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CONGRESS ON PATENTS, TRADE MARKS AND INVENTIONS.

On October 2 the World's Fair congress devoted to patents, trade marks and inventions opened its sessions in the Art Institute, of Chicago. Among those participating were: Dr. R. J. Gatling, the inventor of the Gatling gun and president of the American Association of Inventors and Manufacturers; Everhard Faber, of this city; Judge Henry W. Blodgett, who held the position of permanent chairman of the congress; Richard Pope, Canadian Commissioner of Patents, and others well known either as lawyers, manufacturers or inventors. Judge Blodgett in his opening address spoke principally of what invention had done for the great farming regions of the Northwest in the production of improved harvesting machinery. These inventions alone have made it possible to harvest the enormous crop of the grain-producing area. As the management of this machinery requires a considerable degree of mechanical skill, the speaker held that it had operated to develop the intelligence of the population, as well as to admit of improved farming apparatus, thus bringing about a two-fold benefit. Dr. Gatling delivered an address of welcome on behalf of the American association, briefly recapitulating the well known story of American patents. Rowland Cox, of the New York bar, read a paper on trade mark law, taking the ground that it is a fortunate thing that in adopting the constitution of the United States, trade marks had been left out of the patent statutes. His contention was that they should be awarded what they have received, namely, the common law protection, holding that a constitutional provision for them would have degraded their common law right into a statutory privilege.

Mr. Faber, in an address which he delivered on the next day, rather took the opposite ground, feeling that the United States should make some statutory provision for the protection of trade marks, if it was only for adequate registration thereof. He cited a directory of trade marks of stoves, which was issued a few years ago, which showed that all but one brand or name given were used by from two to five different manufacturers. A Bureau for the International Registration of Trade Marks has been established at Berne, Switzerland, in connection with the International Union, but, so far, no provision for registration of trade marks by citizens of this country has been made. Expensive litigation or long advertising seemed to him the only way of determining right of priority in trade marks. It will be seen that to some extent his views were the opposite of those of the distinguished lawyer, Mr. Cox, who preceded him in this subject. Lemuel W. Serrell, of this city, read a paper on the uniformity of patent laws, incidentally pleading for a more liberal construction of patents on the assignment of a reasonable period of public use which should not invalidate a patent. Papers by Dr. Gatling and by L. L. Bond, of Illinois, were devoted largely to the same subject, the epoch-making and great inventions of the world. Mr. Francis Forbes, of New York, formerly delegate from the United States to the Madrid convention of the International Union for the Protection of Industrial Property, spoke on the international law of trade marks. Other very able addresses signalized the meeting, some of which will be found outlined on page 246.

While these gentlemen were laboring at Chicago in the very midst of the most wonderful exposition of inventive genius the world has ever known—an exposition which never could have been realized except for the beneficent influences of the American patent laws—another set of men, assembled in the Congress of the United States at Washington, were at work in the unwise business of trying to emasculate and break down the system which has conferred such marvelous benefits upon the country.

The Hon. Mr. J. T. Heard, of Missouri, introduced a bill (H. R. 84) to prohibit inventors from bringing suit against individual infringers of patents, thereby allowing such infringers to take possession of and enjoy the labors of the inventor, without compensation to him, thus legalizing robbery.

The Hon. Mr. John Davis, of Kansas, introduced a bill (H. R. 3433) reducing the term for which patents are granted from seventeen years, which is the present term, to seven years. This law if passed would deprive nine-tenths of all inventors of any emolument from their inventions, and we presume that is the object of the bill.

The Hon. Mr. J. F. Lacey, of Iowa, introduced a bill (H. R. 1989) authorizing Congress, by a special act, at any time, to nullify any existing patent on payment of from twenty-five thousand to one hundred thousand dollars. The value of many patents is reckoned by millions of dollars, especially such as telephone patents, electrical railways, sewing machines, and hundreds of other new inventions, that confer inestimable benefits upon the people. This law legalizes the taking away of the inventor's property without due compensation.

