

Miscellaneous.

Running Splice.

EDITOR CANADA FARMER:—The knots described by Mr. Spence in your last number are very useful at times. I can only add a description of what is called a "running splice," used when a rope is required to run through a block, for which a short splice would not do, as it doubles the thickness of the rope. It is put together in the same way as a short splice, but after the strands have been untwined far enough (and they should be untwined farther than for a "short splice") one half of each strand is cut off lengthwise, so that when the splice is finished, the part spliced is no thicker than it was before.

If Mr. Spence will take a cord composed of more than three strands, he will find it can be spliced as readily as any other.

It is not always considered a disgrace for sailors to go up or down through the lubber holes, as some masters of vessels will not allow fattock shrouds to be rathened, so that the men must use the lubber holes, and besides they can go up faster that way, whenever that useful instrument, the marine barometer, gives indications of an approaching squall, and all hands have to be sent aloft in a hurry to take in sail. SARAWAK.

The Norwegian Method of Making Hay.

A correspondent writes to the *Agricultural Gazette*, apropos of the bad haying season to call attention of farmers to a plan adopted by the farmers of Norway for the purpose of protecting their grass, when cut, from rain. It is not at all unusual there for the grass to lie out for two months, or even more, and of its quality, when it has been so treated, experience speaks very favorably.

The plan is this:—Stakes about 6 feet long are put up in sets, of four or five in a line, in every part of the field, the lines running in a direction about east and west. Across these, and about 15 or 18 inches apart, are lashed thin cross poles made from the waste of wood clearings, and untrimmed. When the hay is cut, the men, women and children go out in the fields, and in whatever condition the grass is, whether wet or dry, hang it over these cross bars. To do this, a good large handful of grass is taken, one end thrust between the bars, and then the two ends, on different sides of the bar, are bent down so as to hang across it like clothes on a line. In this way the grass is piled up all along the bars and handful above handful to within a few inches from the bar next above. That is next taken, and in this way the hay is packed up into what appear like grass walls, and by this means it stands out defying the worst weather of a climate so wet as that of Western Norway. The spaces serve for ventilation, the thickness is not sufficient for heating, and it is raised above the wet and steaming earth, so that sun and wind when they come have their full effect upon the mass and speedily dry it; while the protection afforded from the rain is quite remarkable for such a simple system.

Medicinal Uses of the Sweet Flag.

The Sweet Flag, *Acorus calamus*, says Anslic, "is a very favorite medicine of the Indian practitioners, and is reckoned so valuable in the indigestions, stomach-aches, and bowel affections of children, that there is a penalty incurred by any druggist who will not open his door in the middle of the night and sell it if demanded." A bath made of the infusion of the root "is regarded as an effectual remedy for epilepsy in children." Schroder informs us that "it possesses virtues in obstructions of the spleen and liver." The Egyptians regard it as a valuable aromatic and stomachic. The Turks prepare a confection of the root, and employ it "as a preventive against contagion." "European practitioners have considered the root as tonic and aromatic, and occasionally prescribe it in cases of intermittent fever and dyspepsia."

Dr. A. T. Thomson recommends it as an anti-periodic; and Dr. Æ. Ross reports that it is an excellent stimulant and diaphoretic; he looks upon it "as most serviceable in atonic and choleric diarrhoea. As an insecticide, particularly with reference to fleas, I have always found it very efficacious; but for this purpose, the root must be obtained fresh. Last year, the chief cause of mortality among the house patients of the Seoni Main Dispensary was dysentery; the gael population also suffered very much from the same disease. The disease is most prevalent about the middle of the rainy season, that is, during the

months of July and August. The disturbance probably of the water-supply, especially when this is derived from tanks and streams, and the dampness of the season are, in some measures, I think, accountable for the appearance of the disease. In many of these cases, a malarial taint could be detected. Ipecacuanha does not, I regret to say, always succeed in these cases. There were no less than sixty-nine cases of dysentery treated in the Main Dispensary during the months of July and August. I found a decoction of the rhizome of the *Acorus calamus* very effectual in arresting the flux of blood, especially in the dysentery of children. The decoction is prepared thus.—Of the bruised rhizome, 2 ounces; Coriander seed, 1 drachm; black pepper, half a drachm; water, 1 pint; boil down to twelve ounces and set aside to cool. The dose for an adult is an ounce three times daily; for a child, 1 to 3 drams, sweetened with sugar, two or three times a day. Astringent extracts or quinine might be added if necessary."

