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No. 429,

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THE PLOT AGAINST PATENTS.

For several weeks past we have been calling the attention of our readers to the remarkable series of bills introduced in Congress for the purpose of breaking down the patent laws, and also to the extraordinary attitude exhibited in the House of Representatives in respect to patents, by the passage of two of these bills by immense majorities. Such of the newspapers as share in the Congressional feeling of hostility to the holders of patents are found to be owned or controlled by railway officials.

The general, all-pervading impression among the people is that nothing has so greatly contributed to the prosperity of the nation as our excellent system of patent laws. How it is that Congress, at this late day, has been brought around into its present hostile attitude appears to most persons unaccountable. It has been accomplished, in all probability, by a very cunning and adroit system of operations pursued by the combined railroad companies. The aggregate amount which they are annually obliged to pay to the inventors and patentees of new inventions rises to hundreds of thousands of dollars every year; and naturally they reason that, if by hook or crook they could nullify the patent laws, their profits would be increased and great annoyances overcome. For a number of years they have made efforts in this direction, but so far without much success. For a long time they have had their combined patent bureau in operation, under which they make a common defense against paying patent royalty for any patent, when there is a chance to escape. They now have a head center at Washington, through which, this year, they are making a desperate effort to carry laws in their favor, and pull up all patents by the roots. They have stuffed the grangers, making them to think that inventors, who are really their best friends, are their enemies; that the charge of ten dollars for using a patent drive well, which saves them two hundred dollars, or the cost of an open well, is a hardship; that payment for patents is nothing but robbery, and in this free country can no longer be tolerated.

With falsities like this the railroad agents have induced farmers to ask Congressmen to vote down the patent laws. They have drafted various forms of adverse patent bills, and caused them to be sent from different parts of the country, to different members of Congress, purporting that these bills represent the feelings of large numbers of their constituents, and asking that the same be introduced and passed. This system of deception has been so extensively worked up and manipulated by the railroad head center, that at last it has had its effect in the House of Representatives; and in that body there is to-day actually a large majority of members who are willing to encourage the false idea that new inventions and new industries are a bane to the people instead of a blessing; and these members are now ready to execute the wishes of their railway masters by passing laws that will give relief from paying further tributes to inventors.

The worst is that these hostile laws, while they undoubtedly increase the dividends of the railway people for the time being, will also deal a terrible blow to industries in all parts of the country. Every establishment in the land that manufactures under a patent, all workmen employed in such concerns, two hundred thousand patentees and their families, all must now have their property struck down or damaged to gratify the railway kings.

They wave their wands, and their newspapers cry out against patents; they manipulate Congress through false bills and deceptive representations, and that august body is unable to hold its own against them.

We will not repeat again the details of all the hostile bills now before Congress, but will only select two, either of which, as soon as passed, will accomplish all that the railroad schemers want. Here is the full text of the little bill introduced by Mr. J. A. Anderson of Kansas, and now before the House, by which the life of all new patents will be reduced from seventeen years to five years:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That section forty-eight hundred and eighty-four of the Revised Statutes is hereby amended by striking out the word "seventeen" and inserting in lieu thereof the word "five;" and that all acts or parts of acts inconsistent herewith are hereby so modified as to be made consistent.

This bill will be a happy thing for the railroads, as soon as passed.

But here is one calculated to make the railway monopolist still happier. It was introduced by Hon. Mr. Voorhees, Senator from Indiana, and is now before the Senate, its passage expected every day. We give the full text:

S. 1,558. Be it enacted, etc., That it shall be a valid defense to any action for an infringement of any patent, or any suit or proceeding to enjoin any person from the use of a patented article, that the defendant therein, or his assignor, purchased the patented article for use or consumption, and not for sale or exchange, in good faith and in the usual course of trade, without notice that the same was covered by a patent, or without notice that the seller had no right to sell such article; and in all such cases notice received after such purchase shall not have the effect to impair in any way the right of such purchaser as absolute owner.

If Mr. Anderson's patent bill passes, all new patents become free for use by railways and the public at the end of five years.

If Mr. Voorhees' bill passes, the free use of all existing patents is at once taken from the patentee and given to the railways.

