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THE BENEFITS OF THE PATENT LAWS.

In the discussion of the oleomargarine bill in the House of Representatives, effort was made to bring a point against it as being a manufacture based on patents. One member declared that he had a hundred patents before him relating to it. This point was made, it is obvious, to gain the goodwill of the House for the measure, by invoking its dislike of the present patent laws. Extraordinary as such reference appears, it was seriously made. It is most satisfactory to see how it was met. The Hon. Nathaniel J. Hammond, of Georgia, took up the issue, and said in reply, partly to Mr. Holman: "He is hardly driven again to say this bill is against a monopoly patent. He absolutely says that the patent clause of the Constitution is a curse rather than a blessing."

Mr. Holman.—No; not that. Mr. Hammond.—I cannot argue such a proposition in my limited time. But the history and the experience of this Government will show no other clause, except those that protect life, liberty, and property, that has been half as valuable to this country. Let me call attention to some facts which illustrate this. We may put our wives down to knitting stockings for themselves and their children, or we may turn to a machine that will knit seven pairs for one mill. What rest to the wife! What comfort to the babes! With patent pegwood we peg sixty million pair of shoes per annum in the United States at a cost of five pairs to a cent! Millions of feet are shod that but for that invention would be crippled by the hard frosts of winter. Sir, the Patent Office has changed the whole current of modern life. It has given fewer hours of labor, and to more men less consumption of human muscle, a broader sweep of human mind. . . . The foundation of that change is the constitutional clause on which is based the Patent Office. It has increased wages, it has increased mental strength and physical strength, mental comfort and physical comfort. When gentlemen are driven, in support of this bill, to denounce any part, and especially that part, of the Constitution of the United States, they are indeed hardly driven." [Applause.]

This shows that in Congress there is some recognition of the benefits of those statutes, and interference with them is resented by one leading member as an attack to some extent on the Constitution.

Again Mr. Hammond had to return to the charge, in answer to his former opponent. Just as gracefully and eloquently as before, he defended the patent statutes against the unreasonable attack made on them. He holds Mr. Holman closely to the issue he had raised.

"The gentleman from Indiana [Mr. Holman] got away from the issue made between him and myself as to that clause in the Constitution which declares that 'to promote the progress of science and useful arts, patents may be granted for limited times.' He undertook to raise a prejudice by speaking against 'patent monopolies' and the laws as passed. The law is one thing, the Constitution another. If the law is wrong, it ought to be changed. The Constitution was the thing which he attacked, and is the thing which we swear to support."

Mr. Chairman, in the price of every acre of land in this country on the eastern or western shore, you see the value of the patent rights. What would our Western lands be worth but for improved corn-droppers and corn-shellers, and improved plows, thrashers, and binders? What would they be worth but for the improved machinery which has tunneled our mountains, which has bridged our rivers, which carries our produce to the ocean, and from the eastern shore to the great world beyond?

Mr. Chairman, let us look at the philosophy of this thing. It is a fact that every dollar of gold which was ever dug cost three—not to the man who dug it out. It is but one who finds it, and he gets rich. But the others who are hunting, the others who are wearing out their hands and eyes in fruitless search, are spending their dollars. It was not the man who undertook to find oil in Pittsburg, but the man who struck it, that made a fortune. The world profited by the industry of the searchers for gold, and the world reaps a benefit from the find of the finder. That they got rich affects not the question.

That grand impulse of selfishness which God has placed in every man for his protection, as a stimulus for his ambition and energy, which makes anxiety to be rich, is the mainspring which has led to all the inventions of this world which are worth talking about.

Why is it we outdistance any nation of the earth? It is because we have the best patent laws and patent organization on the face of the earth. Why is it that these very systems denounced as monopolies are utilized by every one of us, except that they bring but good? Take this telephone. How many use it, simply to save the expense of servants?

The gentleman from Indiana [Mr. Holman] said when printing was invented, there was no patent office. When the Patent Office was established, the printing press then in existence compared as poorly with the Hoe power press of to-day as a chip on the ocean com-

pares with the most magnificent steam vessel which floats a flag. [Applause.]

