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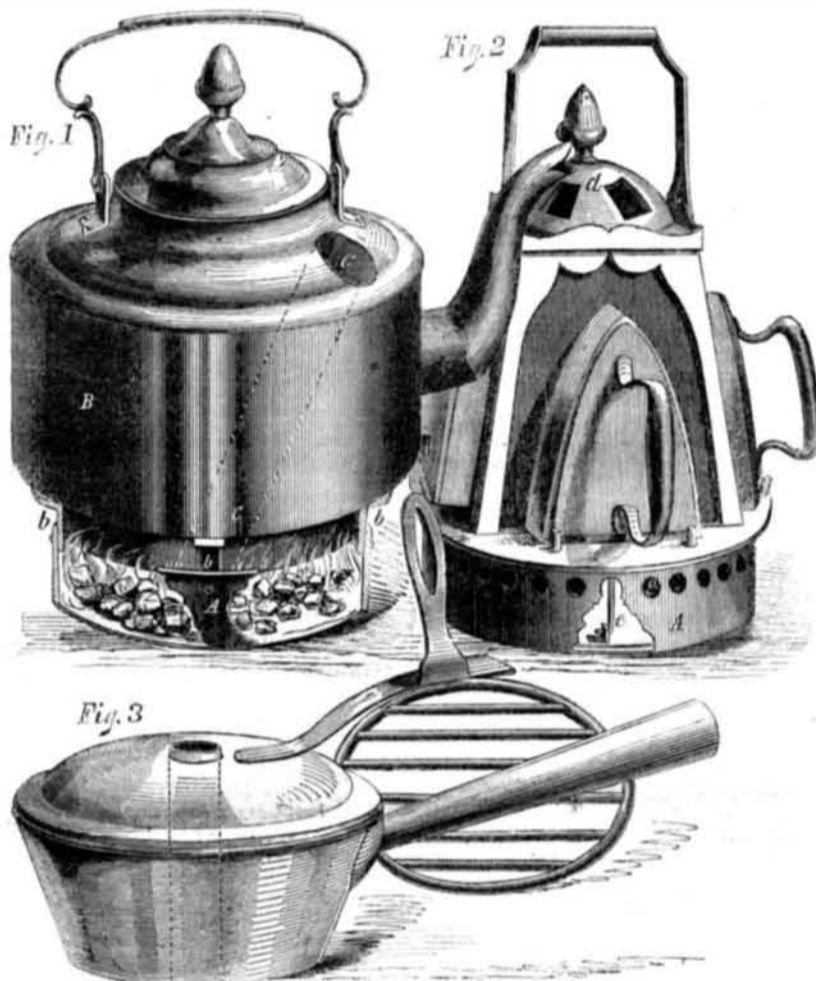
Peat for Fuel.

In low situations, where the water has no free outlet, and yet where it cannot collect to form ponds or lakes, certain small plants, peculiar to such situations, accumulate and grow. When these decay, they are converted into that substance called *peat*, which consists almost entirely of roots, stems and leaves matted together. In some countries, the accumulation of such vegetable matter covers large tracts of several miles in extent, and are called "peat bogs," such as in Ireland; we call them peat meadows and peat swamps. These bogs vary in depth from a few feet to several yards, and are, in general too soft for the foot of man to tread, yet there are passable foot-roads through most of them. Peat is employed for fuel in the greater part of Ireland, in several districts of France, Germany, and Holland, and in the Highlands of Scotland. The substance is soft when found in the bog, and is easily cut, with a long narrow spade, into pieces resembling bricks; these, when exposed to the sun and air, become dry and hard, and are very inflammable. The quality of peat is very variable, just like coal. The best kind is compact, and nearly black; the inferior kind is light, and of a brown color. The lower strata of deep peat bogs make the best peat, because more compact; and they more nearly resemble bituminous coal in character.

Owing to the great quantity of ashes which peat produces, it has, until within a few years, been little used in furnaces or grates; it was, therefore, generally burned like wood, on the old-fashioned hearths, on *andirons*. In Germany, France and Ireland, peat has, of late, been subjected to severe pressure, like clay in brick-making, and thereby reduced to one third its natural bulk, by which process it has been rendered nearly as compact as coal, and as available for all purposes in which fuel is employed. Peat can be charred like wood, and its charcoal is reputed to be of a very superior character for making iron and steel.

There are quite a number of peat bogs or meadows in various sections of our country, to which little attention has heretofore been paid, owing to the abundance of wood fuel; the time has now arrived when, of necessity, more attention must be paid to them. In Worcester, Mass., peat has been brought into use by Messrs. Washburn & Co., and has proved more valuable than was expected. From a peat meadow, (as described on page 379, Vol. XII, SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN,) they have taken out and used about 2,000 cords, which, when well seasoned, produces as much heat as an equal bulk of dry oak wood. We have no doubt that every peat meadow in our country might be rendered valuable for fuel, especially by subjecting it to pressure, a process, we believe, which has not yet been tried among us.

WESTLAKE'S SUMMER STOVE.



In the heat of summer, although we never need any fire in our rooms, we often want hot water for tea, coffee, and similar purposes; flat irons require to be heated, and food cooked. To effect these desired ends without creating much or any external heat, is the aim of the simple little contrivance shown in our engravings.

