

agent. I do not wish to be understood to underrate the disastrous effects that would, probably, and have occurred from an accidental explosion; only to say that I think, with properly made, unfrozen nitro glycerin, the cans packed in plaster of Paris, as the law requires, it is safer than powder. I speak of its being unfrozen, because during the use of it on this road, from last September until the middle of January, the only instance in which any glycerine was exploded without the aid of powder, was a small frozen piece that was crushed between two stones. Nitro glycerin was placed in the hands of six different foremen, and by them in the hands of the men; was carried unprotected in sixty pound cans up and down the line, frozen and unfrozen, in dump carts; and was generally treated with the recklessness with which Irishmen treat powder. And as blasting material is usually used on roads, it must be the safest of the three; for, as there is no necessity of any tamping but water tamping, if a charge miss fire, there is no solid tamping to cut out—at the danger of the driller's life—as with powder. For if water has been used, another cartridge can be dropped in in a minute; or if sand has been used, a portion of it can be scraped out, and a small charge of glycerin poured in and fired on top of the old charge. Besides which, gun cotton will ignite and explode not only from a light spark, but from a flame, thus making it the most dangerous of the three; while powder, though it cannot be ignited without the aid of a spark, or something red hot, can be ignited by any spark, such as one flying from drills or from rocks falling; and nitro glycerin cannot be exploded, even if ignited, unless confined, and in that case a spark could hardly reach it.

In regard to the accidents that have occurred: the one in New York almost surely occurred from the nitro glycerin having leaked into the sawdust in which it was packed, and oxidation and combustion followed, as surely as if oil had been put on the same sawdust, and it put in a warm place, only the combustion was rather more rapid. I have been informed that the accident at the express office in San Francisco occurred from the same cause. As there is now a law against transporting nitro glycerin in glass, or in any mode except in tin cans, packed with plaster of Paris in wooden boxes, we will probably have no more such accidents.

At Aspinwall, a case of nitro glycerin was dropped into the hold of the steamship; few of us would have cared to have been on the deck when a barrel of gunpowder was treated in the same way. At Bergen, red hot iron was brought in contact with tin and solder that melts at from 360° to 475° F., and nitro glycerin would be of little use as a blasting material if it had not proved disastrous. At the risk of reiteration, I will sum up the advantages possessed by nitro glycerin over gunpowder and gun cotton.

1st, That, being of greater strength, there is a great saving in drillers' wages, as fewer holes have to be made, and the charge of glycerin can be put into the rock much more compactly. For instance, if, to break up a certain rock, 1 foot of depth in the bore hole was required with glycerin, 13 feet would be required with powder, which would necessitate 6 feet of additional drilling if but 1 hole was used; but 13 feet of powder could not be exploded in a 2 inch or 2½ inch hole so that it would be effective, on account of the slowness with which it burns, so that additional holes would have to be drilled, with in each an allowance of at least ⅓ of the depth for tamping. With gun cotton there would not be so much difference.

2d, That nitro glycerin is not injured, either permanently or temporarily, by water or moisture, which enables us to use water tamping, a great saving of time and risk of life, impossible with either of the others; and it can be stored in damp cellars, or under water, without the necessity of drying it before using, as in the case of gun cotton, or having it ruined, as with gunpowder.

And lastly, the difficulty of exploding it renders it the least dangerous to human life.

EFFECT OF ARSENIC UPON APPLES.

Some years since a man was indicted by the Grand Jury of a western county for an attempt to kill by poisoning with arsenic. He was convicted, and sentenced to be imprisoned, at hard labor, in the State Prison at Auburn, for the term of twenty years, and was subsequently pardoned, his innocence having been satisfactorily established.

It was charged in this case that the arsenic was administered by inserting it into cuts made in the sides of apples, four in number. It was proved that the cuts were made on the 22d of September, and that the apples were laid away in a drawer until the 11th of October in the same year, during which time the accused was absent, and, of course, had no access to the fruit. Nothing remarkable was discovered in the taste of the fruit or its appearance. Two of the apples examined by a professional Toxicologist, had slits in their sides which contained crystals of white arsenic amounting to at least one grain on the cut surface of a single apple. The eating of the fruit was followed by all the symptoms of arsenical poisoning, but, fortunately, by timely measures, death was prevented.

