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ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, MAY 15 1897.

ARE MADE OF VENEER.

MILLIONS OF BASKETS FOR BERRIES, AND CRATES FOR FRUIT.

All Sorts, From Pie Plates and Butter Dishes to Barrels for Peas—Machines That Shave Logs—Girls Get 85 Cents a Thousand for Shaping Baskets.

When you buy a pie, a pound or two of butter, or strawberries or other small fruits for dessert, the grocer sends them home to you each in its own neat wooden plate, cup, or basket, with no extra charge for the package and with no injunction upon you to return or even to care for the package. You use the package for other purposes, burn them, or pitch them into the refuse barrels, probably without a thought as to the source from which they came, the ingenuity of their manufacture, or the great convenience which they offer to yourself and the dealer in the improvement over the methods of handling goods which were in vogue only a few years ago.

The next time one of these neat wooden packages comes into your hand give it a moment's attention, and ten to one it will set you wondering at the skill and ingenuity which is evident in its production and at the cheapness of a product which can be given away with each few cents' worth of groceries or fruit. Butter plates are in fact so cheap that if the grocer weighs the thin wooden dish as part of the butter and sells it at the price of butter he is making a larger profit upon it than he makes on the butter itself. The manufacture of these clever wooden packages has all grown up within a few years, but the use for them has grown to such an extent in this short time that the numbers of them sold every year can only be computed by getting into the hundreds of millions. The manufacture of them has become a very important industry in communities where perhaps little or nothing else in the manufacturing way could be successful, and it is computed that between 25,000 and 30,000 persons are employed in this industry. The making of the packages goes on during the whole year, but the great market time for them is just beginning, commencing with the first shipments of early fruits and garden truck from the market gardens of the South. It is the farmers who nowadays pay for the packages in which we buy our fruit and vegetables, and, little as these packages cost, they form a serious tax upon the farmer at the present prices of his products.

The simplest of all these packages is the pie plate—a mere circle of veneer stamped into form in a hot die. Next comes the butter dish, which, if you undo one and lay it out flat, you will discover was cut from a single piece of veneer and bent into form along lines partly cut through it. It is held in its final form either by being crimped at the edges between bits of tin or stitched with small wire staples which are driven through and clinched. A more complicated piece of work is the berry basket. The butter dish needs little strength, for its duty is done in going from the shop to the purchaser's house, and it does not matter that a cross-grain section of wood forms the sides. But the berry basket must be strong enough to carry its load through the rough handling of perhaps hundreds of miles of railroad travel, two or three cartings, and finally, perhaps, the hawking of the berries through the streets. If you examine one of these you will find it made of two pieces cut with ingenuity, so that when they are folded and crossed they form a basket, with the grain of the wood running endwise in each piece, and these pieces are finally fastened together with tacks or staples and bound around the edge with a double strip of a veneer of tough wood.

Go to the fruiterer, the grocer or green grocer, or the florist and you will find each using baskets or cups made in similar ways and of veneers. The foundation of this modern package business lies in the invention of a machine which shaves logs of wood into continuous strips of veneer instead of the old way of sawing the veneers out like boards. That machine was invented about twenty years ago, and since then it has turned whole forests into pliable strips of wood of the thickness of ordinary cardboard and as capable of manipulation, while possessing qualities which makes them available for purposes for which cardboard would be utterly useless.

As could be guessed easily, the manufacture of fruit packages has to be carried on at places which are right at the edges of the forests, while at the same time near to or upon transportation lines and in the vicinity of towns and villages. Not many spots combine all of these features, and the men who own the principal factories make a matter of mystery of the exact locations of their works. Where poplar, beech, and birch and elm and sweet gum grow, there are made the baskets. The crates in which berries are sent to market are made where white spruce grows. So it one were to hunt along the outskirts of the farming districts, in New Hampshire, New York, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and in Michigan every once in a while he would find a little town in which perhaps 200 persons were employed in making fruit and berry packages. Twenty-five or thirty of these would be men, who are hauling in the logs from the woods and doing the heavier parts of the factory work, and all the others girls and boys or women, who do all the lighter work.

The process of manufacture begins at once with the barking of the logs The logs are then sawed into sections of about 2½ feet in length and immediately plunged into a long vat of boiling water or sealed into tanks where live steam is fed to them. They are steamed or boiled for twenty-four hours. A crane picks them up one by one and lands them between the centres of a burning lathe, where they are automatically centred and clinped fast. As they begin to turn a broad sharp knife as long as the logs comes up and slices the log spirally into one immense ribbon of wood. As the ribbon glides over the knife rollers catch it and feed it under fixed knives which slice it into the right widths for basket parts. Other knives, set so as to cut but part way through it, makes the marks upon which the parts are afterward folded. Other knives set in the faces of the rollers cut the ribbon into proper lengths. These pieces of veneer still have to be shaped, and this is done by passing them between other rollers set with knives.

