

together by means of wedges. Drive the wedges gently at the start and each one equally till all the joints fill up snugly, and then stop, for if driven too tight the floor will spring up. Never wedge directly against the edge of the flooring board, but have a short strip with a tongue on it between the wedge and the board so as to leave no bruises. Then fasten the floor to the sleepers by driving a flat-headed, steel wire nail of suitable size, one inch from either edge of every board, straight down into each sleeper. At the end joints smaller nails may be used, two nails in board near the edges and as far from the ends as the thickness of the sleeper will permit. Proceed in this manner until the floor is completed, and you will have a floor that will remain tight and look well until worn out.

Such minute directions for so common and simple a job sound silly, but are justifiable from the fact that there are so many alleged carpenters who either do not know how, or are too lazy, to lay a floor properly.—*Southern Lumberman*, U.S.A.

THE RATING OF GROUND RENTS.

In a paper on "The Rating of Ground Rents," recently read at the Surveyors' Institution, Mr. George Beken dealt with the question—Whether the proposed measure, if enacted, would benefit occupying tenants?

He stated that ground rents are not paid by them, that an occupier does not necessarily know whether there is a ground rent on his house or not, and in negotiating for a tenancy does not even ask the question. The existence or non-existence of a ground rent is the concern of his immediate landlord, and depends upon whether he (the landlord) holds a lease only, or has bought the freehold. If he has only a lease, and consequently has to pay a ground rent, that does not enable him to obtain a higher rent; and if he were empowered by legislation to make deductions, in respect of rates, from the ground rent he pays, that would not necessitate his accepting less rent.

Mr. Beken's conclusion is that the rating of ground rents would not have the slightest effect upon occupying tenants.

It would merely, he held, shift the burden from one set of investors to another set, that is, from leaseholders to their ground landlords, notwithstanding that the former, by having agreed to pay all the rates, have obtained their leases for less than they otherwise would.

He then discussed the reason generally put forward in support of rating ground rents, viz.—That new imposts which were not contemplated when the leases were taken, and which are alleged to benefit the lessors' property, have been thrown on the rates. If this be so, he contended that, as a set off, account should be taken of the benefit the lessees receive from the expenditure. And if leases were to be set aside in order to give one party redress for "the unforeseen," similar redress could not be fairly refused to the other party.

He was of opinion that in many cases, if the benefit accruing to a lessee from what may be termed "Improvement expenditure" could have been foreseen when he took the lease, he, or someone else, would have been willing to give a higher ground rent, in anticipation of that benefit outweighing any resulting increase in the rates.

He gave instances of claims and counter-claims which he considered would arise in going behind leases, as suggested, and said the necessary calculations would throw an amount of trouble and worry upon both parties that would be perfectly

intolerable, whilst the net result, which would as often be against the lessee, as in his favour, could only be approximate, and would generally be trivial compared with the cost.

The measure would be especially hard upon investors in ground rents, who are content to take a low rate of interest in consideration of receiving a safe and regular income with little trouble.

In conclusion, Mr. Beken was of opinion that any legislative interference would do more harm than good, and he asked, if leases were to be revised whenever any covenant might become disadvantageous to either of the parties, why not subject every other kind of contract to similar revision? The logical sequel would be, he said, that no contracts, for any purpose whatever, would be binding, the effect of which upon enterprise generally would be most prejudicial.

TO CLEAN SMALL SOREWS.—Screws that are too small for separate treatment may be cleaned from rust as follows: Take a pound of screws and place them in a small box—a cigar-box will do; put a small quantity of oil on them and shake for a minute; then put a piece of cotton-waste in the box and repeat for a minute; finally, put a handful of sawdust in the box and shake for another minute or so, and remove the sawdust by sifting it from the screws in a fine sieve.

Glazed bricks are now largely used for both interior and exterior decoration. They are manufactured in Philadelphia and elsewhere in the United States. For this purpose an ordinary light-colored or red brick is used, and a suitable enamel is produced on the surfaces to be exposed. Some colors are very easily obtained. A simple lead glaze or a cheap buff brick makes a good yellow. A manganese and iron glaze is used for black. White and blue are the most difficult to produce, since the red color of the brick must first be hidden by an opaque layer of white before the finishing glaze is applied. Green must be made in the same way.

LITTLE ONES IN SPECTACLES.—A writer in the *Boston Herald* says that the very general and growing prevalence of near sight is largely due to carelessness with children. The number of children who wear spectacles has become a serious subject of remark. That a radical wrong exists somewhere, when children only four years of age are thus hampered for life, is only too palpable, but whose the blame, and what the remedy for this evidently increasing affliction? Are future generations to be *sans* eyes as well as *sans* teeth? The defects in vision necessitating spectacles are inherited, or infants scarcely able to read would not be hurried to opticians and fitted to glasses that must bother them while they live. Oculists give many sensible reasons for this weakness of the optic nerves. But no one impresses the necessity of care in the management of eyes until the damage is done, and then it is too late. Young mothers who cover the baby's face with a veil, or who wear spotted lace against their own eyes, and who allow their children to read by insufficient light, are laying up trouble for themselves, though oculist and optician will be better off for their criminal ignorance. As to the schoolrooms, where children spend so many hours of the day, do parents ever ask or know how they are lighted, and whether the scholars face windows, and whether they are obliged to strain their eyes by blackboard exercises in half-lights? A little precaution in the use of the eyes, and some knowledge on the subject of improper lighting, would be a pound of cure in this matter of spectacles.