Some doubts having arisen upon the sufficiency of the evidence, investigations were commenced to ascertain the effect of arsenic upon apples and other pulpy fruits. The results of these investigations were as follows:

First, when apples have smooth slits made in them with a sharp instrument, the changes which take place in them are very slight, during an interval of two or three weeks, especially so if they are (as was proved in the case cited) in good keeping condition when the slits are made; Secondly, when arsenic—in the form of arsenious acid—is inserted into the slits, the cuts begin to open in the course of from two to five

days; the edges are separated from one eighth to one fourth of an inch, or even more, showing very plainly the white arsenic within. At the same time the skin adjacent to the cut begins to be discolored, and, together with the pulp beneath, turns dark brown, both in appearance and consistency resembling the ordinary slow decay of the apple. This change begins to show itself on the second or third day, and then makes steady and regular progress, extending itself on each side of the cut so rapidly that by the eighth day it attains a width of from five eighths to seven eighths of an inch; by the sixteenth day, one and a half to two inches, and by the twenty-first day, one half or more of the apple will be affected with decay.

The experiments were conducted with great care, upon a great number and variety of apples, and the results were singularly uniform. Experiments upon apples baked with arsenic placed in a slit upon their sides, show that the arsenic, in such cases, is discolored. In the case cited it was proved that one of the apples which was baked had white arsenic in it. It therefore must have been inserted after it was baked.

In this case, it will be remembered that the apples were placed in a drawer on the 22d of September, remaining there nineteen days, and as the accused was absent during the whole of that time, the charge could only be sustained upon the theory that he had inserted the arsenic on the 22d of September. If that had been the case the apples would have been unfit to eat upon the 11th day of October, the time when the apples were eaten.

This action of arsenic upon the pulp of fruits contrasts singularly with its action upon animal tissues, which, it is well known, are preserved by its action.

Iodine and Carbolic Acid.

A communication to the *American Journal of Pharmacy* contains a description of a new solution containing iodine, carbolic acid, and glycerin, which is claimed to possess superior therapeutic virtues. The solution is thus prepared: Take of the compound tincture of iodine, forty-five minims; crystallized carbolic acid, fused, six minims; glycerin, eight drachms; distilled water, five ounces.

The iodine color gradually disappears, and the solution eventually becomes colorless. The time necessary to complete this change depends on the temperature—at 60° Fah, eight to ten days are required; if the cork of the bottle is secured, and the mixture exposed in a water bath to a temperature of from 90° to 100° Fah., the change will be effected in eight or ten hours. The change takes place as quickly in diffused light as in direct sunshine, provided the temperatures are equal. The solution, exposed to sunshine, becomes somewhat turbid, and deposits a muddy precipitate.

The change is due entirely to the carbolic acid, glycerin alone, under similar conditions, effecting no change in the iodine solution, while carbolic acid acts equally well with or without the presence of glycerin.

The character of the change is probably the transformation of the iodine into iodide of formyle (iodoform) at the expense of the carbon atoms of the carbolic acid.

The solution possesses antiseptic and stimulant properties in a marked degree, and has met with favor as an application in the form of injections, gargles, and lotions "in cases of sore throat, ozæna, abscesses in the ear, and foul or indolent ulcers."

It has also been recommended as an injection in cases of internal hemorrhoids, and by inhalation for throat and bronchial affections. When used for inhalation the glycerin can be omitted.

DESTRUCTIVE FIRE FROM FIREWORKS.—The Lawrence Academy, at Groton, Mass., was entirely consumed by fire on the afternoon of the 4th inst. The library, apparatus, etc., were mostly saved. The fire was supposed to have caught from Chinese crackers thrown upon the piazza by a boy. The loss on the building is estimated at \$4,000, entirely covered by insurance. A rocket also exploded in the steeple of St. John's Episcopal Church, in Buffalo, on the 4th. The structure was soon afterward wrapped in flames, which destroyed it with all its valuable contents. We trust the severe lessons which are thus annually received will result in the gradual substitution of more sensible methods of celebrating the birthday of American Independence. In marked contrast to the above we notice that on the 4th of July Mr George W. Childs, of the *Philadelphia Ledger*, gave a "Continental Hotel" dinner to about 150 newsboys in the press room of the *Ledger* building.