Where Do They Come from?

A correspondent of the *New York Tribune* asks the question about the sudden appearance of a new order of plants on soil of which the previous condition has been altered. The case is cited where the Hon. George Geddes reclaimed some ten acres of land which for seventy-five years had been submerged by a mill-dam. It appears that this pond in that time had filled up from four to six feet deep with brook sediment; that this sediment was so soft that it was mid-summer before a man could go over it to sow some grass seed; that this seed germinated and promises an abundant crop. A strange thing happened in connection with this pond mud that is not easily explained. It is this to which especial attention is drawn. There appeared upon it, late in the season, an immense growth of a strange grass, overtopping the plants that came from the seed he sowed, and became so dense and long that he supposed it would smother out his plants. He had the strange grass cut and made into hay of little value. This new-comer, that sprung out of the pond mud—not in sparse plants, but in a dense mass—Prof. Prentiss of Cornell University calls rice-cut grass. Then he asks a pertinent question, which learned and experienced contributors are requested to satisfactorily answer: "Where did it come from?"

Did it come from seed which had been washed down by the brook from above, and if so, did this seed lie and keep sound in that mud thus covered by water for generations, and germinate so luxuriantly as soon as the water was drawn off, and take the lead of pure, sound seed so recently sown by the writer? These strange things are continually happening. "I am told that the old fields of Virginia, which have been cultivated for hundreds of years, when abandoned, as they frequently are, are almost certain to produce a crop of pitch pines, and no other kind of evergreens or trees. Do they come from seed? Again, when the dense forests of hemlock are cut off for lumber, and the annual fires run through and burn up the limbs and other refuse, the next season is sure to bring a dense crop of what is commonly called fire-weeds, and nothing else, to be succeeded the next year by an equally dense growth of blackberry vines. There had not been any fire-weeds or blackberry vines growing on this land for perhaps a thousand years before. Again, I have seen quite a dense growth of hemlock spruce (*Abies Canadensis*) growing out of earth taken from the bottom of a shaft sunk for iron ore, perhaps 50 feet deep or more. Now, there had been no vegetation growing out of that earth for 20 centuries, and it may possibly be 20,000,000 of years. Many other instances of the kind might be mentioned, but these are sufficient for my present purpose. The question recurs and demands an answer: "Where did they come from?" Did they come from seed? If so, then seed must have a most wonderful vitality. Or, is Prof. Tyndall correct in the formula recently advanced by him that "matter contains within itself the power and the potency of all life."

My opinion is that they did not come from seed, but that a certain condition of soil (or matter) and climate will produce a certain kind of plant, which opinion I may hereafter more fully elaborate, if not convinced to the contrary."

TO FIT A KEY.—When it is not convenient to take a lock apart to fit a new key, the key blank should be smoked over a candle, inserted in the keyhole, and pressed firmly against the opposing wards of the lock. The indentations in the smoked portion made by the wards will show where to file.

ASCENT OF WATER IN TREES. Prof. McNab has presented to the Royal Irish Academy a memoir on the ascent of water in the stems of plants, to investigate which point very many experiments were made. He finds in the privet the rate of ascent to be about six inches per hour; in the elm, 16.6 inches, in the cherry laurel the rate varied from 24 to 12 inches. Experiments were also made as to the influence of sunlight and darkness, the influence of the leaves, and the influence of pressure.

The Wheat Weevil.

There is a wrong impression as to the character of this insect (*Calandra Granaria*) and especially in reference to the time of its chief depredations. Quite early in the spring, while wheat was not yet in blossom, reports came from some interior counties that the weevil was thus early committing extensive depredations. From many other localities we heard similar reports, but a little later in the season. These were founded in misconception, for the truth is the weevil properly preys only upon the grain, commencing its ravages about the time of its ripening and continuing them long after it is gathered into the granary—hence the name of grain or granary weevil.

