a rifle. This is the timber the Indians made bows of, and which now serves the same purpose for the young savages whom we have always with us. There are sinewy blue beeches, slowly grown up from ox goads and the "beech seals," of Ethan Allen's Green Mountain Boys, to the girth of a man's thigh, a size at which they mostly stop growing. A smaller trunk, like yet unlike them, sets folks to guessing what kind of wood it is. He will hit the mark who fires at random the names "shadblow," "berry," or "am- lanchier." If the axe had been merciful, in early May its branches would have been as white with blossoms as it the last April snow still clung to them. Tossed and a-top of all is a jumbled thatch of small stuff,—saplings, impropitiously cut, short- lipped striped maple, and dogwood, the slender, tope-most lengths of great trees once the perches of hawks and crows, and such large branches as were not too crooked to lie still on the sled.

The snow-flies, harbingers and attend- ants of thaws, are making the snow in the woods gray with their restless myriads, when the sled makes its last trip across the slushy fields that are fast turning from white to dun under the March winds and shower and sunshine.

The completed woodpile basks in the growing warmth, as responsive to the touch of spring as if every trunk yet up- held its branches in the forest. The buds swell on every chance-spared twig, and sap starts from the severed ducts. From the pine drip slowly lengthening stalactites of amber, from the hickory thick beads of honeydew, and from the maples a flow of sweet that calls the bees from their hives across the melting drifts. Their busy hum makes an island of summer sound in the midst of the silent ebbing tide of winter.

As the days grow warmer, the woodpile invites idlers as well as busy bees and woodcutters. The big logs are comfortable seats to lounge on while whittling a pine chip, and breathing the mingled odors of the many woods freshly cut and the in- describable woody smell brought home in the bark and moss, and listening to the hum of the bees and harsher music of the saws and axe, the sharp, quick swish of the whip-saw the longer drawn and deeper ring of the cross-cut, and the regular beat of the axe, —fiddle, bass-viol, and drum, each with its own time, but all somehow in tune.

If the man comes who made the round of the barns in the fall and early winter, with his threshing-machine, having ex- changed it for a sawing machine, he makes short work of our woodpile. A day or two of stumbling clatter of the horses in their treadmill, and the buzzing and screeching of the whirling saw, gnaws it into a heap of blocks.

Our lounging-place and the children's wooden playground have gone, and all the picturesqueness and woodiness have disappeared as completely as when splitting has made only firewood of the pile. It will give warmth and comfort from the stove, but in that black sepulchre all its beauty is swallowed out of sight forever. If it can go to a generous fireplace, it is beautified again in the glowing and fading embers that paint innumerable shifting pictures, while the leaping flames sing the old song of the wind in the branches.—Rowland E. Robinson, in Atlantic Monthly.

CRANKS AS INVENTORS.

QUEER IDEAS REVEALED IN THE U. S. PATENT OFFICE.

Inventions in the Art of War Are Likely to Come to the Front Now—An Ohio Man's Cornplanter—Odd Notions that Have Proved Valuable.

Every event of importance brings down upon the examiners at the Patent Office a myriad of impossible inventions which their wild-eyed originators believe to be the greatest things in the world, writes a Wash- ington correspondent of the N. Y. Sun. It is therefore expected at the Patent Office that the possibility of a war with England will cause all the idle dreamers in the in- venting line to send new devices for killing men and sinking ships. There will be, if the war talk is continued, guns, ammunition war balloons, unsinkable ships, new kinds of armor, armed flying machines, and other similar devices, ninety-five per cent., of which will be absolutely worthless in the eyes of the examiners and will be rejected on this ground. In the United States such discrimination is shown that the business of inventing has reached the dignity of a profession, in which many men are earning more than mere livelihood.

Upon the model makers devolve the worry and bother of the visits of these in- ventors, and upon the examiners of the Patent Office the responsibility of selection. In certain classes of inventions, for a patent to be granted a working model must be furnished, and this rule, in the case of the perpetual-motion fiend and his ilk, saves the examiner a great deal of work and needless bother. In the case of ordinary freak inventions the matter is not so simple for some inventions that were once thought to be senseless have, after the expiration of the patents, come into use and are of extreme value. There are other cases where the insanity of the idea of the in- ventor is too apparent. A man not long ago invented a plough with a cannon at- tachment. If the farmer was attacked in the field at a distance from his home he could turn on the battery and discharge the attacking party. Another man came to the Patent Office with what he consid- ered to be the discovery of the century. This was nothing less than a new method of tempering iron. He was quite sure that as soon as the patent was granted he would have no difficulty in disposing of it to the great iron and steel makers of the world, and that guns and armor of a superior quality could be furnished in a short space of time through his idea. The tempering solution he proposed was Jamestown weed one ounce; apples, one ounce; turnips, two ounces; water, one gallon. The in- gredients were to be cooked, and the iron dipped into the mixture.

