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"PATENT PERFDY."

Under this heading the Prairie Farmer devotes a long column to a denunciation of the patent system, exhibiting in its worst phase the spirit of unreason which just now pervades so large a portion of the agricultural world with respect to patent rights.

The grounds for complaint against the patent system appear to be in substance two: First, under its fostering influence inventors are continually introducing new machines, and improvements on old ones, which farmers cannot afford to do without; Second, the manufacturers of the improved machines actually charge money for them, and often get rich by making and selling them in large numbers. Incidentally the manufacturers are given to the wholesale purchase of patent rights from inventors, and erecting upon them greater "monopolies," to "the vexation of the public." In this way the beneficent purpose of the Patent Office, they tell us, has been and is constantly perverted, and the institution turned into an "engine of fraud and oppression."

This perversion of patent rights, our contemporary goes on to say, "presses harder on the farmers than upon any other class of the community. The necessities of existence compel the farmer to keep abreast of the times in all the mechanical improvements in the implements of his business. The penalty of not keeping up is worse than falling behind: it is that of going under. If he does not use the average quality of labor-saving machinery he cannot compete with those who do, and if he cannot compete he cannot live in a country where labor and the cost of living are high. Even his manual labor, separated from machinery, is comparatively valueless, so that, if he cannot use improved implements of his own, he must perforce hire out to use those of his more fortunate or more enterprising neighbors."

It is terrible to contemplate the pressure thus brought to bear upon farmers by this fertility of our inventors, and somewhat amazing to see how tenderly the Prairie Farmer regards them and their interests. If the patent system had become an engine for the oppression of the farmers only, the perversion of its function evidently would not be so grievous or unbearable; but it bears even harder upon the inventor, and for his sake its immediate abolition is demanded.

In the words of the Farmer, "the patent laws were designed to reward the original inventor of a valuable contrivance; but it is a rare, not to say phenomenal, case in which such intention is carried out. The design is almost invariably stolen by some tricky associate of the inventor, or boldly taken out of his possession by a superior in the establishment in which he works, or wheedled out of him for a song by some speculative capitalist. The sentimental arguments for granting patents may be dismissed summarily. The real inventors never get the benefit of their inventions, and the further pretense of protecting them is a hollow mockery."

Strange that the 20,000 inventors who apply for patents every year, and keep on inventing and taking out patents year after year, sometimes scores of them in the course of a lifetime, do not discover the extent to which they are swindled, and strike hands with the Grangers in securing the overthrow of this terrible "engine of fraud and oppression!"

Forgetting syntax and all save the enormity of the crime which the Patent Office commits in giving the deluded inventor his letters patent, the Farmer says: "The government takes the applicant's money, the agents takes all he can beg and borrow, and his return is a document seldom worth the paper its matter is printed on."

To put a stop to this official injustice, what remedy can be more summary and logical than the one the Farmer proposes when it says, "An act of Congress should declare all existing patents forfeited to the people!" and what proposition could more fitly fall under the heading "Patent Perfidy"?

The immediate occasion of this outburst against the patent system is the recent decision of the Supreme Court sustaining the barbed wire fence patents owned by Washburn, Moen & Company.

"The sweeping character of that decision," says our excited contemporary, "is almost beyond comprehension. The use of barbed wire will be practically unlimited for some years, and the profits of this one firm will distance the tales of the Arabian Nights, the treasures of Monte Christo, or the fortunes of the Bonanza kings. Allowing one firm to bleed hundreds of thousands is all the more doubtful policy from the fact that the firm produces nothing, but simply preys on the work and needs of others, under the protection of government, like the highwaymen and freebooters of the Romantic period."

That the company which own the barbed wire fence patents have a most desirable property is beyond question. That they may make a good deal of money out of their property, if their business is wisely conducted, is altogether probable. But where the bleeding and robbery of hundreds of thousands come in is not so apparent.

The company offer the Western farmers an excellent fencing material, and the farmers will buy it when they cannot do better. If the barbed wire fencing is so much cheaper and more efficient than any other to be had that the prairie farmers cannot do without it, the company are to be congratulated, and the farmers have no obvious reason for complaining. There are a great many species of property that are desirable, and that men would like to get without

paying therefor the market price—land and cattle and corn, as well as fence material—but the intensity of that desire is no just ground for the legal or illegal seizure of such property; and any arguments which go to justify the confiscation of intellectual property justify with infinitely greater force the abolition of property in land. The champions of the farmers will do well, in this connection, to keep in mind the proverbial advice to those who live in glass houses.

