Uncle Sam's Curiosity Shop.

It may not be known to many out-of-town readers of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN that the United States court in which patent cases are tried in this city is held in the Post Office building.

It is necessary to know this fact to understand what impelled a newspaper reporter to climb so high to find the miscellaneous articles he describes.

"Climbing flight after flight of stairs in the Post Office building, by an inside passage, until there was nothing between him and the sky except the roof, an *Evening Sun* reporter, very much out of breath, reached at last the curiosity shop of Uncle Sam. Two large rooms and a small one are devoted to the curiosities. They are piled up on the floor in great heaps, while tiers of long, broad shelves are filled with them. There are so many of them that the custodians would very much like to get rid of them. But they are preserved with jealous care. They are the exhibits made by contesting parties in patent cases. The testimony is taken on the floors below in the offices of the United States Commissioners, and the exhibits, after being properly marked for identification by the examiner, are stowed away.

"It needs but a cursory glance to come to the conclusion that nearly everything that man uses is patented, and that nearly everything that is patented has to fight infringements, or at least what are claimed to be infringements.

"Bundles of cloaks, corsets, hats, ready-made clothing, and hat sweats are piled up on the middle shelves. Hoopskirts, frames used for clothing in shop windows, fire screens, patent medicines, and paints add variety to the scene. The 'shoo-fly' rocker is largely represented, made in the shape of a bird.

"The floor of the smaller room is completely covered with a pile of school furniture. High up on the wall hangs a model of a sliding car door. Near it are several sets of heavy iron shutters. Huge furnaces rest by the side of tiny oil stoves.

"The veteran exhibit is a specimen of the first refrigerator invented. It consists of a barrel within a barrel, the spaces between the inner and outer one being filled with brick. The inner barrel is divided by a partition, one side being intended for the ice and the other for the storage of the articles to be preserved. An equally curious exhibit is the model to show how wet tan is burned. It is made of tin, and consists of a large number of curiously arranged boxes.

"There is a full collection of railroad signals, with white and red headlights. One of the towers is a leaning tower. Near by is a set of electric bells, a patent bottle stopper, a hopper, a cotton press model, and a great variety and number of scuttles. Patent pails are equally numerous, and there is a large assortment of tin oil cans. A very odd spring has a triangular base, with a straight rod working up and down.

"Among the most profitable inventions is the nail driver and puller. Another is the patent egg box, with its numerous compartments, made with straw boards. Photograph instruments, bed springs, and odd wagon springs rest side by side. Several yellow bags, curiously tied, arrest the attention. These are intended to show how hams are tied up. The style of tying is patented. Patent cuspidors occupy an upper shelf. Just under them are a number of coffee mills.

"There is a very interesting bit of machinery for making barrels and hooping and heading them. On the shelf above it is an equally curious exhibit of a brick machine. Two very clumsy and heavy exhibits are the models of a machine for making boot heels, and another for manufacturing envelopes. The latter is old-fashioned and very complicated. Two other clumsy exhibits are the knitting and ruffling machines, and also one for pegging.

"Soda fountains are very numerous, and there are buttonhole and kid glove machines, with countless sewing machines, whole and in parts. Only a small fraction of the entire collection has been named. It is apparent that in the matter of a patent, eternal vigilance is the price of success."

Exhibition of Locks and Keys.

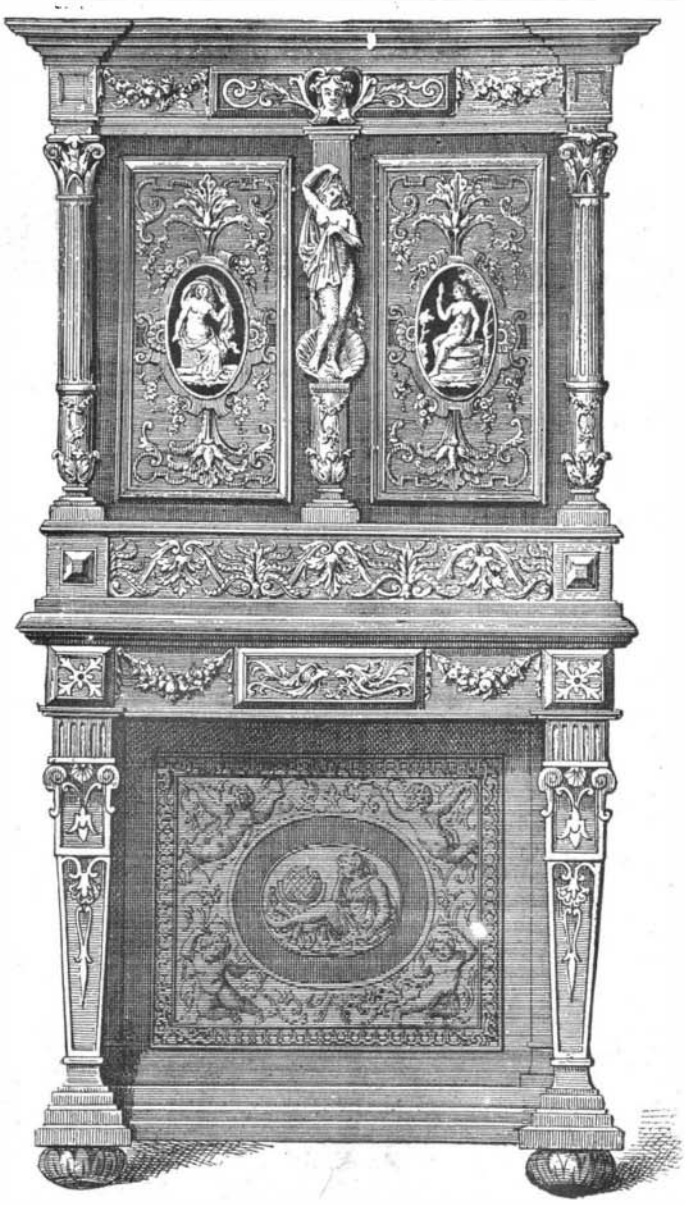
An Austrian locksmith, Herr Andreas Dillinger, has been for eighteen years collecting locks and keys of ancient and modern manufacture. The work was undertaken with a view to benefit the locksmith trade, by diffusing useful knowledge, and the articles were first exhibited two years ago, in an industrial museum at Vienna. On the initiative of the Educational Department of the Austrian Ministry, the collection was sent for exhibition into various towns in Austria, and after the round was completed Herr Dillinger carried his collection to Germany, and exhibited it there in various important industrial centers, the last in turn being Berlin, where the collection has recently been on view. It contains 606 different locks, the earliest examples dating from the year 400, and the latest being quite modern. Among the collection are seventeen locks from the middle ages, which, in point of workmanship and artistic design show the high state to which this industry was developed in those times.—*Industries.*

