

**ARTIFICIAL AMBER.**—Articles made of imitation amber are now produced in immense quantities and of beautiful appearance, and sold for the natural material. The resembling substance thus employed is principally colophony—a resin obtained by the decomposition of turpentine—though many other ingredients are also made

stance becomes liquid at a much lower temperature. Again, while the true article is only slightly attacked, after a very long time, by ether and alcohol, the imitation rapidly loses its polish in contact with such liquids, and soon becomes soft. True amber pieces of small size may be formed into a lump of much greater

**TEXAS MILLET.**

We give on this page an engraving of Texas millet, a forage plant which has gained some prominence in the Southern States, and is put forth as worthy of attention by the Commissioner of Agriculture in his report for 1878. It is represented to be a grass of vigorous, rapid growth. It is very leafy, the leaves broad, rather thin, sprinkled with soft hairs. It grows two to three feet high, but the spreading stalks are often four feet or more in length, growing very close and thick at the base, and yielding a large amount of food.

This grass has been brought to the attention of the department during several years past. Mr. Pryor Lea, of Goliad, Texas, has had it in cultivation for a number of years, and writes respecting it as follows: "I consider it far superior to any grass that I ever saw for hay. It is a much more certain crop than millet, and cultivated with less labor, and all kinds of stock prefer it. I expect to report a good second crop on the same ground this year. In this region this grass, in the condition of well-cultured hay, is regarded as more nutritious than any other grass. It grows only in cultivated land; it prospers best in the warmest fourth of the year; its luxurious growth subdues other grasses and some weeds, with the result of leaving the ground in an ameliorated condition."

The following is the technical description of the plant: Branches of the panicle rough, the pedicels with scattered hairs, especially near the flowers; spikelets oblong, somewhat pointed, 2 to 2½ lines long, sparsely hairy; lower glume half or two-thirds the length of the upper, acute, 5-nerved, the lateral nerves uniting with the midnerve below the apex; upper glume prominently 5 to 7 nerved, pointed; sterile flower with 2 palea, the lower 5 to 7 nerved, much like the upper glume, the upper paler; thin and transparent, as long as the lower; perfect flower ovate or oblong-ovate, acutish, transversely wrinkled with fine reticulated striae.

An annual grass two to four feet high, sparingly branched, at first erect, becoming decumbent and widely spreading, very leafy, sheaths and leaves finely soft-hairy; margin of the leaves rough; leaf blades 6 to 8 inches long and ½ to 1 inch wide, upper leaves reaching to the base of the panicle, or nearly so; panicle 6 to 8 inches long, strict, the branches alternate, erect, simple, 3 to 4 inches long, with somewhat scattered sessile spikelets.

A PECULIAR case in relation to weighing scales has recently been decided in an English court, which may be of great interest to scale makers and users in this country. It seems that there is a scale known as Salter's Family Scale, which consists of a bowl-shaped scale on an upright pillar and a finger and dial register underneath. It is said that 40,000 of these scales are made every year, and thousands of them are in use in the government departments. It was alleged by the prosecutor in this case, that by placing the goods to be weighed on one side of the scale, and not exactly in the center, the weight was erroneously registered, sometimes to the extent of several ounces. The defendants, being a Manchester firm who had sold one of these scales, were found guilty of the charge of having sold a false or unjust balance, and were sentenced to pay a fine of 20 shillings and costs. As might be expected, the case is to be taken to a higher court.

**GREAT INCREASE OF TONNAGE.**—The shipping of the world is now estimated at 20,000,000 tons, which is 10-fold greater than the figures of two centuries ago. It is especially noteworthy that it has doubled within the last 25 years. Accompanying the increase in tonnage, there has also been a vast increase in speed, so that the amount of maritime commerce now is at least 40 times greater than in the year 1680.



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TEXAS MILLET.—*Panicum Texanum.*

use of to give it the requisite qualities. So perfect is the imitation said to be, that the false substance has the electrical properties of the true, and some ingenious fabricators have even managed to introduce into the substance foreign bodies, insects, etc., to render the similarity more striking. The means of detection are simple. Genuine amber requires a heat of 545° to 550° Fah., to melt it, while the spurious sub-

stance, by moistening the surfaces to be united with caustic potash, and pressing them together while warm.

**HOW SNAKES MOVE.**—Snakes creep; they have a series of muscular rings along the body, by the contraction of which, in rapid succession, they move over the ground. Watch the next one you come across.