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Contents.

(Illustrated articles are marked with an asterisk.)

Table listing various articles such as 'Alex. H. Stephens', 'American locomotive fire-boxes', 'Is glucose wholesome?', etc., with corresponding page numbers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS OF

THE SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN SUPPLEMENT

No. 376,

For the Week ending March 17, 1883.

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Table listing sections I through VIII, including 'ENGINEERING AND MECHANICS', 'TECHNOLOGY', 'ELECTRICITY, LIGHT, HEAT, ETC.', 'ARCHITECTURE', 'NATURAL HISTORY', 'AGRICULTURE, HORTICULTURE, ETC.', 'MEDICINE AND HYGIENE', and 'MISCELLANEOUS'.

SALE OF PATENTED MACHINES BY SHERIFF.

Wilder, the owner of a couple of county rights for a patent graining machine, became bankrupt, and his wooden ware factory, its machinery and effects, were sold at auction by the sheriff, including two of the graining machines which were in use in the establishment.

The case was tried in the United States Court, Western District of Pennsylvania, before Judges McKennan and Acheson, who held as follows:

"The purchaser of a machine from the patentee acquires no right in the patent itself, and needs none to enable him to enjoy his acquisition. By implication he is invested with a license to use that particular machine, and in the absence of express provision to the contrary such license passes with the machine to successive owners as an incident of proprietorship."

EXPERT TESTIMONY.

The domain of science is far from being as exclusive as formerly. It was once a cloistered place where the asperities of life were supposed never to penetrate.

Our reference is to patent cases. Among them every conceivable principle of science is encountered as applied with more or less success to the problems of every-day life.

It has been settled by experience that a lawsuit is best conducted by a lawyer. From this feeling arose the proverb that the man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client.

It is very rarely that the right or wrong of a question that reaches the courts can be decided on its face. Two views can always be taken, and different theories entertained.

Thus the court has presented to it two opposite theories of the mechanical or scientific limits and features of the invention. Each of these theories has been stated on direct exami-

nation by opposing experts, and then sifted by a rigorous cross-examination to ascertain its consistency and relevancy. The prima facie case is first made out, followed by the defendant's proofs, and then by the complainant's proofs in rebuttal.

The experts, it will be seen, perform a most useful and valuable office. They digest a mass of patents, couched often in very obscure language; they seize upon all the points which can benefit their client, and bring them strongly forward.

If a thoroughly bad and unjust case is presented to an expert, he should refuse to accept a retainer. But this happens less frequently than might be supposed.

THE RED SPOT ON JUPITER.

At the first regular meeting of the American Astronomical Society, held in the directors' room in the Brooklyn Academy of Music, on March 5, the topic for discussion was the "Physical Changes in Jupiter."

The remarks of the members were confined to the recent changes in Jupiter. Messrs. Parkhurst and Serviss described their observations of the great red spot which made its appearance on Jupiter's disk in the summer of 1878, and which within a few weeks has almost entirely disappeared.

The general opinion expressed was that Jupiter is a world which is yet in a very early stage of its geological history, and that in the great red spot, and in some other remarkable spots which have made their appearance upon its surface, evidences are seen that the planet either has already a solid or liquid surface, or that the formation of such a surface has begun.

One theory was that some volcanic action may have been taking place, which threw up into the atmosphere a mass of smoke and erupted materials which formed the red spot. Another theory was that the crust of the planet where the spot appeared may have been exceptionally heated, so that the atmosphere above it was kept free from clouds.

The society meets on the first Monday in April in the physical laboratory of the Packer Institute. At that time special papers will be read upon the connection between sun spots and terrestrial meteorology.

SAFETY AT SEA IN A FOG.

Mr. John F. Schultz, of this city, has conceived the idea of preventing collisions at sea in a fog, by means of balloons. He proposes that all vessels should be provided with balloons of sufficient capacity to take a person high enough above the fog to see balloons from other vessels that may be in the vicinity.

The relative positions of the different vessels are then communicated to the captain or other officer of the ship, and by signals between the lookout men in the balloons, the direction of the vessels is so controlled as to avoid collision.

The inventor does not state how the man in the balloon is to communicate with the officers of his ship, but it is presumed by an electric wire attached to the cable line by which the balloon is fastened to the ship's deck.

Patents in Congress.

Congress adjourned on the 4th of March, and all the schemes for the alteration of the patent laws, trespass upon inventors' rights, extension of defunct patents, all failed. Inventors may therefore breathe freely for a year at least, and go ahead with the development of new and wonderful discoveries.