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Contents.

(Illustrated articles a	re marked with an asterisk.)
calypha marginata*	247 Iron, expansion of, etc. (18) 250
ir. purity of the (29)	250 Iron sticking to linen
llovs for repairing valves (28)	250 Kerosene fiames (15)
lloys resembling gold (32)	250 Kerosene, hose for (20) 250
menities, editorial	241 Kitchen cabinet* 243
inswers to correspondents	250 Lacquer, a good 242
rchitectural studies (45)	251 Lacquer, gold 240
rkansas diamonds, to dress (81)	250 Lattle, proportions of a
rmor place, the thickest	247 Magnetic meridian, the (57) 251
ells, alarm (59)	201 Magneto-electric engine*
elting, something woout"	250 Match composition (44)
costs angines etc. (8)	250 Meridian changes in the (6) 250
coilor plug fusible*	246 Mica, electricity from (21) 250
collers blacking for (11)	250 Mica, the utilizations of 241
collers testing*	246 Mildew, preventing (27) 250
read making Vienna	240 Mucilage bottle, improved*
susiness and personal	250 New books and publications 248
ards, soiled (37)	250 Nitro-glycerin, dynamite, etc. (48), 251
ars, early sl'eping (58)	251 Oil and water volatile, etc. (43) 251
hilblains, to cure	248 Parchment, colors on (22) 250
listerns, natural	248 Patents, American and foreign 248
oal, early discovery of	247 Patents, official list of 251
coal tar paint (36)	251 Pavement, pig iron 242
opyright in articles (33)	251 Photographic carbon process 242
esk, improved*	246 Pictures on glass (19), 250
liamonds (46)	251 Plant, the time to
artbenware, glazing (34)	251. Flus and minus signs
arth is weighed, etc., how the"	245 Fump, norse power
ngingers in New York city (22)	251 Pullips, locomotive and air (10) 250
ngines high and low (7)	250 Railway gionals improved* 946
ingines proportions of (13)	250 Rain gages (42) 251
ingines speed of, etc. (2, 3, 14)	250 Recines, useful
whibition, the international	241 Reservoir dam, the Lynde
xperiment, new lecture*	244 Roses, how to set out 244
eathers, cleaning (47)	251 Sewing machine in Europe, the., 243
eed water heater*	242 Snake, aspitting 248
'iber plant, the baobab	240 Soap for toilet, etc., (32) 250
isb, canning (38)	251 Soapsuds, save your 242
luosilicic acid in the arts	240 Soap, testing (50) 251
lass cylinders, blowing (40)	251 Spectrum of the electric arc 242
lass, ruby-colored (19)	250 Spectrum, the magnetic
ourd, an ornamental"	247 Spring power 244
wrogcone simple form of the	231 Study and Dusiness 291
(and ening wire (1)	950 Tellurium (94.96) 950
leating hy steam (12)	250 Tin in Tuscany 242
luman remains in Michigan	244 Trees, shade 251
ncendiary machine. an	239 Tube cleaner, steel* 248
nduction coils (56)	251 Varnish for negatives
nk, a river of	248 Water, electrolysis of (58),
nk, blue black (30)	250 Waterproofing boots (20) 250
nk, indelible Indian (25)	250 Water through pipes, flow of (10). 250
nk, indelible, to remove (42)	251 Well water in cities 239

THE SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN SUPPLEMENT. No. 16.

With 51 Figures and 60 Articles.

For the Week ending April 15, 1876. TABLE OF CONTENTS.