When the gentleman from Pennsylvania was a boy his neighbors, perhaps himself, lived in a cabin, with nothing to hang their coats upon but a peg, and nothing to sit upon but a stool. Under the impulse to inventive talent given by the hope of securing for inventors during a limited time the exclusive benefit to the cogitation of their brains, the homes of the poor and the rich have been made comfortable. And the cottage of the workingman to-day outvies in comforts and luxury the dwellings of the kings of a hundred years ago.

Mr. Chairman, look at the item of wages for a moment. Go back fifty years, and compare the wages then paid with the present rates. Take the history of New England recently published, and compare the wages of a shoemaker of to-day with what they were then. These mechanical improvements have been developed in every department. Yet shoemakers' wages are doubled and in some departments trebled in fifty years. One man to-day can make three hundred pairs of boots each day by a Yankee machine; but more boots are wanted, and bought for little money. I do not care where you go or what you see, it is better and cheaper because of inventions. Inventions are made because they are protected by the Constitution. The thousands and thousands of dollars that are wasted in vain endeavor, the sleepless nights, the toilsome days, all at last crystallized in some man's success, bring a glad fruit to the Patent Office, and ask it to make the contract according to constitutional promise. The inventor says, 'Give me this for a limited time, and at the end it shall belong to the world.' And the world makes by the bargain every time." [Applause.]

The fact must be regretted that there was any need for such words. Their bearing should form a part of the creed of every legislator. But it is, on the other hand, a subject of congratulation for all that when the necessity arose there was some one ready to say them, and able to say them so well. The parenthetical "applause" shows how well this direct statement was received, and illustrates the fact that the House of Representatives is not dead to the issue. The menacing attacks on the patent statutes at any moment may come before the House. When this time comes, we trust that the members will not be found wanting, and that such wrong measures, although urged by the Committee on Patents, will receive speedy death at the hands of the whole assembly. If opposed with such spirit and eloquence as disclosed in the quoted remarks, they never will pass by the majority that a similar measure received some years ago.

This defense of the patent statutes comes with added grace and force from a Southerner. He does not represent a section devoted to invention. But he is ready and willing to offer a tribute from the agriculturists of the South to the inventors of the North, who have made their work easy and profitable to them. We spare our comments of Mr. Hammond's remarks, as we feel that we can add nothing to their force.

CAR BUILDERS PERPLEXED ABOUT CAR COUPLERS.

At the annual convention of the Master Car Builders' Association, which opened at Niagara Falls, June 8, there was quite an excited discussion relative to car couplers. It will be remembered that the Executive Committee of the Association conducted, in September last, a series of tests of car couplers at Buffalo, as a result of which twelve special styles of couplers were recommended for further trial in actual service, out of forty-two that were then experimented with. [For particulars of these trials, with illustrations of the couplers experimented with, see SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN SUPPLEMENT, No. 510.] Of the twelve then selected for subsequent service tests, only seven were, by the committee's report at this last meeting, recommended "as most worthy of trial" in a large way hereafter, to "demonstrate their ultimate worth," five styles of coupler formerly recommended being thus inferentially condemned. The committee gave no reasons, when questioned, for their action in this particular, further than that the service trials were as yet very incomplete, an admission which different members of the convention thought should have prevented the committee from making a report discriminating against the five styles of coupler that were dropped; and this impression seemed to be so general that the whole car coupler question is yet concededly an open one.

The trials of couplers are to be further continued by the committee, but new consideration will be given by these examiners only to such couplers as may be indorsed by five members of the Association. The committee express doubt "as to whether there is to-day available any automatic coupler which a railroad company would be justified in applying to its cars," as other companies would still use different couplers, and the danger to train men would thereby be increased rather than diminished. It is rather recommended that "the safest course for railroad companies to pursue is the conservative one of retaining the old general style of coupling," while the energies of the Association should be devoted to adopting and