In any case the objection to the barbed wire patents is largely sentimental and grossly exaggerated. The Western Rural cries out against the "barbed wire fence outrage" as loudly as the Prairie Farmer, and demands as shriekily the overturning of the patent system; yet, at the close of a long editorial on the "barbed wire fence monopoly," as an illustration of this "reckless disregard of justice and the interests of our farmers in the management of the patent shop at Washington," it says:

"Some of our subscribers in Iowa inform us that they intend to resort to the use of plain telegraph wire for fence purposes, setting the posts closer together, and using five wires, which they claim will answer the purpose just as well as barbed wire. It will be found, however—we think—that the additional wire, and the additional posts needed, will bring the cost up to a figure that will not be much under that at which barbed wire ought to be sold for, if indeed it comes much below what it now actually is sold for."

This plain statement of fact simply cuts the ground from under the anti-patent complaint. Thanks to the inventions which the barbed wire people legitimately control, they are able to set before the farmers of the West as good a fence as, if not a better fence than, the farmers can otherwise obtain, and in doing this they lessen in no way the freedom of the farmers to invent or construct a better and cheaper fence if they can.

No doubt it would be money in the pockets of the farmers if they could get their fences for nothing, or at prime cost; so it would be apparently to the profit of fence makers and other manufacturers to get their wheat and corn and beef and butter on the same terms. But useful things are not to be had in this world in that way, and fortunately sensible and sober-minded farmers are aware of the fact. The unthinking may be temporarily deluded by the sophistries of those who assume to guide them, but their common sense and sense of justice will dominate in the end.

OZONE AND THE SANITOLGY OF ODORS.

At the meeting of the (Homeopathic) County Medical Society in this city, April 13, Dr. John S. Linsley read a paper on the "Sanitology of Odors," in which some astounding results were attributed to the influence of ozone in the air.

The old theory of the superior healthfulness of an ozonized atmosphere was not only enlarged upon, but it was shown to the doctor's satisfaction that the more or less remarkable careers of such men as Moses and John Adams and Daniel Webster and Horace Greeley and some of our popular poets, might be traced to the energizing property of an ozonic atmosphere. The atmosphere which "energized" Moses, we presume, must be accepted as specially ozonized, only by inference from its inferred effects, which is a somewhat unsatisfactory basis for an argument; but the doctor was able to point to the fact of more recent observation that the celebrated New Englanders he mentioned were all natives of what he called the ozonic region.

A considerable source of the ozone which is supposed to exert so beneficial an effect upon the atmosphere by disinfecting and "vitalizing" it, was attributed to plants whose foliage, fruit, or efflorescence emits fragrant volatile oils or resinous matters which yield ozone by oxidation. Among our native trees worthy of cultivation for the production of atmospheric ozone, the doctor mentioned Oregon maple, magnolia, pine, basswood, locust, and sassafras; and among the beneficent shrubs and plants, the golden currant, spice bush, azalea, wisteria, clematis, thyme, celery, sweet vernal grass, and clover.

The natural inference is that intending parents who wish to be progenitors of great men—national leaders, statesmen, poets, or what not—will do well to set their homes in ozonic regions, and surround them with as large a variety as possible of ozone-making trees and flowering plants.

It would be cruel to needlessly discourage any enterprise in this direction, for the world needs great men badly, and the suggested method of getting them is not an expensive or unpleasant one. Still it is but fair to say that it is not quite so certain, as the doctor appears to think, that there is ever any large ozone in the air, or that its effects would be as intimated.

A great many pretty hypotheses have been based upon supposed evidences of the occurrence of ozone under certain atmospheric conditions, and the supposed oxidizing and other effects due to its presence; but the whole subject has been thrown into confusion by the discovery that the trusted ozone tests are unreliable, and that the oxidizing principle of the atmosphere may be and probably is in large part, if not wholly, hydrogen superoxide. It appears that most of the reactions formerly relied upon for the detection of ozone are also produced by the hydrogen compound whose existence in the air has been demonstrated; and also that the remaining reactions may be due to other compounds known to occur in the air, as carbonate of ammonium and certain sulphides. The odor sometimes observed and ascribed to ozone is not a trustworthy evidence of its presence, since