

The Durham Recorder.

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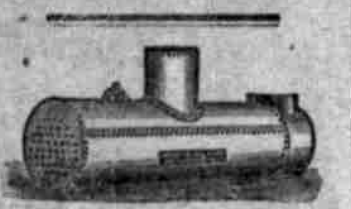
VOL. 71.

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 1890

NO. 14



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AMONG TAR-HEELS.

DEVELOPMENTS OF ONE OF AMERICA'S LEADING INDUSTRIES—LIFE OF A PINE TREE.

A Primitive Class Who Live Happy and Contented Lives in the Isolation of the Great Forests.

In ante-bellum days the production of the three valuable constituents—tar, pitch and turpentine—that enter so largely into the manufacture of naval stores, was in a crude state of development, and at the breaking out of the war the great turpentine producing districts of North Carolina were comparatively deserted, as most of the men had either enlisted or were impressed into the Confederate service. The process of manufacture was so slow and tedious that the demand at times was far in excess of the supply, and the cost of transportation of one of the important elements, rosin, was so extravagant that it was permitted to run to waste from the stills, covering the ground for acres in extent, and from three to four feet in thickness, which, mixing with the sand, became extremely hard, presenting a smooth, flat surface, and greatly resembling solid rock in appearance.

When peace was declared the demand was greatly multiplied, and the introduction of better railroad facilities and the erection of modern mechanical and scientific appliances gave the industry an impetus that was wonderful, and to-day one can hardly comprehend the magnitude of the business or believe the immense proportions into which it has expanded during two decades. Indeed, the people who are employed in the manufacture of these three important commodities are really unconscious of the part they are performing in the developing of one of the greatest industries in the United States. They rarely wonder beyond the confines of the tall pines; a newspaper seldom finds its way into their midst; they know little concerning events transpiring in the busy outside world, isolated as they are from intelligent and progressive civilization.

Here they live in their rude huts, hidden away in the depths of these great forests, in ignorance and solitude, gathering the crude material from nature's laboratory and preparing it for market in the stills. This is their only occupation, for a remarkable feature of the country in juxtaposition to these forests is the sterility of the soil—so barren, in fact, that but little grass is found in some sections.

The life of a pine tree for producing purposes is computed at about eleven years, and the several stages through which it passes ere it is cast aside as a "dummy," to us a technical phrase, is curious indeed. First come the scarifiers, men with half moon-shaped knives, who make an incision in the trunk near the roots about three inches deep. This cut is termed a "box," each of which contains from two to three quarts of sap, and the average number of these boxes to an acre of trees is sixteen hundred.

Then follow the "sappers," who examine the gum to see that it is "ripe," and closely upon their heels come the "dippers," men who carry long, curiously-shaped iron or wooden spoons and an ordinary water-bucket. The bucket is placed against the "box," the spoon inserted in the cavity, and the sap scooped out. By a dexterous twist of the wrist, acquired by long and constant practice, these "dippers" will "clean" the box at one scoop. Then there is a process known as "cornering," which requires a brigade of "hackers." If the season is good and the yield prolific, a piece is cut out from the top and bottom of the "box" by the "hacker" with his gouge, and the tree is "tapped" for the second time.

For a time the largest distillery was located near Wilmington, N. C., with a capacity of producing 1,000 barrels of gum turpentine per day, but distilleries on a more modern plan and of still greater capacity have been erected at intervals in the districts. Look where you may the country seems one vast area of barrels piled one upon the other. Wagons and cars are loaded with them,

vessels and lighters on the rivers and creeks have their full complement, and docks and warehouses are filled to repletion.

One of the most interesting, as well as one of the most amusing sights, is the construction and burning of the tar kilns, which is attended with scenes of the greatest jollification and hilarity by the inhabitants. A rudely-constructed one-story frame building, located in the corner of a worm fence at the forks of a road, marks the entrance to the mighty forest. This unique structure is long and narrow, void of paint, and is environed by a rough porch. In every direction through this mighty wilderness of trees lights twinkle like thousands of stars and dense columns of black smoke rise slowly above the tree tops, filling the air with fumes of burning tar, while men and boys sit silently about like grim specters, the whole presenting a peculiarly wild and weird scene.