The grain weevil in its perfect state is a dark or pitchy red winged beetle or bug, about one-eighth of an inch long. It has a slender proboscis or snout, curving a little downward. The thorax, or chest, constitutes about one-half of its body, and is nearly as large as the abdomen, or belly, lying back of the middle ring. The thorax is punctured with a large number of holes, giving it a rough appearance. Over the abdomen are delicate wings, which are shielded by wing covers, having lines or furrows upon their upper surface running parallel with their length. The wings do not entirely cover the tip of the abdomen. The female punctures the ripening or ripened grain with her beak or rostrum, and deposits one and sometimes two eggs.

From the egg is hatched a grub or worm, which eats its way into the grain, closing up the aperture behind it with excrements so that it lies perfectly shielded from external injury. No mechanical action short of crushing the kernel can disturb the destroyer. They are effectually destroyed by kiln drying the grain. This grub or worm grows to about one-twelfth of an inch in length; its body is white and soft, with nine rings around it. The head is small, round, yellow-colored and provided with cutting instruments. Arriving at maturity, which is not till the flour portion of the wheat kernel has been principally devoured, this worm or larva assumes a nymph or chrysalis state (like that between the worm and the butterfly), and within two weeks after the perfect weevil is formed, which eats its way out through the shell and goes forth to deposit its eggs in turn upon other sound kernels. They are very productive, a single pair often multiplying to 5,000 or 6,000 in a single year. Both the perfect insect and the grub feed upon the grain.—*New York Herald*.

TO DRIVE AWAY RATS.—An English Journal gives the following recipe which it says has proved very successful: Take some glass and powder with pestle and mortar, then mix with some lard into pills, and drop into the rat holes. It will drive rats and mice out of the place; they die of decline.

TREATMENT OF NEW WOODEN UTENSILS.—Wooden vessels for containing articles of food and wine, and wooden vessels for culinary purposes, can be rendered fit for immediate use by the removal of the unpleasant extractive matters, by treatment with a solution of washing-soda. Thus an ordinary barrel should be half filled with water, and a solution of about two pounds of soda in as much water as will dissolve it; then head up the barrel and thoroughly mix the liquids by shaking the barrel, which should then be filled to the bung with water, and allowed to remain for twelve or fourteen days; then after withdrawing the discolored liquid, it should be well rinsed and filled with pure water and allowed to remain several days, when it will be fit for use. Other wooden vessels may be treated with a similar solution of soda.

CONCRETE.—In answer to your question respecting concrete or asphalt, I have done a great deal successfully for walks and some kind of floors, such as the floor of a pig-house, but have never attempted it for heavy traffic. It is neither difficult nor expensive. Of course a great deal depends upon the cost of material; the labor is trifling. I have used screenings of gravel (I don't like it clean, but mixed with sand); I have used sand alone when I could not get anything better, blacksmiths' ashes, and ashes from my engine. The last I did was for our churchyard walks; for those I got the screenings of Leicestershire granite, which made a splendid path, but of course, more expensive—the granite cost 10s. a ton. It is quite an unnecessary expense and trouble boiling the tar. Get your material dry, mix it with tar, turn it over twice, and let it lie a couple of days, then turn it again, and mix a little lime with it, about a tenth, let it lie another day, and then on a fine, sunny day lay it on, rake it even, and roll well as soon as it will roll, in an hour or two's time; if the roll does not work well (it ought to do if the stuff is not mixed with too much tar) scatter a little dry sand over it. Every summer I brush my walks over with cold tar, and give a good sprinkling of sand, and they are as good now as when first put down, fifteen years since. Any laborer can do it, only take care before laying it down it is of proper consistency. When ready, it ought not to show the least of tar, but should be a dull, dead black, and when moved with a shovel, ought to be "lively," exactly like a mass of mites in a cheese. The stuff will keep a long time in a heap if covered up or kept dry. I shall be glad to give any further information.—*Cor. Agricultural Gazette*.