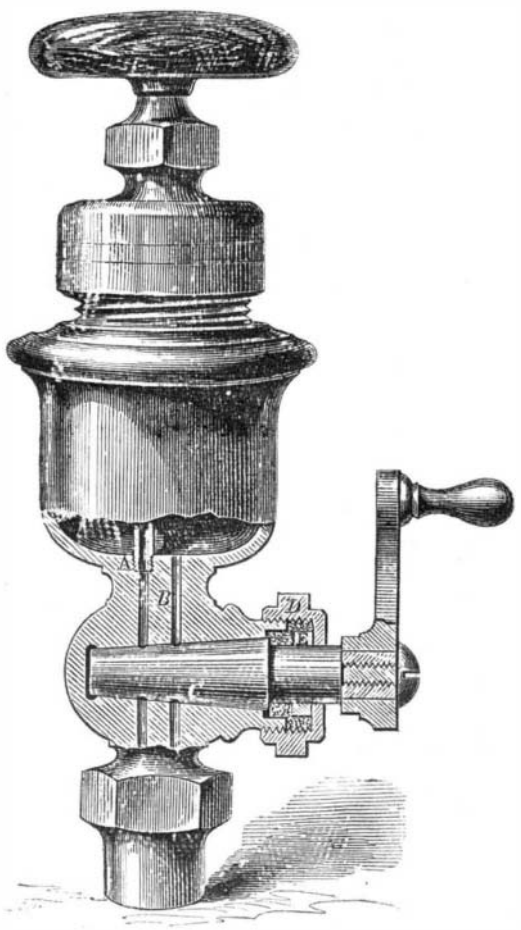
HARLIN'S PLAN FOR IMPROVING OIL CUPS.

The great difficulty with the oilers generally in use on the cheats of engine cylinders is the wear of the plug and the trouble of grinding and resetting it. It is in use but a little while before it leaks and becomes a source of continual annoyance. After being several times re-ground the transverse holes through it become out of line with those in the cup and stem, which should correspond. The object of this improvement—for which a patent is now pending through the Scientific American Patent Agency—is to provide a means of making these leaky or discarded oil cups useful and even better than before. It consists simply in packing the plug so that no leakage is possible and that the portion which is seated in the stem is not compelled to perform two offices.



A brief reference to the parts of the engraving will readily explain the action of the oiler. A is the pipe for the admission of the steam to the surface of the oil in the cup, and B, the oil hole leading from the cup to the interior of the chest. C is the plug and D the stuffing box, inside of which is the packing and the ring, E. From these references any engineer or machinist will see how readily one of the common oilers may be improved to render them perfectly effective, durable, and convenient.

Further information may be obtained by addressing McNab & Harlin, 86 John Street, New York city.

GILDING ON WOOD.

A correspondent inquires why picture and mirror frames which are gilded receive a coat of some white composition before being gilded, while the letters and ornamentations on signs, made also of wood, do not.

It will be noticed that picture frames when gilded have a luster — are burnished — while the letters on signs are "dead." The composition referred to is necessary to this burnishing, as the wood would "give" too much and the leaf be broken and destroyed. To prepare the frame for the gold leaf a mixture of hot size and whiting, quite thin, is applied evenly, and followed by successive coats, each thicker than the other, care being taken that the ornaments or carvings are not clogged and filled by the mixture. The coating when completed is about one-sixteenth of an inch thick, and is smoothed with pumice stone. Upon this bed is laid a composition of clay, red chalk, plumbago, suet, and bullock's blood. The leaf is then applied precisely as in ordinary gilding, which will be presently described, and burnished with agate or bloodstone set in convenient handles.

In ordinary gilding, as for the lettering on signs, no preparation is necessary, except to apply a mixture of boiled linseed oil and ochre, called gold size, which should stand over night or for a few hours until, to the practiced touch, it is of the proper viscidity to receive the leaf. The application of the leaf appears to be perfectly simple, but it requires much experience, dexterity, and the exercise of discretion and good judgment. The gold leaf comes in "books," each leaf of which is coated with red chalk, an argillaceous oxide of iron, to prevent the adhesion of the gold to the paper. The gilder, holding in his left hand a cushion covered with soft leather and in his right the foot of a rabbit or hare, removes one of the gold leaves from the book by simply touching it with the hare's foot or lifting it with a thin steel blade, and conveys it to the cushion, on which he spreads it by gently blowing upon it, by which he smoothes out all the wrinkles. With his blunt edged knife, similar to a painter's palette knife, he cuts the leaf into pieces adapted in size to the spot to be guilded, and with the hare's foot lifts the piece and dexterously conveys it to its place, finishing the process by touching the uneven portions with a soft camel's hair pencil. No draft of air can be allowed in the room where this work is done, as the particles of gold leaf are so light that they fly at the slightest breath. Sometimes it is necessary to press portions of the leaf into depressions of the work, if for instance it is a carved frame, by a wad of soft cotton, but this cannot be used in a damp atmosphere.

