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THE POSITION OF INVENTORS.

be found in the decisions of the judges of the courts in which short term of years. patent rights have been decided. Some of these judges have acquired great eminence in this field. In preparing their decisions they had to study the patents, their scope, utility, of the subject from the studies alluded to.

appellation, "the Metaphysics of the Law." His opinion of northwest. the dignity of inventors and the value of their services to the country at large is worthy of record. In one of his early the same comet that was, as we stated, seen in the northwest decisions, given over fifty years ago, he says that "patents | when first visible to the naked eye. It was faintly perceptiare not to be treated as mere monopolies, odious in the eyes of ble on the 27th of November, and looked like a small nebthe law, and therefore not to be favored." It appears from this ulous star. About the 21st of December it became a plain that the monopoly part of the question had been even then though not a conspicuous object in the northwest, being agitated. But this judge was always opposed to such views then in the northern constellation Cygnus. It has been The Scientific American Export Edition is a large and splended peri- as those referred to. In another place he says that the Con- visible every clear, moonless night since that time, pursuing stitution of the United States, in giving authority to Con- its course over the sky with a speed marvelous to behold, gress to grant such patents for a limited period, declares the having traveled from a position high in the northwest to its object to be to promote the progress of science and the useful present locality low in the southwest. It will continue to Commercial, trade, and manufacturing announcements of leading houses. larts, an object as truly national and meritorious and well move in the same direction till it is so far away as to become founded in public policy as any which can possibly be invisible in the largest telescopes. It will probably be visiwithin the scope of national protection. It seems a pity ble in this latitude till the latter part of February. these principles to their actions.

> so inconsiderate and unskilled in business as men of genius stars. and inventors usually are. A little earlier Judge McLean Following these judicial utterances to a later period, we find McLean again. In 1855 he said: "A monopoly takes from time predicted by astronomers. the public what belongs to it, and gives it to the grantee, whereas the right of a patentee rests entirely on his own patent declared proper compensation, and a politic one on the part of society. There should be no reason for disturb- guides.

If patent lawyers be consulted, they will be found generally of the opinion that a patent is a contract between the inventor and the Government. The case of Ransom vs. New wood, yet the only cutting or boring portion is the chisel correct doctrine, the Government would play a poor part in its work and guided in its course, the gimlet screw at its changing the status of patents already granted.

dicated in the judicial opinions we have cited. The real work and the spiral guides the auger and elevates the chips. policy of the Pateut Law is a selfish one on the part of the So the auger, deprived of these portions, becomes a rotary it by society at large than by the inventors themselves. It may be cut. Mortises for tenons are made with such an has evolved the enormous amount of ingenuity represented implement, and it is used also for many other similar purby a quarter of a million of inventions. All this work is poses. devoted to the manufacturing industries of the country. An adaptation of the circular saw is more peculiar than By the law only human inventions can be protected, so that this. It is the cutting of a wide kerf with a thin saw; thus no natural principle can be monopolized. It would be hard a saw of one-fourth of an inch thickness, or "set," cuts a 63 to imagine where we would stand in the industrial world score, or slot, of three-quarters of an inch or more. In apunbacked by these inventions. If an inventor seems in some pearance the saw is anything but mechanical, and at first Tion. It is because of their unselfishness and devotion to the sult of the work is good. The effect is produced by placarts that inventors are apt to lose the reward due to their in. ing a circular saw on an arbor somewhat smaller than the dustry and talents. The public often reaps the benefit of hole through the saw, and canting the saw to an angle inventions long before the patent has expired.

in this path. With the abrogation of the patent laws invent that twice in its revolution the saw cuts out of its true kerf tion would cease almost entirely, and we should have to look on either side. It will be seen that if the quarter inch saw to other countries for new devices in machinery and pro- is set one quarter of an inch out of truth on its side, it will cesses. The national position would be a humiliating one cut one-quarter of an inch on each side, making, with the in place of a proud one. Every such measure as those reprimary thickness of the saw itself, a cutting width of threecently passed in the House of Representatives aims a blow quarters of an inch. This apparently crude method proat these laws. We can only hope that it will prove as in- duces very satisfactory results. It might be supposed that effectual as it is ill-judged and impolitic.