- TABLE OF CONTENTS. I. ENGINEERING AND MECHANICS. With 32 figures.—The Jetty Works, Gaiveston Harbor, 5 figures.—New Method for Foundations, 1 figure.—Milling Machines and Tools, by Josnua Rosz, 7 figures.—Ihe's Differential Compass.—Bang r Water Works.—Trial of Air Brake.— Proposed New Tunnel under the Thames.—Gunnery Trials Ama-teur Mechanics.—New Suspens', on Bridge over the Hudson River.— Deepening of the Beds of Hivers.—San Francisco Free Baths.—Dril-ling and Slotting Machine, figure .—Richards' Water Meter. 5 figures.— Shaping Machines, by Professor MacCord, 9 figures.—Screw Propel-lers, by N. D. SPARTALI, 4 figures.—Exaporation and Percolation, by C. GREAVES, C. E.—The Si tun Gun.—Action of Powder on the Bores of Guns.—Ironwork Construction in 1875. U. THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF 1876. With Sengravings.—
- THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF 1876. With \$ engravings.-The Brewers' Exhibition, 1 figure.-The New HampshireState Building, 1 figure.-The Feed Water Heater at the Exhibition, 1 figure.-The American Society of Civil Engineers at the Exhibition.
- Amotical Courts of of the Baginess and Assaying, by PROFESSOR BRU. No KERL, 5 figures. Crystalline Surfacing of Metals.-Cutting Steel by Means of Soft Iron.-Award of the Bessemer Medal.-Remarkable Cable Tolegraphing.-A Dividing Rod Expert.-Cremation in Milan.-Natura Gas, its Composition and Transportation.-Product of Steel.-Changing Methods of Business. III.
- IV. CHEMISTRY AND METALLURGY.—Chemical Substances Obtained from Plants.—Action of Sulphuric Acid on Hydrogen Carbides.—Ane-thol.—Use of Cercum for Aniline Blacks.—Spectra of Nitrogen and Al-kaline Metals.—Temescal Tin Mines.
- V. LESSONS IN MECHANICAL DRAWING. By PROFESSOR MACCORD

VI. AGRICULTURE, ETC.-The Chemical Action of Plants, by PROFES

Scientific American.

FLUOSILICIC ACID IN THE ARTS.

One of the compounds of silicon with hydrogen and fluorine, known as hydrofluosilicic acid, H₂ Si F₆, seems likely to become at some future time as useful and well known as it is now rare and untalked of. It is not a new substance, but has long been used in analytical laboratories for precipi tating potassium, one of the most difficult salts to precipi tate; and also it is used for separating barium from calcium and strontium. About eight years ago, Tessié du Motay and E. Karcher attempted its manufacture on a commercial scale at Grossblittersdorf; but the Franco-Prussian war interrupted the business, which has never been revived. Their process consisted in smelting together in a shaft fur nace, by means of a cold blast, a dry mixture of sand, clay, fluorspar, and fine coke. The gases evolved, consisting chiefly of nitrogen, carbonic oxide, carbonic acid, and fluoride of silicon, were passed through water in a condensing apparatus, when the fluoride of silicon was decomposed into silicic acid and hydrofluosilicic acid. The acid solution was either introduced into commerce in that form, or employed in preparing silico-fluoride of potassium and sodium. This process was quite imperfect, and, until a better one is devised, the manufacture of fluosilicic acid on a large scale is not likely to be revived. In the first place, not all the fluoride of silicon is decomposed by the water, and this involves a waste; secondly, some hydrofluoric acid is formed, which cannot be expelled, and this interferes with its usefulness in decomposing the chlorides of potassium and sodium. Finally, the silico fluorides of potassium and sodium, when formed, are not completely decomposed by heat into fluoride of silicon innocence or guilt being determined by the manner of its acand alkaline fluorides.

That it is highly desirable to devise a cheap and perfect method of manufacturing fluosilicic acid will be seen when we mention some of the uses to which it is applicable, although some of these are of less value to us than to our German neighbors. This is especially true in regard to the manufacture of fluoride of potassium from the Stassfurt brines, rendering its separation from the troublesome magnesium very easy. It can also be employed to separate sodium from sea water. The alkaline silico-fluorides are decomposed by heat into fluoride of silicon gas, which is utilized, and alkaline fluorides, which are easily converted into caustic alkalies by means of quicklime. Kessler has also patented a process for making soda from table salt, in which carbonate of lime is used. The fluoride of calcium produced may be used over again in making the fluosilicic acid, in place of fluorspar.

But there are many other uses to which fluosilicic acid may be put beside the preparation of caustic alkalies. It has been proposed to use it for decomposing bones, phosphorites, and sombrerites, in the manufacture of artificial fertilizers; while fluosilicate of potassium is itself a very suitable form in which to introduce this alkali into the soil.