Perhaps one of the most amusing patents ever granted was issued on the claim of an Ohio man in 1883. He evidently had not lived a great length of time on a farm, for his invention of a new corn planter, while original to an extreme degree, could hardly be put into use. The picture accompanying the patent is a work of art. It repre- sents an old horse driven by a stout man who holds the lines nonchalantly in one hand, an expression of much pleasure on his face, while at his side trudges a small hairy dog of the yellow variety. To the horse's forelegs, just above the fetlocks, are attached two small boxes to contain the feed. Ropes are fastened to catches in the sides of these boxes and lead through pulleys attached to a small saddle over the horse's shoulder and back to the horse's hind legs. As the horse moved forward each step of the hind leg opened the seed boxes, and corn was sifted down into the holes made by the front hoofs. The verbi- age of the claim on this patent is as origi- nal as is the drawing:

First, I claim the combination substantially set forth with the cheap old horse A, to the forelegs of which are attached the boxes BB that are to be filled with corn.
2. I claim the pulleys CC in combination with the strings DD substantially as shown in the drawing.
3. I claim the guide E (a small iron shaft shaped like a rowlock), fastened above the horse's tail, through which the lines pass for the purpose set forth, and the stickler H to prevent the lowering of the tail.
4. I claim the fat driver F to prevent the said cheap horse from going too fast.
5. I claim the fat dog G merely as company for the driver.
6. I claim the worms (not shown) in combination with the crows KK substantially as shown in the drawing for the purpose set forth (a purpose not set forth.)

A man who was afraid of being buried alive claimed a patent for a coffin of pecu- liar shape. The coffin was connected with the air above by an opening containing a small spiral staircase. If the supposed dead person concluded to resurrect himself he could seize handles above his head and haul himself up, ascending the circular staircase at his convenience. If he was not strong enough to lift himself, a bell cord was situated near his hand by means of which help could be summoned from the neighboring office of the cemetery.

At first glance the idea of attracting noxious insects to imitation flowers where they could be killed by poisoned honey might seem absurd. Yet it is said that this

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scheme, a patent for which has been issued, works very well. A man out in California, patented a scheme for killing destructive insects on fruit trees a number of years ago. He surrounded the tree with a bal- loon-like affair, and then injected a gas noxious to the insects but harmless to the tree. People laughed at him and he was considered a crank. Two years ago, when the patent expired, people began to see what a good idea it was, and now the method is in extensive use in California. It will be seen, therefore, that patent ex- aminers are obliged to be both careful and discriminating in judging the merits and demerits of an application.

A man not long ago invented a balloon attached to a trolley wire. This balloon was presumably for purposes of long-dis- tance investigations by telescope in time of war. Underneath the trolley wire was a motor which operated two large wooden propellers sending the car along and pull- ing the balloon. Another man invented a "steam nigger" operated by an electric motor in the regions of the pit of the stomach. The invention's use is not set forth. S. S. Applegate invented an ar- rangement for waking himself up early in the morning. A series of corks dangled above the place his head ought to be in the bed, and, actuated by clockwork, made life a garden for the weary sleeper until in self-defence he was obliged to get up. Another invention of the same kind was a contrivance for dumping the hired girl out of bed at 5 a. m. This, too, was actuated by clockwork. It was not considered to be so polite or gentle a method as that of Mr. Applegate's. There was another in- vention intended to save the weary Ben- edick a few hours of slumber in the morning for a mechanism placed under the kitchen fire was supposed to light it at any hour desired. There is a very funny model at the Patent Office of a cat made of sheet iron operated by clockwork. It is intend- ed to be placed on the roof of a house, woodshed, or back wall in neighborhoods where the night is made hideous by ner- vous Thomases and Marias. At any touch of warlike demonstration on the part of its curious neighbors the clockwork sets the claws going all at once at a tremendous rate and there is a temporary rest for the weary. At the Patent Office there are models of Mark Twain's scrap book, the pages of which are already muddled, and Lincoln's device for getting vessels off shoal places. This consists of bags of in- flatable rubber which as occasion requires are blown up and the vessels raised.