The tar kilns are constructed from the stumps and cast-off trees. Nothing appears to be wasted, for even here the refuse material is utilized advantageously. Even after these cast-off trees have been "worked" for the gum turpentine several times the sap still maintains a vigorous vitality, and in the old stumps also, and it adheres to the refuse limbs lying about, which it coats with a thick gummy substance highly combustible, and as quickly ignited as powder. The stumps and trees are cut into lengths of from four to five feet.

An excavation about two feet deep is made in the ground, in the middle of which is placed the mouth of an iron pipe, which extends for some distance underground beyond the excavation. Dirt and refuse matter are then filled in about the split pieces until the pile assumes the size and shape of an immense cone. The whole is then covered with earth and the fire lighted. This is termed the "smother," and as the intense heat softens the tar it runs down into the centre of the earthly basin and drops into the pipe, through which it is conveyed to the outer edge of the excavation. Men and boys are constantly on guard, armed with shovels, to prevent an outburst of flames. They are required to be vigilant and unceasing in their attention to this important part, or disastrous results may follow.

There are two sets of watchers, night and day. Occasionally a great sheet of flame bursts suddenly forth, illuminating the gloomy surroundings and cracking and hissing terrifically. With wild shouts the watchers hastily scoop up shovelfuls of earth and quickly "smother" it. Some of these kilns will yield from two to three hundred barrels of tar. Fifteen days is the limit for the burning out of kilns, and when the cone has settled to a flat surface and the last ember died out then it is that the watchers throw down their shovels with a loud huzz and the women and children come issuing forth from their forest homes, and the festivities begin.

All conventionalities are thrown aside. The whole community is a bewildering chaos of fun and excitement. Here is the kiln-burner in his red shirt, tow-linen trousers, and perhaps barefooted; here is the maid and matron dressed in the primitive calico "frocks," and the dirty, heathy, cunning-looking scions of the tar heelers in medley of colors, all mixed up in inextricable confusion. A venerable negro or two plays the violin, and the inevitable black jug plays a conspicuous part on this general hilarious occasion.

A loyal North Carolinian, who served in the Union army, tells a very amusing story in connection with the rosin beds mentioned above. During General Sherman's famous march to the sea apart of the Twentieth Army Corps was halted in a section of this forest and prepared to camp for the night. The soldiers were somewhat mystified at finding so large a stretch of smooth, solid rock, but congratulated themselves that they would not have to bivouac in the mud.

Knapsacks were unslung, guards were mounted and fires were kindled at different points, and the tired and weary veterans were preparing to settle down for a comfortable rest. The heat of the fires softened the

rosin. First it began to sputter, then great black clouds of smoke began to ascend, and suddenly huge columns of fire shot up seemingly from the very bowels of the earth.

The whole camp was in commotion, the men beat a precipitate retreat, and soon the whole space was a seething, roaring mass of flame. One of the soldiers, as he grabbed his gun and started, shouted a warning to his comrades: "Run, boys! We've struck hell!"

Fun for the Kids.

In a nut-shell—The worm.
A watch word—"What time is it?"
You can always get points from the porcupine.

"Spread yourself"—as the bread remarked to the butter.—St. Louis Magazine

A lengthy morning call—A mother trying to get her son out of bed.

The eagle is dear to the American heart, but the double eagle is twice as dear.

What the socks said to the boot heels—"Run down and see us"—Burlington Free Press.

A man often drops his eyes without breaking them. Not so with his spectacles.—Danville Breeze.

A boy who wanted to learn the soap-making business was bounced because he could not tell a lye.—New York Journal.

"I'll give you a licking," said the old cat to her kitten, but she wasn't mad at all.—Merchant Traveler.

One call will send a man to put out a fire, but it takes half a dozen calls to make him get up and start one.—Danville Breeze.