It seems to us that the passage of these bills, or of any of the other bills which impair the rights of inventors to hold their patents, or prevent them from recovering damages against infringers, would be disastrous to the country and destructive to the interests of a large portion of the people.

There is at present writing a strong probability of their passage. But if effort is promptly made, they can be defeated. Let every patentee, every inventor, every manufacturer, every workman, every farmer, every individual, who believes in the maintenance of home industries and the encouragement of the useful arts, write letters personally, at once, to the Senators and Members of Congress, urging them not to sacrifice their interests and property in this wanton and unjustifiable manner.

Read the letter of Mr. D. L. Carver, in another column.

CABLE RAILWAYS FOR NEW YORK CITY.

The Rapid Transit Commission of New York City, under authority of a general law of the State, has lately mapped out and granted to one company in the city the routes for no less than sixty-six miles of new railway tracks within the municipal limits. These lines are to run up-town, down-town, cross-town, in fact in all directions. The commissioners appear to have legislated on the supposition that New York city is in great present need of more rapid transit lines, and will by its rapid growth soon require extensions. These wants, present and future, are amply provided for by the commissioners so far as routes and tracks are concerned; but we fear their judgment is ill-considered in requiring, as they have done, that the main lines of these new roads shall be worked on the cable system. What the people require is rapid transit; but the cable plan is in reality only a slow form of slow transit. All the cars must run at the same speed; if one train or one car is detained, the speed cannot be increased so as to make up for lost time; if the cable breaks, or a cogwheel gives out, all the cars, on both tracks, for the entire line must stop; all the streets through which the cables run are rendered dangerous to horse flesh by liability to tearing off shoes by wedging in the slot of the cable pipe.

The system has a variety of other objections. With a view to the presentation of these, our reporter lately interviewed Mr. F. C. Crowley, a street railway engineer, constructor, and operator of long experience, who has made a very careful examination of the Chicago cable roads. The report, which is quite interesting, will be found in our SUPPLEMENT of this week, page 6847.

After all that can be said by way of objection to the cable system, it must be admitted that in some localities, especially for hilly towns, it has proved very advantageous; in fact, it will work very well anywhere and in any city where rapid transit is not wanted. But for the streets of New York, it would seem as if a better and less objectionable system would be the employment of some form of independent motor, powerful, but fast or slow as needed, and susceptible of use in the streets with the same facility as horses.

MALARIAL FEVERS.

The case on trial described by Dr. Griswold in the New England Medical Monthly of August 15, referred to a pond in Berkshire County, Mass., near which many cases of ague and fever had occurred. The point was this: Did the existence of the pond cause the fevers?

The disease has been in time past by most writers reckoned a marsh fever, and it was commonly believed to be limited to regions and to seasons where vegetable matters were undergoing decomposition from moisture and heat—that is, to swampy lands and (except in the tropics) to the autumnal months. New England was formerly free from it. It is possible that a single case may have occurred occasionally in the extreme southwestern part of Connecticut, but practically ague was unknown there until 1860. In that year a most wonderful onward movement to the east and the north commenced, and it has continued unchecked till the present time, and in its progress it has overturned theories at a rate as remarkable as its own advance.

Commencing on Long Island Sound, at Southport, in 1860, it spread as already stated, with an irregular front, reaching New Haven in 1864, Hartford in 1872, and the northeast part of the State not till 1883. It has maintained a steadily epidemic condition ever since, having swept the State so fully that not a town is now exempt from its sway, except, possibly, a few in Windham and New London Counties. Running up the Housatonic Valley, it reached the northern line of the State in 1877, and in 1878 it crept over into Massachusetts at Lenox (the place referred to by Dr. Griswold) and Lee. It has already invaded the sacred precincts of Boston, and is in high march for Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, for all that we can tell.

This progress is astonishing, for no change has taken place in the surface or condition of the country to which it can be traced. Ponds and swamps have always existed of natural formation, and artificial ponds have been formed, dating back to the first settlements, but they have been harmless. Nor can we say that they have anything to do at the present time with the evil. For, disregarding its name of marsh fever, the epidemic has just as freely selected its victims on the hills as in the swampy valleys. Litchfield, "a city set on a hill," which had always boasted its healthfulness, acknowledged the tread of the invader in 1880, and he had come to stay, to their great disgust. And disregard-