The Cork Oak.

At present we depend for cork upon the countries bordering the Mediterranean. In these countries the actual market value of cork is ten times what it was at the beginning of the century, and it is likely to go still higher. In Sardinia, Sicily and Naples extensive cork plantations are being destroyed for the purpose of obtaining the tannin of superior quality yielded by the bark and carbonate of soda from the ashes of the wood. This destruction has been going on for years, while planting has not even replaced the trees destroyed, except in France and its African dependency. As long ago as 1822 the French Government appropriated 4,500 francs, which were to be divided among those who, planting in 1823, should possess at the expiration of ten years plantations of 10,000 vigorous saplings. In 1834 only three persons had been entitled to the reward. But France has now over 500,000 acres of cork plantations in Algiers, yielding a considerable revenue to the State. About fifty years ago the Spanish began to encourage the planting of the cork oak, and the number of trees in that country has increased. This increase would have been greater but for the fact that, while in some provinces cork has become the chief source of wealth, in others many proprietors destroyed their trees in order to clear their ground for more valuable productions.

The cork oak grows to the height of about fifty feet. In Algeria and in the Spanish Province of Estramadura the development of the tree is somewhat greater. The tree reaches a great age. It continues to grow for 150 or 200 years, and after its growth it still yields cork, though of an inferior quality. In some parts of Spain it is customary to destroy the tree when the quality of its cork begins to deteriorate. In Europe the tree is met with as high as forty-five degrees N., but it needs a warm climate. In France and in Spain it is found 1,600 feet above the level of the sea, while in Algeria it occurs at double that altitude. The tree can bear a minimum average annual temperature of fifty-five degrees Fahrenheit. It prefers land sloping to the southward and near the sea. Granite lands and slaty, sandy and silicious soils are very unsuitable, and it does not take kindly to damp soils. It grows spontaneously in virgin soils where silica or silico-argillaceous compounds abound. Lands suitable for the vine are suitable for the cork also.

The blossoms appear in April or May and the acorns ripen from September to January. As a rule these are bitter and are not good nutritive mast for swine. The tree bears acorns at the age of from twelve to fifteen years, but they are not fertile until the tree is thirty or forty years old and bearing cork fit for bottle stoppers. It is found generally that the tree which produces the largest and sweetest acorns will also yield the finest cork. A close growth and lack of light and air cause diminution of the yield of acorns and lessen the quantity as well as impair the quality of the cork.

During its earlier years of growth the cork tree needs some shelter, and the "belt" system of planting seems to have been very generally adopted in France and Spain, because for several years, while the trees are growing slowly, the land can be made to produce as much as though they were not present. The "belt" system consists in planting the trees in rows, with one or more rows of vines between. The acorns and the vines are planted at the same time, the latter in rows seven feet apart and the former about forty inches one from another in a furrow between them. The trees are thinned out afterward. In this way the yield of the vines is as great as though they were planted alone, while the oaks receive the necessary shade and cultivation. Until the trees are from twenty to twenty-five years old this mixed plantation is profitable. After this the trees no longer need the vines, and these, now themselves receiving too much shade, should be destroyed. These plantations are cultivated at the beginning and at the end of the rainy season. The hoe is used to stir the earth, hurtful roots and weeds being burned, while those that rot quickly are turned under, that their ammonia may be utilized as manure.

The most favorable season for the germination of the plant seems to be that when the acorns fall naturally. In Spain this takes place in the latter part of November. The meteorological phenomena of the cork-oak region of Spain are very similar to those of Southern California, so that the season of germinating would probably be the same here. The young plant would receive the benefit of the rain, its roots would spread and it would be better fortified against the heat of the ensuing dry season. About the twelfth year the young oaks should be pruned every fourth year hereafter. After trimming out the trees there should remain eighty to the acre.

But the tree begins to be of value when it has attained a diameter of from two to four inches when it is from twelve to fifteen years old. At the same time the first coat of cork removed, and even the second, is of no very great value for stoppers. The cork should be removed when the sap is running. Some growers prefer to take it off when the sap is ascending; others when it is descending. Along the coast of Spain the latter part of June is preferred for this operation, because then the cork separates readily from the trunk of the tree. The tree is said to have arrived at maturity when the cork has a market value. After the first stripping the cork is removed at intervals of ten or twelve years. Yet, as cork of a thickness sufficient to give stoppers for champagne bottles is the most valuable, many growers extend the period. In this, as in all things else, experience is the best guide. Many growers remove the cork gradually. The first year all below a height of twelve inches from the ground is taken off, two years later all above this and below the branches, and after another equal period that of the branches. In this way the tree is less exposed to cold while the new cork forms more rapidly. Great care is taken not to wound or remove the inner bark. After the removal of the cork two, sometimes four, longitudinal incisions, reaching to the inner bark, are made under that portion of the trunk which has been tapped. This prevents the cracking of the outer surface of the new cork. Many persons will be surprised to learn that the cork oak does not shed its cork naturally. If not removed the outer portion of the cork comes off in flakes, just as the bark of many other trees.