It is said that letter envelopes were made about forty years ago, by Brewer, a bookseller in Brighton, England. He employed a pattern made of metal plates for cutting out the sizes, and the demand for the envelopes became so great that he was obliged to employ a London firm to manufacture them.

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

COLLEGE COURANT. Yale.

We are in receipt of the *College Courant*, published weekly at New Haven, Conn. It appears in a new elegant dress and enlarged form, and its prospectus and able list of contributors give sufficient promise of a brilliant future. It has our best wishes.

THE WORKSHOP, No. 5, published by E. Steiger, No. 17 North William street, contains an article upon bookbinding and fancy leather goods, also several ornamental designs for various purposes.

THE ZOETROPE, OR WHEEL OF LIFE.—We have already noticed this unique optical instrument, which has afforded so much amusement to old and young, and although an American invention, its sale has already become quite extensive in Europe. Sets of figures are furnished with each wheel, and the changes which its rotation effects are both amusing and instructive. The Zoetrope is manufactured by Milton Bradley & Co., Springfield, Mass.

MANUFACTURING, MINING, AND RAILROAD ITEMS.

GREASING WAGONS.—But few people are aware that they do wagons and carriages more injury by greasing too plentifully than in any other way. A well made wheel will endure common wear from ten to twenty-five years, if care is taken to use the right kind and proper amount of grease; but if this matter is not attended to, they will be used up in five or six years. Lard should never be used on a wagon, for it will penetrate the hub and work its way out around the tenons of the spokes, and spoil the wheel. Tallow is the best lubricator for wood axle-trees, and castor oil for iron. Just grease enough should be applied to the spindle of a wagon to give it a light coating; this is better than more, for the surplus put on will work out at the ends, and be forced by the shoulder-bands and nut-washers into the hub around the outside of the boxes. To oil an iron axle-tree, first wipe the spindle clean with a wet cloth with spirits of turpentine, and then apply a few drops of castor oil near the shoulder and end. One teaspoonful is sufficient for the whole.

TO REMOVE THE TASTE OF NEW WOOD.—A new keg, churn, bucket, or other wooden vessel, will generally communicate a disagreeable taste to anything that is put into it. To prevent this inconvenience, first scald the vessel well with boiling water, letting the water remain in it until cold; then dissolve some pearlash or soda in lukewarm water, adding a lime to it, and wash the inside of the vessel well with this solution. Afterward scald it well with plain hot water, and rinse it with cold water before you use it. The reason for this is the ready combination of resinous matters with alkalines to form compounds soluble in water. The resinous substances of wood, while new, cause a disagreeable taste and odor in substances kept in wooden vessels.

RAILROAD ENTERPRISE.—It is less than half a century since the first railroad in the United States was commenced—the Baltimore and Ohio, in 1828—and now there are forty thousand miles of railway within the limits of the country. The Mohawk and Hudson Railroad, in New York, was the second road built, and the South Carolina Railroad was the third. The road from Boston to Albany was commenced in 1841, and a continuous line of railway between Boston and New York was formed in 1849, by the completion of the New York and New Haven road. The Erie and the Hudson River lines were completed in 1851, the Michigan Southern and Michigan Central the following year, and in 1853 an unbroken line of one thousand miles of railroad between Boston and New York and Chicago was formed. Between 1849 and 1857, there were 15,813 miles of road constructed, and the railroad enterprise gained such an impetus from the success of those eight years that no obstacle has since been able to offer anything more than a temporary check. At the close of the year 1857 there were 1,093 miles of railroad in the United States, and at the close of 1867, there 33,244 miles. This gives an average increase of 1,156 miles per year for thirty-three years. The largest number of miles opened in one year was 3,643, in 1856, and the least number was 159, in 1843.

GOLD IN ALASKA.—Reports continue to reach us which tend to confirm the previous statements of important gold discoveries in Alaska. Much excitement is said to prevail in Oregon, Washington Territory, and British Columbia, in consequence of these reports. Specimens of anthracite have been brought to Sitka by the Indians, who report large deposits in the interior. These statements are probably exaggerated, but there is some reason to believe Alaska contains considerable mineral wealth. It ought to contain some mineral wealth as it will take considerable to purchase this territory.