The Hon. Mr. O. M. Hall, of Minnesota, intro-

duced a bill (H. R. 1985) to prevent the inventor from obtaining any compensation for the use of his invention from "innocent users of patented articles."

We regret that not a single member of Congress has brought forward a bill to facilitate, protect, or assist the innocent inventor in securing reasonable rewards for his labors in benefiting the country by discovering new processes and inventions. It seems to us the true policy is to pass laws to foster, encourage and promote the establishment of new industries, not to break down and chastise the authors and inventors thereof.

BLOWING UP A WRECK.

Recent heavy storms along our coast not only created sad havoc, destroyed much property and ended many lives, but they left in their track many dangers which make possible future disasters. Among these may be mentioned derelicts and sunken wrecks. Of the former there are now some twenty along our coast, endangering the coastwise trade as well as the transatlantic trade.

From time to time, the Hydrographic Office of the Navy Department receives notices of the positions of these derelicts from the various ships that have sighted them. This office issues a monthly chart showing the positions of the derelicts, and it is interesting to note how they drift with the currents and winds.

There are also a number of sunken wrecks, whose masts and rigging project above the surface of the water. These, being in shoal water, are near the coast, and are particularly dangerous to our coastwise trade.

A ship running into a derelict or sunken wreck is in as great danger of serious injury as if she had collided with a ship under way, and the ugly point about the derelict is that it carries no lights, and on a dark night it would be impossible to see it in time to avoid the danger. The brave seaman must rush boldly on and trust to the "cherub who sits up aloft" to guide him clear of the masked foe.

The increasing commerce of the world has made apparent the necessity of doing something for the lessening of this danger and for some time past there has been serious discussion of a plan to have an international arrangement for the removal of wrecks. The plan proposes that each country take upon itself the task of keeping clear a certain definite section of the frequented parts of the ocean. At the present moment there is an endeavor to secure legislation on the subject in Congress. There is a strong possibility that our government will detail a vessel, probably a sea-going tugboat, to this duty, equipping her with the necessary gear, as hawsers, grappels, tackles, kedges, explosives, torpedoes, electric machines, and means of setting fire to dangerous floating wrecks.

Recently the old war veteran the U. S. S. Kearsarge was sent to destroy a particularly dangerous wreck off the entrance to Delaware Bay. It may not be without interest to describe her experience, methods and the results.

She left New York on September 27, and on the morning of September 28 arrived near the position of the reported danger. The position had to be accurately determined by astronomical observations, for no land or lighthouse was in sight from which to reckon by compass bearings.

The danger sought had been described as two spars sticking out of water to the height of about eighteen feet, a rather small object to see on the sea even in daylight unless close to it.

Arriving on the exact position as reported, nothing could be seen of the spars. Search was begun on the plan used in the Coast Survey when looking for a shoal spot. It is known as the "starring" method or "running radials." This consists in running a few miles on any given course, then steering a course at right angles for a few miles, then steering for the original position, passing it and standing on for a few miles, turning at right angles, running a few miles and then turning and running again for the original position. This method, if continued, will cause the ship to describe a sort of Maltese cross around the original position. All this time a bright lookout was kept, many men being on the watch for anything that looked like a spar sticking out of the water.

The second tack brought success, and the ship was soon at anchor near the wreck. The exact position was latitude 39° 3' north, longitude 74° 9' west. The wreck was that of a very large three masted schooner. The hull was on the bottom in seventeen fathoms of water, but the masts, with other wreckage, held in some manner by the rigging to the hull, projected above water. One of them was upright, but two of them were inclined, and all were bobbing around in the heavy sea in such a manner as to make it extremely dangerous to approach them in a boat.

A cutter, in charge of the ordnance officer, left the Kearsarge and went to the wreck. Soundings were taken over the wreck, and the officer's investigations led to the conclusion that the decks of the hull must have split, and that the only part dangerous to navigation was the floating wreckage, masts, spars, etc., that remained attached to the hull. The problem then resolved into blowing up or