There are innumerable inventions to prevent accidents by collision on railroads. One of these patented recently consists of a very elaborate device by means of which one train runs over the top of the other, both presumably continuing on their way uninterrupted by the chance encounter. There is another English invention having much the same idea. The application is different, however, for the front of the engines are built wedge-shaped with the wedge inclining more to one side than the other, by which means at the impact one train goes to one side of the track and the other train to the other side. Both trains are derailed, but the force of the collision is reduced and the loss of life brought to a minimum. Besides these inventions, there are modes of changing the shape of the features, modes of operating every conceivable thing on earth by windmills, modes of soaring through space, and travelling through fire and water without the least discomfort, modes of making steel and iron by simpler processes than have ever been dreamed of which uniformly do not work, and hundreds and even thou- sands of plans which have resulted in nothing but bother to anybody who has had anything to do with them. Certain methods have been patented for locating gold and silver by means of divining rods. Even methods of making gold are found. Here is an English recipe for manufactur- ing gold:

"Cut whole wheat straws into little square snips the width of a straw and mix

this with a quart measure of the grains. Measure out half a two-quart saucepanful and set it aside. Fill the saucepan three- quarters full of water and set it to boil over the fire. Pour in the mixture and let it boil two and a quarter hours, adding water at intervals. Then strain the liquor in thin layers in soup plates, and al- low the same to rest thirty-eight hours at a temperature of 46° Fahrenheit. Then slowly bake them dry and find the gold adhering to the plates."

But of all the vast army of cranks who besiege the model makers and the exam- iners of the Patent Office, the perpetua- motion fiend is the most troublesome of all. It is he who goes into the model maker's shop with a wild look in his eye, and, after peering cautiously about and swearing the model man to secrecy, brings out his senseless contrivance and sets it triumph- antly on the work bench. He is the man above all men whom the model maker dreads most. Fortunately a recent order in regard to perpetual motion inventions requires a working model to be shown to the examiner before a patent can be issued in this class of inventions, and it greatly simplifies the task of the examiner. He listens to the enthusiasm of his visitor, and then quietly asks for the model. Of course this does not work, and when the inventor excuses the lack of continuous action on some ground, he is told to bring it in again when it is fixed. He leaves the room protesting that it is all right. Sometimes he returns and sometimes he doesn't. When he doesn't the examiner is pleased: when he does the same proceeding is gone through with again.

Many inventors have come near—very near—the solution of the problem, but have not quite reached it. There was one crank who walked here all the way from Georgia. His perpetual motion machine consisted of a tall framework of uprights. In this framework was swung back and forth the trunk of a large tree. When the butt end of the tree was swung from one side to the other it struck a spring which was set loose and pushed the tree back to the other side. There another spring was set loose, and the action was supposed to be kept up forever, but it wasn't. Another man had a scheme which was more expan- sive and elaborate. He had a steam en- gine, a dynamo, a heat generator and water. The office of the steam engine was to run the dynamo, that of the dynamo to operate the heater; the steam was to be generated from the water, and the steam would run the steam engine. Another man had a propeller in the bow of a vessel. The propeller shaft ex- tended aft to a point opposite the paddle wheels, where the power developed by the propeller was communicated to them. He said that the forward motion of the vessel turning the propeller would develop enough speed to turn ten paddle wheels of similar size. Another man had a tipping board on a pivot, upon which a little car ran up and down. When the little car reached one end it released a spring and the tipping board was pushed up so that the car wen back again. This was accomplished, or proposed to be accomplished, by one spring winding another up while it ran down itself. One of the most ingenious perhaps of these perhaps, of these perpetu- al affairs is the invention of G. H. Furman. It consisted of an inner and outer wheel. The edges of the cogs in the inner wheel and they were supposed to fall on the outer wheel with such force as to send it around until the shot caught in its curve and fell into the inner wheel.

Dance Alphabet.

A dance alphabet has recently been in- vented by a Russian professor, who has de- voted fifty-two years of his life to teaching dancing in the Russian Imperial College. His invention consists of minute figures which represent every conceivable position the human legs can assume.

Proof Positive.

"I wonder if he really loves me?" she mused. Again she read his letter. "It must be so. I can make no sense of it."

HANGING TO A Instructions for Women to Stand in a St

Always face the sides o the front or rear. When lean slightly in direction going. When the car is lean toward the rear. Pla far apart as you comfortab a car turns a corner inclin ward inside curve of the r feasible grasp the strap on car over this inside curve, the strain to a minimum. of this particular rule is th frantic clutches and involun affection which the stander stow upon those seated.

The philosophy of such lows: You lean toward the starting car, so the does not acquire th simultaneously with speak, not be left b car restores the t posture. You le the car stops t momentum ac car was in then safe. I should adv is better adap

A couple of yo their way along through the rain a dressed man going looked back ratherly them.

"Well, what's that snapped out one of the stranger to hear then "Pardon me," he ple his hat; "I had no intent but I was just wonderi girl it was that came dow day with a hole in her now. Thanks, Good Francisco Post.

No Rever-ible Ar

"If you would like so fine," said the art deale une Turner I shall be h "A picture that's pair good enough for me, Boodle, the wealthy c ing the presuming trad glance, "et it's well dc

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