Fluosilicic acid has been used in the manufacture of beet sugar, as it is able to precipitate the alkaline salts contained in the molasses, which hinder the separation of the crystallizable sugar. Their precipitation by this acid was first pro posed by Von Kletzinsky and afterwards by Marix.

Combe and Wright recommendits use in the manufacture of glass and porcelain. They propose to replace the lime by silicofluoride of calcium, either alone or with the barium salt, in the manufacture of glass; and instead of carbonate of potash they would take the silicofluoride of potassium. Still more important is the substitution of fluosilicic acid for boracic acid in the lime, alumina, and other compounds used in English stoneware. Silico fluorides could scarcely be used for glass on account of the evolution of fluoride of silicon vapor when fused.

It may also be mentioned that it has been proposed and used in making artificial stone, for fixing stereochromatic colors, in making tartaric acid, as a substitute for this acid, as a mordant in dyeing and calico printing (in place of the drug bath), for whitening pins, for removing the lime from beet juice in making sugar, and many other uses. It pro duces an incomparably beautiful patina on brass, bronze, zinc. and German silver. A French manufacturer uses its sodium salt to make hard alloys rich in silicon. T. Christy has taken a patent in England for its use in the manufacture of ammonia from gas liquor.

It seems as if fluosilicic acid, notwithstanding the service it has already rendered, is not attracting the attention it deserves either from chemists or manufacturers. Let America take hold of the problem and show the old world what she can do with this curious and useful acid. On a small scale in the laboratory, it is made by mixing together pulverized fluorspar and fine sand, adding oil of vitriol, and heating. The gaseous fluoride of silicon thus formed is passed into water, precautions being taken to prevent the tube from choking up with precipitated silica. The products are pure gelatinous silica and a solution of hydrofluosilicic acid.

[APRIL 15, 18 76.

en from thin strips of the bark. The bark is obtained by first chopping off the softer outer bark of the tree with a hatchet, after which the inner bark is stripped off in large sheets. The pieces are beaten with a stick to soften them, and shaken to get rid of some of the pithy matter which they carry. The sap is then dried out in the sun, and then the fiber is pressed into bales for shipping. The smaller trees produce the finest and softest fibers. The bark is taken off all round the tree, which does not appear to suffer much injury. A fresh layer of bark grows and is thick enough to be taken off in six or eight years. Mr. J. J. Monteiro, who has the credit of adding this valuable fiber to the resources of the paper trade, tells some amusing stories of the difficulty he experienced in developing the business of collecting the fiber. By paying liberally, he induced some of the natives to take hold of the new work at last, and matters went on tolerably smoothly until a season of drouth came on. The fetich men declared that the "big iron "-his hydraulic press-had fetiched the rain and prevented its appearance. The matter was discussed throughout the country; and at a general meeting of the people of the neighboring towns, it was decided to apply the usual tests to the big iron, and, if it proved to be a sorcerer, to destroy the press and throw it into the sea. It is the custom in those parts to try all cases of supposed witchcraft by subjecting the suspected to the ordeal of poison. For this purpose they use casca, the bark of a large tree, the erythrophlaum Guineen. sis, which acts either as a violent emetic or as a purgative, tion.

In the case of the press, the application of this simple and, to them, perfectly satisfactory test was seriously interfered with by the absence of any stomach or insides to the big iron, for the poison to take effect on. After much deliberation it was resolved to employ a substitute in the person of a slave to the king. To this unwilling representative of the big iron the casca was duly administered, and luckily acted as an emetic; so the press was declared innocent of bewitching the rain. Still the rain held off, and grave suspicions arose as to the sufficiency of the trial. To resolve all doubts, the poor slave had to undergo the ordeal a second time, fortunately with the same result, and the press was never more suspect. ed of complicity with evil spirits.

THE SECRETS OF MAKING VIENNA BREAD.

