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THE RELATIONS OF CHEAP PATENTS TO INDUSTRIAL PROSPERITY.

The factors of American prosperity are many.

We have a magnificent country, to begin with; a territory of continental scope, made fruitful by a climate unsurpassed in kindly adaptation to needs of varied agriculture and the requirements of industrial activity. Our mineral resources are unrivaled in richness and variety. Our complex population embodies no small part of the best pluck and energy and intelligence of all civilized nations. Our free institutions favor individual and associated activity in all legitimate directions. With us men are respected as men and honored according to their deeds; the thoughtful laborer, whose practical sense or constructive ability adds new force or utility or convenience to the common possessions, far outranks in popular estimation the thoughtless inheritor of wealth or social position, however honored or useful his ancestry may have been. The laws are framed to guard the rights and liberties of all; and each man's sphere of action is limited only by the inevitable limitations of his personal force, intelligence, and integrity.

Under such conditions progress and general prosperity would seem to be inevitable, so inevitable that minor conditions might be safely left out in taking account of the great factors of national well being. But other nations, which do not share our present prosperity, are not destitute of like conditions favorable to industrial success. Some in addition enjoy age, the prestige of power, long accumulated wealth, an industrial history covering many generations, and priority in the markets of the world, which unite to give them advantages over the most favorably situated new country with its newly established industries. In the front rank of such countries stands Great Britain, which for many years has been the workshop of the world, and still retains a commercial supremacy which tells immeasurably in favor of her mechanical industries, in giving them a commanding position in the world's markets. Yet the trade of Great Britain languishes under a serious depression, which threatens to become permanent through the increasingly successful rivalry of other industrial nations—Germany, Belgium, France, and pre-eminently the United States.

The causes of this relative if not absolute industrial decline on the part of Great Britain is not far to seek. At a recent meeting of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers a prominent speaker charged the responsibility upon British inventors and engineers. They had failed to keep abreast of the times. They had allowed the inventors of other countries to displace their products even in British markets. The question was taken up at the August meeting of the London Association, and while the inaction of British inventors was admitted and deplored, the blame was traced to the working of the British patent system. Said the essayist of the occasion, Mr. John Standfield: "The chief cause of our commercial suffering and stagnation is a barbarous law, which to a very great extent prohibits science from developing the resources and strength of the empire." Just before Mr. Standfield had attributed the rise and progress of the British empire wholly to the inventive genius of its people, coupled with the manufacturing resources of the country, pointing out the fact that the great and important inventions patented in England during this century have not only contributed more to the greatness of the empire than all that was done during the previous five centuries, but have brought nearly all of the wealth which England now possesses. Even where the sources of national wealth lay underground, in mines of coal and iron and copper, such wealth could never have been developed except for machinery invented for the purpose. But invention is now less active in England than in France, Belgium, and the United States, and England is losing ground in consequence. This loss of trade, says Mr. Standfield, "may be directly attributed to our (i. e., England's) driving abroad or suppressing a very large portion of the seeds of our prosperity. America is the only great country that treats practical science fairly, and she is consequently our principal competitor." Further on Mr. Standfield says:

"The cheap patent law of the United States has been and still is the secret of the great success of that country. . . . The invention we suppress takes root freely in the United States, which, consequently, supplies our marts with large quantities of labor-saving tools, whereas if our laws were fair and equal we should supply their marts, and use the proceeds for purchasing their grain without impoverishing our country by a great loss of capital as at present."

In the subsequent discussion this point was dwelt upon at great length. How can it be expected, it was asked, that English engineers and inventors can compete with their brethren in the United States when the American can get twenty-five patents for the money which has to be paid for one in England? Very few inventors can pay the fees demanded by the English Patent Office. "The result is," said one speaker, "one-third of our inventors are driven to America, and another third are buried, the secret of their invention still with them." And this obviously covers but a part of the national loss, since the possible but never-to-be-developed inventors in English workshops probably outnumber many times the actual inventors who undertake to put their ideas into working shape. This was put very clearly by one of the speakers. "He had heard it said in every quarter of the globe that English workmen had little or no inventive genius, although they improved things very well, but upon examination he said it would be found that the names to most of the American patents were English

names; and he felt certain that, if the cost of a patent in England were the same as in America, instead of 5,000 patents, the English should take out 45,000 to the Americans' 30,000. If placed on the same footing as the United States, a great impetus to trade would follow. It was evident that there was something wrong when America could pay £9 where England paid £6 per ton of iron, and 9s. instead of 6s. per day for labor, and yet beat the English in the open market. He thought it was the duty of the Board of Trade, when the country was losing its trade, to inquire as to the cause of it. There was only one reason for it, and that was the abundance of labor-saving tools used by the Americans, because their mechanics could get all their appliances protected so cheaply."