The invention consists in having a little iron plate box, A, having a number of holes, *a*, punched in its rim, as in Fig. 2, or suspended by little hooks, *b*, as in Fig. 1. This box is placed in the hole in the stove, and a pint of charcoal is put into it, a match applied, and, if hot water is required, the kettle, B, (having a pipe, C, shown by the dotted lines open at both ends, passing through it,) placed on the fire, the pipe feeding the fire with air. A patent was obtained on the peculiar construction of the kettle on the 11th of August, 1857.

Defective Ocean Steamers.

When the steamer *Central America* was lost in the gulf of Florida, a universal howl of indignation was heard throughout the whole country in reference to the bad management on board, as expressed in some letters of passengers who had been rescued. The alleged bad management pointed to the engineering department as acting independent and contrary to the orders of the lamented commander, Lieut. Hearndon. The report of a committee of merchants, in this city, appointed to examine into the causes of this disaster, virtually laid the whole blame on the engineering department. In opposition to such views, the Inspectors of Steamers for this district, who licensed the engineers, reported that they had examined into the case, and found that the engineers did their duty, and so they gave them a complete whitewashing.

The inventor states that one pint of charcoal burnt in this stove will boil five pints of water in twelve minutes, and yet not in any way warm the room. A saucepan with a tube through it, as seen in Fig. 3, may be applied onto the stove, or a gridiron of the shape seen in the same figure. Fig. 2 shows the invention applied to an apparatus for heating flat irons, the heater, C, being attached to the box by the little hook, *e*, and instead of a tube there is a shut-off arrangement, *d*, on its top. In winter these utensils can be placed on the stove itself; so they are equally useful in winter or summer. Those persons who have tried them pronounce them excellent in their operation.

The State Fair at Janesville, Wis., awarded a premium to the inventor, W. Westlake, of Milwaukee, Wis., who will furnish any further information.

Basing our conclusions on such reports, we would be forced to say "nobody was to blame for the disaster." We, however, have very little confidence in the majority of reports on questions in which those who are appointed as the examiners have any interest; such reports are generally unreliable.

One fact has recently come to light, which goes to show that the *Central America* was, in all likelihood, unseaworthy, and unfit to have been employed for conveying passengers; also that a large number of other vessels, which should not be allowed to go to sea, are in the same condition.

On the 12th inst., Mr. Benjamin, in the United States Senate, brought in a bill to amend the law relating to changing the names of vessels, and in doing so, he stated that he had a list of ninety-two vessels, the names of which had been changed within

eighteen months. Thirty-one of them had either been lost at sea, or the means of loss of life and property. The names were changed to deceive the public, when the vessels were rotten and unseaworthy. He instanced the *Central America*, whose name was changed from *George Law*. One vessel had been condemned and her name changed three times, and she went to sea and was never heard of afterward.

The bill was passed. Good!

Statistics of Food.

In Hunt's *Merchant's Magazine* for the present month, there are some interesting statistics, from which we cull the following information:—

"In the thirty-nine years from 1819 to 1858, the average price of mess beef has been \$10 19 per barrel, and mess pork, \$14 63. Rice has averaged \$3 67 per 100 lbs, and coffee 10½ cents per lb., while tea has maintained a price of 50 cents per pound. In the United Kingdom, in 1841, there was an average of one pound six ounces of tea, one pound one ounce of coffee, and seventeen pounds of sugar consumed by each individual; while in 1856, there were two pounds four ounces of tea, one pound four ounces of coffee, and twenty-eight pounds two ounces of sugar consumed by each person."

We look upon these facts with gladness, because they indicate the replacing of temperate and healthy beverages for John Bull's well-known drinks, beer and whisky.—Eds.

Skeleton Flowers and Leaves.

The leaves and flowers of plants are all formed of a frame-work, beautiful and delicate in the extreme, composed of woody fiber, corresponding to the skeleton of animals; and between the interstices of these fibers is gathered the softer material, forming the leaf or flower. If the leaf be taken and placed in water, and left in the same water for from three to four months, all this soft matter decays, and the stem may be taken in the hand, and the refuse shaken away. There remains behind a network or skeleton of the original object, which can be bleached with a little lime, and it forms a most lovely decoration for the mantel-piece of the tasteful. The leaves of the ivy, the stink-pod of the stromonium, (which is now to be found exactly ripe for steeping), the oak leaf, and, in fact, every production of the vegetable world, are not only applicable, but show themselves with greater beauty when skeletonized than when perfect.

The Soulages Collection.

The Mayors of various towns in the pottery districts of England have petitioned the Chancellor of the Exchequer that this beautiful and rare collection of specimens of the ceramic art may be purchased for the use of the nation, as they believe that such a museum would tend to improve the decorative manufactures of the country. A union of the art-trades has been formed in London to bring the matter before the House of Commons immediately on its re-assembling. The collection was formed by a French gentleman, M. Soulages, and it is now for sale by his representatives.

Sweet Cream for Chapped Hands.

A correspondent—C. P. S. Wardwell, of Lake Village, N. H.—informs us that he has found sweet cream the best remedy for chapped hands he ever tried, after trying a great number of specifics to effect this object.