The work of the men ends with the turning out of the veneers. Now girls take the formed pieces. Whether they are making berry or peach baskets, the next process is about the same. Each girl has before her a wooden form, shaped like the basket she is to make and banded with iron where the tacks or staples are to be driven. She deftly folds a strip of tough birch or elm about the form for the inner band, bends over this the pieces which form the body, and over these another band of tough wood. If she is making tacked baskets, she already has her mouth full of tacks, and she takes these one by one and drives them through the veneers, where they clinch against the iron bands of the form. Those baskets which are fastened with staples are tacked by a machine which carries a coil of wire which it bends and cuts into staples and drives into place almost as rapidly as a sewing machine stitches while the girl holds the form under it.

Some girls will make about 3,000 berry baskets in a day, and the average worker can make about 2,000. They get 85 cents a thousand for the work. For peach baskets they get 75 cents a hundred. The bottoms of these baskets are round pieces of wood, and the machine which cuts these is a clever piece of work. It is a saw made of a cylinder of steel with the teeth on its bottom edge. Boards are piled up a dozen or more high and passed under the saw. Each time it cuts down it cuts clear through the pile, and soon turns the whole pile into round blocks.

In other parts of the factory crates are being sawed out and nailed together. Each well-made crate will have sixty or seventy nails in it, be fitted with hinges, and a hasp for the cover, and yet one of these with thirty-two quart berry baskets in it sells for only twenty-six cents. Better crates which are meant to be returned to the farmer, and are provided with metal corner pieces for strength and are made of heavier material, sell for a few cents more. Few of the baskets are ever used a second time, and it is estimated that 200,000,000 berry baskets alone are used in this country every year.

The 16 quart peach baskets, which are also used for vegetables, sell for 3½ cents each. They find their way into use mostly from the peach orchards of Delaware, New Jersey and Georgia, and in good peach years the number that is sold is enormous. It runs into millions. The neat crates and baskets in which grapes are sent to market are another form of package of which many thousands are used. These usually consists of the crate and 8 baskets, the whole holding 40 pounds of grapes. Crate and baskets can be bought complete for 14 cents. Verbena baskets, with double wire handles, are used in great quantities by florists. These are more expensive. They cost about $14 a thousand or nearly 1½ cents each. Of butter dishes, ranging in size from the 1-pound to those holding 5 pounds each, it is estimated that 200,000,000 a year are used, and these cost from 65 cents a thousand for the smaller ones to $2,25 a thousand for big ones bound all along the two ends with tin. Pie dishes are used, too, by the million, and they do not cost as much as the sweetening in the pies.

There are many forms of baskets and crates and some attempt has been made to make even larger packages of veneers. One of these, a half-barrel covered basket for peas and such light articles, has proven successful. These are sold for 11 cents each. A barrel is also made of veneers, the side in two pieces, hinged upon metal hoops. The parts are shipped flat. One thousand five hundred or more barrels can be got into a car and it is easy to set them up into form. Having no bilge, the filled barrels pack closely together and look shapely, but the lack of bilge leaves them weak and they do not carry heavy fruit without working and bruising the fruit.

Another kind of package formed an important article of manufacture in Maine before the great frosts destroyed all the orange groves in Florida a few years ago. Florida at that time used 2,500,000 orange crates a year. The sides of these came from the Maine woods and the ends were from Florida's native woods. Next winter it is expected that a new growth of trees will begin to bear in Florida, and another demand will come for orange crates.

BOB CASEY'S TERRIBLE RIDE.

An Awful Experience That Resulted Sadly for the Victim.

Some years ago Fort Benton had a daily mail from Helena. The stage-coach brought it three days of the week, and on the alternating days the mail-sack was brought on horseback or in a light wagon. The wagon was driven by a young boy, Bob Casey by name. This boy knew the road perfectly, and was warmly dressed, and perhaps his people were not old enough to the country to know that he could be in danger from blizzards.

One Friday morning, an hour after Bob had left Sun River Landing for Benton, a blizzard of the wildest description set in. In a few moments the roads were obliterated and rendered exactly like all the rest of the boundless plain. Bob had no idea which way he was going, and decided that his only chance was to give the horse his head and let him go where he would. The mail was smell and the wagon light,—and so was Bob,—and he had no doubt the animal would pull through somewhere.

But before long the horse was as hopelessly lost as the boy. He wandered and wondered, and found no way out of the desert. The blizzard increased in intensity, and as Bob was well wrapped on his seat, he could do no better than continue to sit there and keep the horse going.

This he did throughout the whole of a dreadful day, that seemed to Bob, and doubtless to the horse, too, longer than an ordinary week. At last night came on; and just at this time Bob and the horse struck a considerable patch of tall grass, the tops of which came up through the snow. Here Bob decided to camp for the night. He could at least feed the horse with the grass, though there was no food for him.