THE NICOLSON PAVEMENT---IMPORTANT PATENT EXTENSION.

The Commissioner of Patents has extended the patent granted to Samuel Nicolson, August 1854, as reissued Aug. 1867, for a wood pavement. This pavement is intended to combine the good points of all other pavements.

A sufficient foundation is first placed under blocks of wood to preserve them in their wear and to keep them level at the surface. Alternate rows of concrete are also placed with the blocks upon this foundation, so as to prevent their becoming slippery, and the blocks are coated and saturated with bituminous substances, to retard decay. By these means a pavement is produced which has no objections to it, and is comparatively cheap and very simple in its construction.

The tests which this pavement has undergone, and the great saving of horses and vehicles, as well as the increased comfort both to travelers and residents along the streets through which it has been laid, its durability and economy, demonstrate the value of the improvement.

It has been computed according to the testimony in the case that in New York and the adjacent cities, there are over 200,000 horses and a corresponding number of vehicles. These horses and vehicles cost from $100 to $1,000 each, while many of them cost more. It is also estimated that the lowest possible saving on each horse would, in seven years, be not less than $75, which on 200,000 horses, makes a saving of $15,000,000. It is further estimated that the average saving on each vehicle for the same time would be at least $100 or an aggregate in 200,000 vehicles of $20,000,000. It costs now on an average $30 per annum for the shoeing of a horse, one half of which it is thought might be saved by the use of the Nicolson wood pavement. The aggregate saving in shoeing would amount in these cities to $21,000,000. It would probably save in the same time $1,500,000 in the destruction of freights, and a like amount in the expense of cleaning the streets. This gives a total of $59,000,000. To which may be added sundry other gains resulting from the increased capacity of the streets, and increased speed of vehicles, the saving of the lives of thousands of horses, and diminishing the rates of insurance upon them; the saving of goods exposed for sale, from the accumulation of gritty dust; in the prevention of frost in gas and water pipes, the leakages of water into cellars and the improved sanitary condition of these cities. These accumulated savings were estimated to amount to not less than $7,000,000, which added to the increased value of real estate probably not less than $10,000,000 would swell the total saving to $76,000,000.

Last though not least to the humanitarian, will appear the prevention of cruelty to horses. To walk through Broadway, without seeing a horse down is a consummation which the Nicolson pavement would secure. We think this pavement, to be unquestionably superior to any stone pavement that has been or can be devised.

CORROSION OF IRON EXPOSED TO SALT WATER.

It is usually supposed that iron, either cast or wrought, is subject to rapid oxidation by being exposed to the action of sea water; or if alternately exposed to the action of water and the atmosphere. Many facts seem to support this theory, but there are others which would seem to denote that much of this action, instead of being attributed to external influences, is to be attributed, rather, to the nature and structure of the iron. Wrought iron is undoubtedly more subject to the influences of moisture and the atmosphere than cast iron; but the cannon of the *Royal George*, submerged nearly half a century, were so soft, when raised, as to be easily cut with a knife; yet cannon, sunk in the fresh-water lakes of our country in 1812, were found to be but slightly corroded when raised forty years afterward. We have, however, seen shot—cannon balls—sunk at the same time, in the same locality, and recovered at the same time, which appeared to be converted into plumbago, or a species of carburet of iron. We attribute these seemingly contradictory results to the difference in the quality of the metal acted upon.