One of the most practical and useful works which has recently emanated from the government printing office, at Washington, is Professor E. N. Horsford's report on the subject of Vienna bread. Professor Horsford was a member of the United States Scientific Commission to the Vienna Fair of 1873; and the present book is the result of careful and exhaustive research, the aim and object of which was to un. earth the secret of the world-famed bread peculiar to the Austrian capital. There is something very appetizing in his description of the Kaiser Semmel, as the bread is there termed. It is "a smooth, irregularly rounded small wheaten flour loaf, of uniform weight. It presents a ricb reddish brown crust and a delicately shaded yellowish, almost white, interior. It is always light, evenly porous, free from acidity in taste or aroma, faintly sweet without the addition of saccharine matter to the flour or dough, slightly and pleasantly fragrant, palatable without butter or any form of condiment, and never cloying upon the appetite."

The reverse, the Professor might have added, on one hand, of the dyspepsia breeding, doughy compound which passes for bread in many a country home, and of the attenuated. alum-treated, tasteless loaf which is produced in many a city bakery. It seems, however, that these gastronomic abominations are not necessary evils, and that, despite the repeated efforts which have been made to imitate Vienna bread out of Vienna, which have uniformly failed, a way does exist of producing it in all its delicacy. And that way is very simple, as the reader will see by the following:

The first requisite is to procure as good flour as the Vienna bakers have. Good flour can only be made from pure sound wheat, and by good milling. This means in general flinty wheat reduced by the process of high or half high milling, and a selection of the products of the milling, not to exceed one half the total weight of the wheat ground. Good fresh middlings flour, Professor Horsford says, would compare favorably with the average Hungarian flour used in Vienna.

The next requirement is fresh pressed yeast. This is already ade in the United States. It is not difficult to ma ture, since it is made by skimming the froth from beer mash in active fermentation. This contains the upper yeast, which must be repeatedly washed with cold water until only the pure white yeast settles clear from the water. This soft tenacious mass, after the water has been drawn off, is gathered into bags, and subjected to hydraulic pressure until there remains a semi-solid, somewhat brittle, doughlike substance, still containing considerable water. This is the pressed yeast, which will keep for eighty days in summer and for an indefinite time on ice. For use it should be of re. cent preparation and sweet, so that it will yield only alcohol and carbonic acid as products of fermentation. Next follows the very important operation of mixing. Into the middle of a zinc-lined trough, about 21 feet wide and 8 feet long, semicylindrical in form, the Vienna baker empties his flour sacks. Then, into a pail holding about five gallons, equal parts of milk and water are poured, and left to stand until the mixture attains the temperature of the room, between 70° to 80° Fah. It is then poured into one end of the trough and mixed with the bare hand with a small portion

SOR A. VOGEL. VII. NATURAL HISTORY, ETC. - Sea COWS. - Remarkable Blow by Sword Fish. - Largest Goniatite, - Ascent of Mont Blanc. - Walking and Training - Brain Changes in Hydrophobia. - London Geological So-ciety. - New Trout from Kerm River, 1 figure. - New Guinea and the Admiralty Islands.

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A GOLD lacquer closely resembling the real Chinese article is made by first melting to a perfectly fluid mixture 2 parts copal and 1 part shellac. To this add 2 parts good boiled oil. Remove the vessel from the fire, and gradually mix in 10 parts oil of turpentine. To give color, add a solution of gum guttæ in turpentine for yellow, or of dragon's blood for red, a sufficient quantity of coloring material being used to give the desired shade,

THE BAOBAB AS A FIBER PLANT.

The baobab (Adansonia digitata) has long been known as one of the giants of the vegetable kingdom. It has lately become an important source of fiber for papermaking. The fitness of its inner bark for this purpose was demonstrated some years ago, but it is only within the past decade that it

-181-6

has begun to rank as an important article of commerce. By the natives of Africa the bark is put to various uses: Twisted intostring and rope, it is used for all sorts of purposes, and in nntwisted strips it serves to secure loads and to bind together the poles employed in making their huts. Finer pieces are pulled out so as to resemble coarse netting; and the edges being sewn together, they make handy bags for cotton, gum, grain, and the like. Coffee and ground nuts are brought of the flour to form a thin emulsion. The press yeast is