inventors favor them and their rights. They are given by the velocity of the saw's rotation compared with the feed in-

were any needed. But the statute now in force is the fruit An accurate conception of the meaning of a patent and of of many additions and amendments. It has done well in the true status of an inventor is far from common. The fact the past, and is good for some time to come, as it seems that inventors are the possessors of a limited monopoly, that reasonably near the goal of adaptability and efficiency. It is is frequently of great value, weighs against them in the not only inventors, but the public at large, that should resist estimation of the less enlightened class. To form such a any change in it that will affect its efficiency and range of conception, regard should be paid to the opinions of those action. The public are more interested in it than are the most familiar with the subjects of inventious, with patent inventors. This is no paradox, for inventors are the servants laws, and with the structures themselves. The most enlight- of the public, and protected inventions are the property of ened source for an opinion leading to such conception will the world of industry, withheld from common use for a

THE PONS-BROOKS COMET.

We have received a communication from Adamsville, and in many cases their commercial importance. Besides Michigan, in which the writer asks for information concernupon the bench, they were familiar with the practical aspect uary in the southwest, about the same distance from Venus as Venus is from the sun, and a little south, with a tail ex-Of the older judges none attained higher reputation than tending east." He thinks the Scientific American was per-Judge Story. It is he who gave to Patent Law its famous haps mistaken in stating that the comet was visible in the

The comet seen by our correspondent in the southwest is

that our Representatives, before considering the bills for the Thereason the comet could not be found in the northwest limitation of the rights of inventors, did not study and apply was because it was then a faint object almost impossible to pick up unless one knew just where to look for it. When Judge Story declares the protection of patents to be a seen on the 18th of January, it was a little beyond its matter of public policy. How impolitic, then, does the regreatest brightness and nearest point to the earth. This it cent action of the House of Representatives appear. But he reached about the 14th. On the 26th, it passed its perihelion, is not alone in his ideas of the rights of inventors. Other or nearest point to the sun, and, since that time, has been judges at more recent periods reaffirm these views. One, our departing guest. The comet's real course is southeast. Exhib. of 101 speaking in 1847, says that the true rule of construction in as any observer who notes its position from night to night respect to patents is to apply to them plain and ordinary will readily perceive. It is carried westward by the motion principles, and not to yield to subtleties and technicalities of the earth, in the same way that Venus is, who, though . . likely to prove ruinous to a class of the community moving eastward, seems to be moving westward like the

> This comet, known as the Pons-Brooks comet, was discovhad stated that the patent law gives a monopoly, but "takes ered in 1812 by M. Pons. It was predicted that it moved in nothing from the community at large, but secures to them an ellipse with a period of 71 years. Therefore, it might be the greatest benefit." The same judge, later on, speaks of expected to return in 1883. Mr. Brooks discovered it in the patent right as a compensation awarded the inventor. September of that year, and its identity was soon proved. It was called the Pons-Brooks comet from the two discoverers. patents declared not to be odious monopolies or restrictions The great interest it has excited all over the world is due on the rights of the public. To still further define the not to its size or brilliancy, but to the fact that after its monopoly side of the question, we may quote from Judge long absence it has returned to the clime of the sun at the

> Our correspondent desires information in regard to the best book that will "educate him in the revolution of our invention or discovery of that which was useful, and which planet, also others as far as possible." We recommend was not known before." Thus we find the monopoly of a Lockyer's "Elements of Astronomy" and Newcomb's "Popular Astronomy" as reliable and comprehensible

PECULIAR WOOD WORKING.

The auger is intended primarily for making holes in York is cited in support of this view. Accepting this as the lip on its lower end; and if the implement could be kept at point and the spiral above its cutting portion might be dis-But there is another point of view that may be found in pensed with, as the screw merely pulls the cutter into the Government. Vastly greater benefits have been reaped from cutter by which straight or curved recesses of a definite width

nstances to receive an undue reward, this is only the excepthought the method is "sloppy" and foolish. But the reby means of convex faced glands or flanges. When Every American prides himself on his country's progress rotated the saw's periphery has a "wabbling" motion, so such eccentricity of movement from side to side would It will be noticed that the views given on the position of leave very coarse score marks on each side of the cut, but