THE DECORATION OF A HOME.

In the "Grammar of the Decorative Arts," by Prof. Charles Blanc, of the College of France, and a member of the Academy, the author tells us that "effects of

VENETIAN GLASS—SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

perspective are absolutely forbidden in the decoration of the floor," and that "in furniture the straight lines should be mainly vertical and the curved lines mainly horizontal in direction." In the beautiful cabinet of which we give an illustration, though the vertical lines are partially destroyed, enough of them remains to give a sense of stability. The top has no pediment, but is terminated with a straight line, affording a shelf on which vases, busts, or other beautiful things may rest. The pillars are carved and channeled and cut away, and yet do not suggest want of strength, because their burden cannot be great. The elaborate carving on the whole front is very rich, and suggests that a cabinet of such workmanship would be a worthy repository of precious trophies as well as serve its other and ostensible purpose of decorating an apartment.



FRENCH CABINET—SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

The seventeenth century glass shown in our illustration is the product of the period at which Venetian art is considered to have reached its highest point. The workmen of that period attained extraordinary facility in twisting and drawing out the ductile mass into the most elaborate forms, intertwining and working together stems and wreaths of various colors. The points of support were usually very slender, and these objects were consequently so fragile that comparatively few of them have come down to us.

Although Venice, from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, introduced the glass manufacture to France, Germany, England, and other countries, and for a long period maintained an undeniable leadership in this industry, she has obtained no especial distinction therein since the latter part of the last century. Nearly every general industrial exhibition continues to have brilliant examples of the products of the Venice and Murano Glass Company, but the company is composed chiefly of English capitalists, and glass beads constitute probably the larger part of the Venetian glass manufacture to-day.

Do Something.

A man who kept quite a number of men employed in different ways, so that largely they could not be under his immediate control, complains, in the *Industrial Gazette*, that the worst trouble he had was to secure men upon whom he could rely to do something. He would tell them plain enough what he wanted, and then start them out. If anything should turn up different from what they had expected, the larger proportion of his men would come back without accomplishing anything.

As an illustration, he had a man with a team handling bridge lumber quite a distance from one of his saw mills to a railroad shipping point. By securing a reasonably early start, the team could make a good load every day. One afternoon, as he was returning with a load, and had got perhaps half way home, in coming down a hill, through a strip of timber, one of the hind wheels struck a stump and, by some means, broke the axle of the wagon. The man always carried an ax and an extra chain or two, especially to guard against accidents. He was in timber where, with very little trouble, he could have arranged something that would have enabled him to have taken his load into town. He might have been a little longer than usual. Instead of this, he pulled his load to one side of the road, unhitched his team, and mounting one of the horses, rode into town. His employer did not happen to be at home, so nothing was done until the next morning, when he borrowed another wagon and went out and brought in the lumber, and then, leaving the wagon, rode out, rigged a pole under the broken axle, and brought the wagon to town to the shop. Another day was lost in getting the wagon repaired. At least a full day lost more than was necessary, simply because he could not see that it was his business to do something. "I could," he said, "have stood a heavier loss with better grace if the man had only tried to do something rather than spend his time doing nothing. He could at least have shown a disposition to do the best he could. There are plenty of men who see a thing, routine work, done every day, and yet if they were told to do the same thing, would ask to be shown how. They learn nothing from observation. They may see lumber piled up every day, or see and even help put up machinery, load a car with certain material; yet ask one of them to go ahead and do by themselves just what they have been helping do, and they will want to be shown how. They are either incapable or indifferent of learning by observation, or even helping. With some this is simply the result of thoughtlessness. They do not stop to think that they are failing to work as they should to their employers' interests. With others, it is simply indifference. So the day's work, or time rather, is put in; it is a small matter whether the work accomplished is in any way profitable to the employer or not.

A great many employers will recognize their own experience with indifferent, thoughtless employes in the above well told story from our excellent Western contemporary.

A Curious Clock.

A correspondent in *The New Church Messenger* describes a clock recently patented in France, in imitation of a tambourine, on the parchment head of which is painted a circle of flowers, corresponding to the hour figures of ordinary dials. On examination, two bees, one large and the other small, are discovered crawling among the flowers. The small bee runs rapidly from one flower to another, completing the circle in an hour, while the large one takes twelve hours to finish the circuit. The parchment surface is unbroken, and the bees simply laid upon it, but two magnets, connected with the clockwork inside the tambourine, move just under the membrane, and the insects, which are of iron, follow them.