The color of the freshly removed cork is rosy white, but this tint soon disappears. The cork is stacked in piles. In two months it has lost one-fifth of its weight and is ready for market. Strippers receive from sixty to seventy cents for a day's work. In Spain cork is worth from one dollar and a half to two dollars the quintal. As the demand for corks is increasing annually, so the value of cork plantations increases from year to year. Forty years ago in one of the departments of France the cork plantations yielded annually a net profit of twelve per cent. on their estimated value, and this was four times the profit derived from forests of oak.—*G. B. Griffin, in Los Angeles (Cal.) Herald.*

Selfish Daughters.

When the daughter has grown up selfish and domineering it is primarily the mother's own fault. The fond mother, especially if she has few of the good things of this world, is too likely to say: "I will sacrifice everything for my child. I will do without, that she may possess; I will drudge, that she may be a lady. I will stay out of society and wear old clothes, that she may go out as well dressed as her companions and enjoy herself."

That is the first misstep. Any mother who follows that plan will be the slave of her daughter before she is out of pinafores; and the daughter is sure to grow up selfish, exacting, silly and unreasonable. By and by the mother looks for some reward. She doesn't ask for fine clothes and relief from drudgery—she has got use to her hard lot; but she craves a little sympathy and commendation from the worshiped daughter for whom she "has done so much."

Aye, altogether too much; so much so that it has spoilt the girl's naturally sweet and unselfish disposition. Mary is a little uneasy once in a while, but she has no real sympathy for her toil-worn mother. She is ashamed of her mother's old-fashioned clothes, though she takes as her right all the new ones herself, and the æsthetic young lady is impatient and mortified because her mother can't talk about anything but "common domestic subjects, you know."

This is all wrong. As long as a woman has a home she should be the undisputed mistress of it, the superior officer. As long as a daughter remains in her father's house she is the natural and proper subordinate of her mother. Daughters brought up to understand this and to shape their actions accordingly receive a discipline which best fits them to be, in their turn, mistresses of their own homes and judicious mothers. A mother is right in desiring the best welfare of her child; but it is better for the child that her mother should maintain her own dignified position, and that she should make the most of herself intellectually and socially.—*Cor. Minneapolis Tribune.*

Don't Hurry.

You might as well recall the old adage "Wait till your hurry's over" and try and live up to it. There never was anything done well in a hurry and never will be. So soon as one in any sort of work feels himself pushed for time and pushed on by the thought of half a dozen things behind which must be done within a certain period, so soon does he in his work commence to "scrabble," and "scrabbling" ruins it all. The best thing to do under the circumstances (unless the house is on fire) is to break short off, pull up and wait till the hurry is over. If it really is better to do one thing well than six things ill, then the sooner the habit of hurry is gotten rid of the better. Some people's minds, however, by a long life use get in the habit of hurry from which it is quite impossible to free themselves. They perform the most trivial act in a breathless condition of haste when there is no necessity for it. They dress in a hurry, walk in a hurry, and this mental condition is kept up all day. Usually they die in a hurry. By and by more physicians will tell us that these forced and abnormal conditions of mind beget diseases of the body. When hurry is so carried into every act of life (and the tendency for this in these days of steam and telegraphs grow greater and greater) there is an incessant and useless frittering away of vitality. The victim at last falls sick; some organ or function weaker than the rest gives way and the doctor gives the complaint a name. But few will trace its real cause, and that may be a continued unnecessary strain of body and mind for years caused by overmuch hurry.—*N. Y. Graphic.*

—Rev. James Freeman Clarke, of Boston, recently completed his seventy-fourth year. Physically and mentally he yet seems as vigorous as he was thirty years ago.—*Boston Transcript.*

—Now is the time of the year to hunt up old fishing tackle and study up a few boss fish stories.

A Tough Snake Story.