PROTECTION OF EYES.—In a recent investigation by an oculist of Breslan, embracing six manufacturing establishments, employing in the aggregate 1,288 workmen in the different departments of boiler-making, blacksmithing, turning, fitting, &c., it was found that 90 per cent. had often been injured in the eye by minute pieces of metal, and that 40 per cent. had been under medical treatment for serious accidents to their eyes. The whole time lost by the workmen from this cause amounted to 4,726 working days. Ordinary glass spectacles were objected to on account of their liability to be broken, mica spectacles were tried, and found to fulfill all requirements. The mica used is of the purest kind, very thin, and is curved somewhat like a watch-glass. It is held in a frame which fits closely enough to the eye to prevent the passage of metallic fragments. Mica inverts a pale gray tint to objects, but does not impair the eye. The price of a pair of these spectacles, at Breslan is about 15 cents. If, from want of proper protection, a fragment of metal, wood, or other substance, should get in the eye, it can often be easily removed as follows: Take a horse hair and double it, leaving a loop. If the mote can be seen lay the loop over it, close the eye, and the mote will come out as the hair is withdrawn. If the irritating object can not be seen raise the lid of the eye as high as possible and place the loop as far in as you can, close the eye and roll the ball around a few times, draw out the hair; the substance which caused so much pain will be sure to come with it.

The ground has been broken on the Pacific and Atlantic railroad at Springfield, Mo. A large number of men are employed, and the work will be pushed with a view of connecting St. Louis and San Francisco by the 35th parallel.

Recent American and Foreign Patents.

OF THE PATENT OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D. C., UNDER THE ACT OF MARCH 3, 1879, CHAP. 200, SECTION 4882.

MAKING CORES FOR CASTINGS.—Benjamin S. Benson, Baltimore, Md.—This invention consists in an improved device for holding and cleaning the metallic cores used in casting oven pipes, by which such cores can be evenly and thoroughly scraped and cleaned.

VENTILATOR.—J. W. Foard, San Francisco, Cal.—The object of this invention is to furnish an improved ventilator for ships, buildings, cars, etc., which while affording a thorough ventilation to the ship or building upon which it is used, entirely prevents the rain from entering through the ventilator.

FIREMAN'S EXTENSION LADDER.—Robert H. Jones, San Francisco, Cal.—This invention is an apparatus by which, in cases of fires in lofty buildings, the hose can be carried to the top of the building, and there operated conveniently and safely from the ladder. A device is connected by which persons and valuable property can, at the same time, be removed from the upper stories of the building.

HOP POLE.—Luman B. Clark, Bambridge, N. Y.—This invention consists in providing a tapered post of scantling which may be driven into the ground, and which may form a base to which the poles may be attached or rendered detachable.

MILL STONE.—Peter Zimmerman, Delaware Water Gap, Pa.—This invention consists in the arrangement of a ball or suspending apparatus for the stone so as to possess the quality of a universal joint, whereby, although the faces of the stones may not be perpendicular with the spindle, the jarring and pounding action of the parts usually occurring when rigidly connected together will be avoided.

STOVE OR HEATER.—F. S. Zumstein, Evansville, Ind.—This invention has for its object to furnish an improved stove for railroad cars, steamboats, hotels, houses, etc., which shall be simple in construction, will keep the fire in full operation from six to twenty-four hours without its being necessary to attend to the fire, and which may be used with perfect safety on railroad cars, as the stove is so constructed as not to be liable to be broken and to scatter the fire should an accident happen to the car.

PRUNING AND HARVESTING HOOK.—John Stark, Thomasville, Ga.—This invention relates to an improvement in hooks for harvesting and cutting up corn and also for pruning trees, and it consists in making the hook or cutting edges in two or more parts united together.

SELF-DETACHING PULLEY.—Jesse E. Gustin, Elmira, N. Y.—This invention relates to an improvement in pulleys used for raising heavy weights whereby the same are made self-acting or so arranged that the position of the pulley can be changed and the load dumped automatically.

STEAM PRESSURE ALARM.—David McFarland, New York City.—Two patents have been granted on this invention which relates to a new and simple device to be connected with a steam boiler for sounding an alarm when the steam within the boiler exceeds a certain pressure, and also for sounding an alarm when the water descends to a certain level.