In the course of his remarks the essayist pointed out that by suppressing native genius through heavy patent fees, England had driven away many national industries in which she had once held a foremost place. The pianoforte trade was one, London being rapidly stocked with instruments made in New York. The watch and silk trades had been driven out of Coventry and Clerkenwell, while machine-made watches were being developed in America, where labor was 50 per cent dearer. Said the speaker: "The American cheap patents and labor-saving tools alone account for Coventry's and Clerkenwell's misery and decay, and for England's serious loss of revenue and national income. If our workmen were allowed to become inventors they would prove quite as well able to design and manufacture machinery for the construction of cheap watches as the Americans. On the present system our best mechanics, if they have any ambition, are compelled to emigrate to America, where alone they can find an opportunity of utilizing their genius."

Further on the speaker said: "The American patent laws have given the inventors of such small but generally useful articles as sewing machines such a good opportunity of universally introducing their inventions that it is now not worth the while of any manufacturer here or elsewhere to attempt to compete with the American houses. There are 4,000 skilled artisans employed in the United States in this small manufacture alone. While American organs of numerous descriptions are not only excellent but cheap, there is not a single cheap English organ known to the public."

"What has occurred to our piano and watch trade is now occurring—if it has not already occurred—in regard to the manufacture of locomotives and many other manufactures, to the partial ruin of our trade, wealth, and empire."

We might continue these forcible and instructive citations, but the limit of our space forbids. The arguments brought forward to prove from American experience not only the sound policy but the absolute necessity of lower patent fees in England are not needed here. The moral of the discussion, however, should not be overlooked by the friends of American industry. While our greatest rival in the industrial world is learning from our experience the wisdom of extending to inventors the encouragement which comes from a just and inexpensive recognition of their rights, the American people must not be deluded by specious sophistries into an abandonment of the position taken by the framers of our Constitution with regard to inventions and letters patent therefor. The wisdom of granting patents for invention is no longer a subject for discussion. The sound policy of carefully guarding the inventor's rights, against infringements, and of keeping down the fees for issuing the necessary papers, is equally well established. Yet as soon as Congress meets again we may expect a puzzling variety of covert assaults upon the patent system under the guise of bills for the amendment of the patent laws—assaults which will demand the constant watchfulness of every friend of American industry. Inventors and their friends should see to it that they are not misrepresented at Washington by men unacquainted with regard to the uses and benefits of the patent system. They should take pains not to further the election of candidates known to be in sympathy with those who have sought and still seek to break down the legal safeguards of the property rights of inventors and patentees, as provided by the patent laws. They should take especial pains to lay before their representatives in both houses such information as will enable the framers of our laws to avoid the snares which clever agents of anti-patent associations are sure to weave in bills ostensibly drawn to "promote industry" and "encourage invention," or to protect the "innocent" users of what does not belong to them.

"MALARIAL" FEVER IN NEW ENGLAND.

Undoubtedly "malaria" covers a multitude of sins of ignorance on the part of physicians, almost every malady, the nature of which is not readily understood, being attributed in professional parlance to malaria or malarial complication. Still there is evidently some malefic influence, whether in the air, in the earth, or in the waters under the earth, that has been causing in New England the past summer almost as much suffering as the break bone fever has occasioned along our Southern coasts.

The history of the "malarial wave," as it is called, and its progress eastward and northward, is instructive. For forty years preceding 1865 New England had been practically exempt from the troublesome "chills and fever," "fever and ague," or "malarial fever," which prevailed more or less generally further West and South. There had been an epidemic of it after the war of 1812, and an earlier wave had