A letter from Nashville, Tenn., in the Louisville *Courier-Journal* says: A land prolific in primitive genius is always prolific of snakes. Snakes of less material recognition sometimes follow the march of civilized society. The late Judge Jo C. Guild's very entertaining history of "Old Times in Tennessee" is the best picture of the earliest settlement of the country south of Kentucky yet produced; it is a work which will grow as the years go by. Judge Guild was born near what is now the present site of Erin—on the Memphis & Louisville Railroad—in Stewart County, Tennessee, about the year 1800. There he lived and flourished till 1812, when his father moved over into Sumner. Near ten years of age, the youthful pioneer had a most remarkable experience on his father's little farm near Erin, which he gives in his own words, verbatim as follows:

"I must give you a snake story, which is a part of the history of this country, and has been handed down from sire to son.

"I had my deadfalls to catch squirrels, which was a log eight feet long, with a pair of figure-four triggers, to which was attached an ear of corn to decoy the squirrel, and while moving the corn at the end of the trigger, the log would be thrown, which, to him, was equal to the French guillotine used in those days when France got drunk on crime and vomited blood. Barefooted, I one morning started forth in a long trot, going around the field to examine my deadfalls. When I got to the far corner I found one of my deadfalls down and the tail of a squirrel protruding. I knew I had him. My entire attention being drawn to the squirrel I straddled the log to lift it up, when my naked foot rested on the broadest back of the largest rattlesnake ever seen in Stewart County. He was as strong as a mule and big round as a large yellow dog. He rapidly threw himself into a coil, and his battle-cry was heard. I knew that this meant business. In trying to extricate myself I became entangled in his coils. He then had elevated me three feet above the ground, resting on the broad folds. One of my feet was hung in his coils, and it was with difficulty that I extricated myself. In disengaging myself, I fell headforemost upon the ground. There was no time for swapping horses or getting upon my feet, so I rolled over and over until I got fify feet from the scene of strife. Every time I struck the ground I thought I received a bite. Then I got up, ran to the center of the field, and 'hollered' all kinds of 'murder,' which alarmed my father and mother, who came running with a hoe and an ax, thinking that Indians, who were troublesome in this section, had either wounded or scalped me. As they came up I still involuntarily shouted murder! murder! murder! They partook of the excitement, and asked me what was the matter. I could give but a very indistinct account of the situation, in which I spoke of a snake. Then they were satisfied that I had been bitten by a snake, and raised up my togo, looking for the bite, and asked me where I had been bitten. I told them I was bitten all over. They could find no marks, and wanted me to go and show them the snake. I declined to go in that direction, but told them if they wanted to see the biggest snake they ever laid eyes on, to go up to the corner of the field. I remained, tembling and convulsed. They proceeded to the point indicated, and found the monster snake, still lying by the dead squirrel. He was of such extraordinary proportions that it was not prudent to attack him alone. Billy Rushing and other neighbors were called in to assist in the killing; five or more came. A long, forked sapling was placed on the back of the snake's neck, and held there by four men, when my father stepped up with the ax and cut off his head. We had two or three large yellow dogs, and the body of this snake was about as large and of the same color as the dogs. He was as long as a fence-rail, and had twenty-two rattles, being that many years old. When he was beheaded the dogs were set upon him, and bravely he kept up the fight. He would throw himself into a coil, and with the stump of his neck strike the dogs, knocking them eight or ten feet. When the dogs came out of the fight they were as bloody as butchers. He was such an extraordinary snake that the neighbors concluded to carry him home, but were unable to drag him. The oxen and cart were sent for, and with the aid of handspikes he was rolled into the cart. His skin was stuffed with bran, with the head attached, and it was hung up by the walls of the house as a trophy, such as the scalps that hang from the girth of the Indian warrior."

This was a large snake, but he came forth in the time that tried men's souls. He, like others of larger growth, however, comes down to us well authenticated.

—The secret of the Keely motor is out at last. In a burst of confidence Mr. Keely gave the whole thing away in the following terse language: "Molecular disintegration is the primary generator of vibratory phenomena. Propulsory forces emanating from analytical action upon compound fluid and vapor foundation evolve ethereal matter distinctive from oxydized, hydrogenated and nitrogenated components." How supremely simple it is, now that we know it! Strange that somebody should not have made this discovery years and years ago!—*Boston Transcript.*

—Musicus: Very fugue good jokes can be made on contrapuntal subjects, but paragraphers frequently polka little fun at dance tunes.—*Commercial Herald.*

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