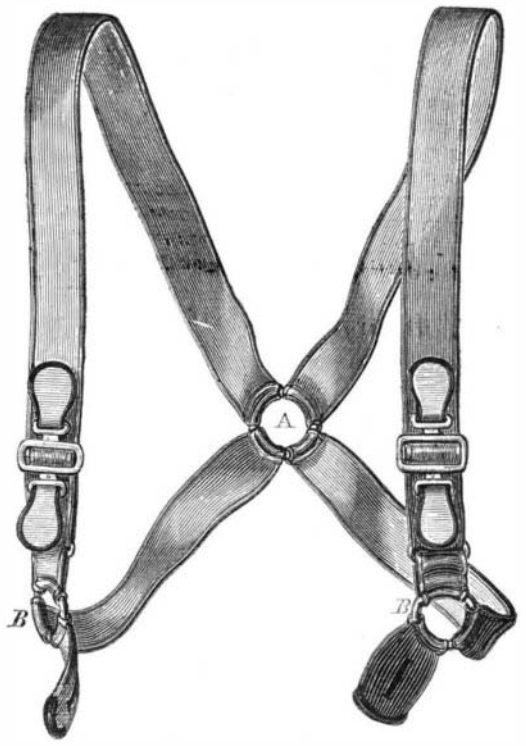
Cast iron, to resist corrosion, should be as hard as the circumstances of the case will admit, of an even, close grain, containing but little graphite, which is found so abundantly in ordinary soft iron, the filings from which will smut the fingers. Water pipes and gas pipes are too often cast from the refuse of the foundery, slag, scoria, etc., when they should be made of the most compact metal, hard, white iron.

A Scientific Toy.

An amusing, if not a very reliable, hygrometer may be constructed as follows:—Take an ordinary cigar box, and place a vertical upright rock shaft in its center. To this shaft attach a bar of light wood so as to form two equal arms on each side. Insert a staple at one end of the box; attach one end of a piece of small catgut (or a horse hair will do) to it, wind it twice around the vertical shaft and fasten the other end to a small coiled spring fastened to the other end of the box. The absorption of moisture will render the gut longer or shorter as the atmosphere is moist or dry, and the motion produced by the contraction or expansion of the gut and the spring will be communicated to the vertical shaft, and through it to the arms. If to the end of one arm a toy figure of a mower be attached, and to the other a figure holding an umbrella, openings being cut to represent doors in the side of the box, fronting each figure, the figure holding the umbrella will appear when the air is moist, and the haymaker when it is dry. Rain is more likely to occur when the air is moist, than when it is dry, and thus this toy will indicate, to some extent, the probability of rain. This is an amusing modification of the well known hair hygrometer. It may be added that the smaller the vertical shaft is made, the more delicate will be its operation. A box of considerable length in proportion to its other dimensions is best adapted to the purpose.

TOWLES' PATENT ELLIPTIC SUSPENDER.

We recollect an anecdote of a rigid Scotch Presbyterian, who, in advising his son against heretical influences, bid him beware of suspenders to his breeches. What connection the old gentleman could see between suspenders and theology we never could perceive, but that he might oppose pantaloon braces on the score of discomfort seems reasonable. In hot weather they are a nuisance; they bind and sweat the shoulders and prevent free movement of the body. Having pretty thoroughly tested the contrivance illustrated in the accompanying engravings, however, we are certain it is free from these objections; we have never before found anything of the sort so comfortable and so well adapted to give ease to the wearer in every position of the body.



The pantaloons are supported and suspended from two points only, these being under the arms and central. By reference to the engravings it will be seen that the strain and weight are equal in whatever position. From a common center or ring, A, on the back, both front and back webs draw equally, those which pass over the shoulder and those which pass under the arm uniting at rings, B, just forward and under each arm, with the buttoning-straps. As the straps across the shoulders are not elastic, chafing, perspiration, and binding are obviated. The larger engraving shows the brace alone, and the smaller its adaptation to the person. The point of bearing being in the center of the back, the webs which pass under the arms and down the front act as shoulder braces, tending to keep the chest expanded and the body erect. This gives a hygienic value to the device.

The patent, obtained through the Scientific American Patent Agency, was issued June 2, 1868. All communications should be addressed to Towles, Bro., & Co., Monumental Silk Works, Baltimore, Md.

Preservation of Oilcloths.

Oilcloths are often damaged by the use of soap containing too much caustic alkali in cleansing their surfaces. All vegetable oils which are adapted for use in painting, absorb oxygen upon exposure to the air, and assume resinous characters. The drying properties of such oils are increased by heating them with litharge, which, by partially oxidizing them, renders their complete oxidation a work of less time than would otherwise be the case. Oils thus treated are called "boiled oils." In this state they are used as a vehicle for the various pigments used in painting and in the manufacture of oilcloths. Resinous substances resulting from the oxidization of vegetable oils are strongly acted upon by the caustic alkalies. It will be seen, then, that the use of soaps containing an excess of soda or potash would be liable to destroy surfaces of oilcloths. To preserve them properly they should be washed with Castile soap only, and occasionally receive a coat of good copal varnish.