The giraffes in their necks
bluen wisdom display;
For a little with them
Will go a great way.
—Philadelphia Press.

"Have you read Smithers' book?"
"No." "Why, you said in your review that it was a great story."
"Well, that's all right. Smithers told me that himself."—Bazar.

Sufferer—"Do you pull teeth without pain?"
Dentist—"Well, not always. I sprained my wrist last time I pulled a tooth, and it hurts me yet, occasionally."—Texas Siftings.

The man who complained of having a "gone" feeling can appreciate what the emotions of a man must be who has a cold and who goes to a party without a handkerchief.—New York News.

"Don't feel badly over what my wife said to you to-night. You shouldn't mind what she says." "Well, I don't see why I shouldn't mind what she says. I notice you always do."—Statesman.

"There is a nice thing about having two babies in the house," said Sleepless.

"What is that?"
"They each cry so loud you can't hear the other."—Chatter.

Proof Positive.

"Do you think all prayers are answered?" was asked of a clergyman.
"Oh, yes; if they are made in the right spirit," replied the man of the cloth.

"How can a man know whether his prayers are made in the right spirit?" persisted the inquirer.
"Oh, by seeing if they are answered."

Jonathan In Switzerland.

There is something exquisitely cool in the following reply of a Yankee to a European traveler when the traveler asked if he had just crossed the Alps:
"Wall, now you call my attention to the fact, I guess I did pass risin' ground."

Sullivan and Jackson to Fight in Norfolk.
Lynchburg Advance.

It is stated that Sullivan and Jackson will fight their great battle in Norfolk. A bill was passed by the last Legislature incorporating a company in Norfolk for the purpose of encouraging athletic sports, races, etc. The bill was rushed through the General Assembly in a hurry, and it is stated by Governor McKinney that no law officer could prevent the fight taking place, if Norfolk is selected as the battle ground.

HURTING A STRANGER'S FEELINGS.

He Did What He Promised and Tried to Lift It.

New York Sun.
There were probably a hundred people in the old Island Home depot in Toledo when a tall, thin man, who might have been 40 years old and did not look to weigh over ninety pounds, who had a rope harness on him, passed around the waiting room and said:
"I am going to give an exhibition of strength outside the building, and shall expect the small sum of a dime from each looker-on. I am going to attempt to raise a dead weight of two tons."

All the men and quite a number of women went out, and enough townspeople came down to make a crowd of three hundred. The thin man passed around through the crowd and took up a collection, and he must have got an average of ten cents for every one present. When he had pocketed the money he approached several large grindstones lying in a heap and stacked together and announced:
"Ladies and Gentlemen: I thank you kindly for your contributions. Here is a dead weight of 2,000 pounds. I shall attempt to lift it."

An iron hook in the harness was hooked into the chain, stacking the grindstones, and the thin man began to straighten up. He was encouraged and applauded by the crowd, but the strain he put out would not have raised fifty pounds. He kept at it three or four minutes, and then unhooked and backed off, and said:
"Ladies and gentlemen: it's no use; I can't do it. I have tried and failed."
"See here—this looks like a fraud!" exclaimed a man who had clipped in a quarter.
"Oh, don't say that!" sorrowfully replied the thin man. You all saw me try."
"But you told us to believe you could lift 2,000 pounds."
"Well, I was in hopes I could. I really wish I could, but I don't believe I ever can."
"That's pretty darn thin!" growled red whiskers, "and I am a good mind to give you a taste of my boot!"
"Oh, please don't! I tried my best, and when a man has done his best such talk hurts his feelings. You don't know how badly I want to lift 2,000 pounds."
"I believe you are a fakir."
"A fakir! Hear him ladies and gentlemen! Because I am not as strong as a dray horse he calls me a fakir! This is too much—too much! I am used to adversity, but this breaks me!"

And he sat down on the 2,000 pounds of cold grindstones and wept like a child—weep until the crowd gathered, and he could get away with his \$30 without being kicked.

What Our Exchanges Say.
Washington Gazette: A horse belonging to Mr. Jesse Gaffila committed suicide by jumping into the river at the market one day last week.