Though the storm still raged with unabating fury, Bob succeeded in making a fire by pulling and matting the tall grass, and got through the night alive.

In the morning the sun shone brightly, though the fine, powdery snow still filled the air. Bob could not make out where he was; nothing was plain to him except that he was far from the road to Benton, and that not a single familiar object met his gaze; but he still trusted to the horse to find the way. Mounting his seat, cold and very hungry, he gave the reins to the horse and bade him 'go on.'

On he did go, but not in the right direction. The endless march of the day before was repeated. The weather was frightfully cold. Here and there, where a bunch of tall grass came through the snow, the horse stopped to browse, and Bob let him do so as often as he wished.

Another night came, and another day, and days and nights after these, and still Bob and the horse and wagon wondered, getting farther and farther away from civilization all the time; the horse supporting life by browsing the grass, but Bob slowly growing weaker and freezing, for the weather continued intensely cold.

Meantime the people of Benton had started out in search of the missing boy. The whole region between Sun River and Benton was thoroughly searched, but no trace found of either horse or boy. A week after the disappearance the search was abandoned. The people had no doubt that boy and horse had perished in the storm, and been covered by the drifting snow.

But valuable letters were in the mail-bag, and ten days after Bob had disappeared some of the parties interested in these letters employed Billy Rowe to go out in search of the bag—not of Bob.

Billy went on horseback, and rode far and wide. Passing over some rising ground, he thought he perceived a moving object in a distant coulee, and went toward it. As he approached he saw that it was a horse, slowly drawing a light wagon, and in the wagon was seated a small human figure. At length Billy saw that it was Bob Casey and the mail-wagon.

Bob seemed to have settled down to sleep; but now and then he would straighten up, grab the reins, and attempt to guide the horse, only to drop back into his seat a moment later apparently unconscious.

Rowe overhauled them and shook the boy. He could get no answer, but at any rate the boy was alive. Rowe wrapped him up anew, and started for Twenty Eight Miles Springs, the nearest place. Here he gave the boy stimulants, and then went on to Benton. At the hotel the speechless and almost lifeless boy was placed in a sitting posture, with his feet in a tub of cold water He could eat nothing, but light stimulants were forced down his throat, and in that position he slept for thirty six hours being occasionally aroused for stimulants.

He recovered but it was found necessary to amputate both feet. A big purse was made up for him and he was sent east to school.

More Natural.

The Rev. Walter Colton, author of 'Ship and Shore' and other books, gave a most forcible illustration of the character of an officer on board the ship to which he was attached as chaplain.

The officer was always meddling with other people's business, and was seldom in his own place. Consequently he was most unpopular with the sailors.

One them, goaded to unusual irritation, said one day, 'I do believe that at the general resurrection the lieutenant will be found getting out of somebody else's grave!'

NIGHT-TERRORS

Some of the Conditions Which Give Rise to This Condition.

In childhood the sleep is sometimes disturbed by what are called night-terrors. A child that has gone to bed apparently well and for an hour or two has slept soundly, or perhaps been slightly restless, suddenly starts with a piercing cry.

He is found, seemingly wide-awake, sitting up in bed or standing in the middle of a room, trembling, screaming and looking intently at some imaginary object. His skin is moist and his hands clutch each other or anything within reach; and when spoken to he does not appear to understand. He calls for his mother or nurse, but does not know them when they come, and often alternately clings to and repulses them.

After a time, lasting from a few minutes to an hour, or even longer, the child recognizes those about him and gradually falls into a sleep from which he does not awake until morning. These attacks may vary in frequency; they may occur every night, every few nights, or at longer and somewhat irregular intervals. The conditions which cause them are sometimes easily discovered, but frequently no immediate cause can be found. As a rule, however, night-terrors occur in children who are delicate and excitable.

An attack is often caused by a disturbance of the digestive organs, resulting from a weak digestion or improper food. Other frequent causes are a catarrhal condition of the nose or throat, enlarged tonsils, morbid excitement of the mind during the day, fever, worms, teething, irritation of the skin, and ill-ventilated sleeping-rooms. Fright is one of the least common causes of this disturbance.

Night-terrors of themselves result in little, if any, serious harm; but as an indication of a nervous organization they are most valuable. They have been likened to the 'slacken speed' signal of the engineer, a signal which must always be heeded. An essential part of the treatment of this disturbance, then, is a strict attention to the child's surroundings and a careful supervision of his training to prevent, as far as possible, any undue mental or nervious strain. Equally important is it that his food should be easily digested and nutritious, but not stimulating, and that an effort should be made to improve his general health by bathing, and exercise in the open air. Whenever indigestion, catarrh, enlarged tonsils, or any of the conditions which might cause this disturbance are present, they should receive their appropriate treatment. Children who, with the exception of an occasional attack of night-terrors, are apparently in perfect health, are frequently cured of the attacks by eating a supper of bread and milk.