

in the quantity as in the quality of the product. It is not probable that the sugar will compete largely with cane sugars for table use on fruit, &c., or in tea and coffee, or for culinary purposes, where a simple, unflavored sweet is desired. But the *syrup*, if it is properly made, and its flavor properly retained by sealing hot, like fruit, in jugs or cans, has no possible competitor as an article of luxury on buckwheat cakes at breakfast. And, even as a substitute for honey, the flavor of No 1 syrup is preferred by many, and it does not cloy the taste as honey does. But, poorly-made, maple syrup is little better than cane molasses, and will not bring a remunerative price. There is as much difference in flavor here as between "gilt-edged butter," and that that is only "fair to middling"; and when that difference is fully understood, the prices of the two grades of syrup will differ as much as that of the two (or half dozen) grades of butter.

Hence, our profits will come mostly from our syrup, and from our best quality too, and any suggestions as to the mode of securing the best results will, I am sure, be welcomed. I wish to call attention to some of the essentials to success, and if I omit any, or fall into error in any respect, I hope some of your ever-watchful readers will call attention to it.

Following the order of the work involved, and noticing the tools, implements, etc., as they are required for use in their order, we have:

1. The *tapping* should be prompt and rapid, as soon as suitable weather really comes; not till then. A drizzling rain, that freezes before the sap can be gathered, never makes the best syrup, and buckets, spouts, and trees, are injured for the

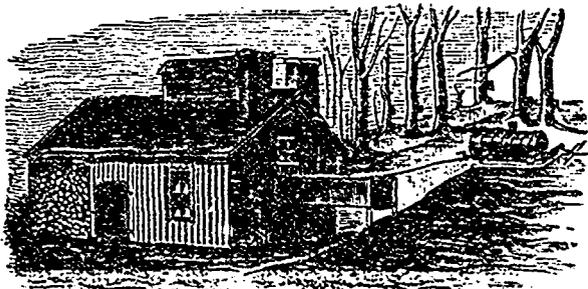


Fig. 1.

rest of the season, if the bush is tapped several days before the season really opens. The Cook bit, half inch size, is best, and the galvanized iron Eureka spout. By repeated and continued trials of it side by side with various wooden and tin spouts, I am fully convinced that it sours the sap least of any, and gives the largest yield. The first merit is more important than the other, for sour sap will never make good syrup. The buckets should always be tin, soldered, inside and out, at every seam. They will not rust inside in many years, and should never be painted there, as that makes them more rough and more liable to sour. Painting the outside, however, will help to preserve the bucket. For our Ohio climate (and I am inclined to think it true anywhere), the buckets should invariably be covered tight. A hole just below the wire rim splits over the notch of the spout, and a board a foot square is laid on top, and excludes rain, snow, dirt, or insects, and prevents the sap from freezing, except in extreme cold, or souring by the sun's heat, except in very warm weather. I know of no one thing more essential to the production of the best grade of syrup than covers. They should be planed and painted, and it is a great help in gathering to have one side painted, say, red, and the other white. All are placed red side up, for instance, in tapping, and then, all are reversed at each gathering. If a tree is

missed, the color of the cover shows it at a long distance. So, none need be missed, and two trips need never be taken to the same tree in doubt whether its sap has been gathered. This was mentioned more fully last year, but I find it so great an advantage, that I feel like repeating it every time I have the attention of sugar-makers.

2. The gathering should begin as soon as the tapping is done. The former should be finished by noon if possible. Otherwise, one force of hands should continue this, and another force should begin soon enough to overtake, before dark, the force that is tapping. Sap should never stand over night in the buckets if it can be avoided, but should be gathered as late as possible before dark, and boiled as soon and as rapidly as possible. It begins to deteriorate almost as soon as it leaves the tree, especially if it is very warm, or on the other hand, if it freezes and thaws.

The gathering cask, figured and described last year, and shown again in fig. 1, seems best adapted of anything for the work to be done. It is simply a cask 5 feet long and about two feet in diameter, fastened firmly to a "boat sled", large end behind, the front end a little the higher, so that when the sled stands level, the sap will all flow from a faucet in the rear, through a tin conductor with a funnel-shaped "head" down the slope, into the store trough below, as shown in fig. 1. The sap need never be lifted but once, or dipped or rolled up skids in barrels at all. It is poured down into the gathering pail from the bucket which hangs at the tree, and is not removed from the spout in emptying. It must be lifted a little and poured into the funnel of the gathering cask, and that is all. After that, by taking advantage of a slope, it will run into the store trough, and thence into the boiler without further labor.

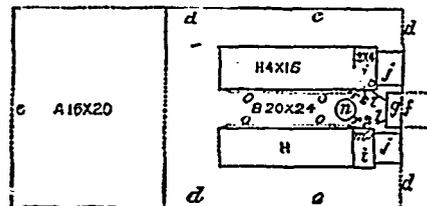


Fig. 2.

3. The sugar-house, its location and its arrangement. The former is indicated in fig. 1. The sugar-maple seldom grows spontaneously except on ground that is somewhat rolling, and in almost every sugar camp can be found side-hill advantages in a sufficiently central location. If the slope is not as steep as that represented in the cut, a longer conducting tube must of course be used, so that the gathering cask can stand far enough off up in the slope to bring it to the required level. In hilly New-England there is usually no trouble on this point, but even there, I have seen sugar-houses on level ground near a fine slope of which they took no advantage. And in Ohio, until within a few years ago, such was the common custom. The store trough stood on a level with the "arch," the barrels were laboriously rolled up two skids and emptied into the trough, and then the sap was lifted, pailful after pailful, and poured into the kettles or pans. Men are strangely slow in learning to take advantage of gravitation and the other forces of nature, even when she seems daily to thrust them before our very eyes. Fig. 2 gives the ground plan of the sugar-house seen in perspective in fig. 1. It is planned for two arches, so that one man can boil the sap from 2,000 or 2,500 buckets. It will be understood from a brief description, if figs. 1 and 2 are both kept before the eyes. A is the woodshed; B, the boiling-room; H H, the evaporators, set on brick arches, \pm , heaters running a foot below the level of the evaporators, and perforated like the