High Point Enterprise: The Modera Barn Company have put in a new saw in the basket factory, thereby doubling the capacity. The Company's shipments to other States are increasing. 3,500 sticks went to South Carolina Tuesday.

Greensboro Workman: It is only a few years ago that a house and lot here now held at \$5,000 could have been bought for \$1,300, and other vacant lots now held at \$100 to \$800 could not have been sold at any price. These are some of the marks of a boom about which there can be no mistake.

Raleigh Visitor: The people of North Carolina, and those of the Journalistic profession in particular will learn with deep regret of the death of Mr. John Joseph Bruner, of Salisbury, which took place in that town last Sunday. Mr. Bruner was born in 1817 and was therefore at the time of his decease seventy three years old. His name was a household word in North Carolina for many years as Editor of the Salisbury Watchman, and he died amid the regrets of a large number of his fellow citizens who honored and loved him. Peace to his ashes.

Stonewall Jackson's widow is poor, and has made application for pension under the Mexican war service laws. Her husband made a splendid record as an officer during the war with Mexico.

AS OTHERS SEE US.

BRIGHT LEAF TOBACCO.

The Greatest Pride to North Carolina.

In a two column article in last week's "Once A Week," a paper published in New York, headed "The South of To-Day" we clip the following extract and thank the editor for it:

"In North Carolina factories and cotton-mills are springing up in every direction, as are woolen, paper and rice-mills, factories for working the finely grained native woods of the State, fertilizer factories for utilizing the products of her vast phosphate beds, oil and flouring mills, agricultural implement works and a great variety of others, all busily engaged in developing the resources of this great State. Near Charlotte gold mining is a flourishing industry, and in the western part of the State the vast wealth of coal, iron, copper, zinc, slate and marble has just begun to be appreciated. The bright-leafed tobacco of her northern counties is still the source of greatest pride to North Carolina, and the product for which she has become most widely and justly famed. From this golden leaf one factory in the town of Durham turns out 10,000,000 pounds of granulated smoking tobacco every year, and another makes 300,000,000 of cigarettes in the same time. North Carolina is doing more than any other Southern State, unless it be Texas, to encourage immigration, and offers most attractive inducements to new settlers."

ONCE MORE.
The year of 1889 represents Old-ham in N. C.; 1890, out!

Hard On Kentucky Christians.
"There is not a church in either Perry, Letcher or Knott county! This is something for good people to think on and act on. Recall some of the missionaries from foreign lands and send them up the mountains. Is not the soul of a Kentucky mountaineer as precious as that of a cannibal African or a rat-eating Chinese? Yes, verily!—Nicholasville Journal.

The Journal is right. Why should Kentucky send thousands of dollars annually to foreign countries to convert the heathen, and neglect her own destitute people? The cannibal kills his neighbor and eats him, but the Perry, Letcher and Knott fellows kill their neighbors for the mere fun of killing. Let charity begin at home.

We clip the above from the *Climax*, a newspaper published in Richmond, Madison County, Kentucky. So two Kentucky newspapers say that there are three counties in that State that have not a single church in their borders. We know that the head of the great Whisky Ring was located in Kentucky, and was a powerful factor every way in the "Dark and Bloody Ground."

We had no idea that such a state of affairs existed even on the frontiers of the West among the pioneers. There, when there is sufficient population to form a county, the church and the school-house have preceded the county court house, and have been dispensing their blessings. But this is in Kentucky, which has been a State in the Union ever since the 4 of Feb. 1791 and is the land of Clay, the Crittendens, and the Breckinridges.

But it is not necessary to withdraw missionaries now engaged in the home or foreign field: there is a plenty who can be sent to this hard and uninviting field in Kentucky, and they ought to be sent by somebody. There is abundance of Mission Boards of the various churches that operate at home. Let them turn their attention to Perry, Letcher and Knott counties in Kentucky and put a stop to the practice of "killing their neighbors for the mere fun of killing."

Nothing is more simple than greatness; indeed, to be simple is to be great.