ism, which confuses and baffles the judgment while in operation, here, in the Patent Office, is its perfect miniature representation, which I may handle, turn upside down, and examine with the utmost facility. Just over the way, I can hear the constant tapping of a wondrous little instrument; and I peer wistfully around the curtained partition, hoping to see what is going on. I am confronted by the words, "No admittance," and my curiosity is hightened, for surely some mystery is being enacted here. Is this "the Devil and Dr. Faustus?" If not, what else can it be? At the Patent Office, this seeming enigma is made plain as day; the apparatus is simply a machine for taming down the electric fluid, and employing its swift wings for the transmission of that which concerns the business and bosoms of men. And thus, from the day when General Jackson, while journeying through the West, on his way to assume the office of Chief Magistrate, undertook to bring on the model of an old saddle-tree, and get out a patent for it, to accommodate an old soldier—from that day until the present hour, this noble edifice has been the depository of the ingenuity of our inventors, who, in spite of all the contumely which would-be-wise men have undertaken to heap upon them, have done more to advance the material interests of the country than any other class of our citizens. Upon the records of the Office we find the honored names of Eliphalet Nott, Whitney, Morse, Hamilton, Jennings, Mott, Hoe, Blanchard, Ericsson, Goodyear, Winans; and even that ubiquitous citizen, *Smith*, has taken out a great many patents, along with a host of others whose names would fill a dozen sheets like this.

On entering the Patent Office—one of the grandest architectural edifices to be found in the world—a sensation of mystery crowds upon the mind. We inquire for the official custodian of the innumerable mysteries which surround us; we find him to be the Hon. Wm. D. Bishop, late member of Congress from Connecticut—a State abounding in ingenious men. He is a proper arbiter of their claims before this interesting bureau; for, united to other qualifications which fit him for the honorable sphere in which he is now placed, he possesses a mechanical element in the constitution of his mind which enables him *to see through* every invention brought to his notice. It is not, however, the Commissioner's duty to examine all applications made for patents; associated with him in the discharge of his duty, there is a Chief Clerk, S. T. Shugert (a faithful officer), twelve Chief Examiners, twelve Assistant Examiners, and a bevy of clerks and messengers employed in various subordinate departments of the Office. Each Chief Examiner and his assistant have a room set apart for their own special use; they regularly examine a classified list of applications, and may be regarded as the *executioners* of the Patent Office. Many an honest inventor, with an enthusiasm peculiar to his species, has had his hopes suddenly "guillotined" by these inquisitorial officials, whose duty, when faithfully discharged, is a most delicate and responsible one, for it requires a discriminating and well-balanced judgment to guard against too much liberality on the one hand, or injustice on the other. The mind of the Examiner works towards its conclusion in two different channels or modes of thought; the result intended to be reached in each case being the same. One Examiner (this is the minority class) carefully examines the applicant's papers, and having obtained the requisite knowledge of the points claimed, starts on his excursion of inquiry, hoping he may discover unequivocal evidence of a want of novelty which will justify the rejection of the application. Another Examiner, pursuing towards the same end, hopes he may be able to discover something new in the applicant's model, whereby he may pass the case for issue—prompted by the feeling that, if there is any reasonable doubt on his mind, he will turn it rather in favor of the inventor than against him; for it is unquestionably better that a dozen patents should be granted for what is *not* new than that one inventor should be deprived of his just and equitable rights. A patent granted for what is old is worthless; but if one inventor is deprived of his just rights at the Patent Office he would scarcely expect to recover them from an outside tribunal.

In reference to the condition of the Patent Office, I may with propriety state that on no former occasion have I ever visited it when a better system or more uniformity of action prevailed. There seems to be a disposition on the part of every one connected with the Office to do his duty faithfully, and to recognize the ruling authority. The new Commissioner is well liked in the Office; and, so far, he finds his duties agreeable, and I may safely predict for him a successful official career. He feels a deep interest in the success of a patent bill which will knock off the rough corners of our present system. In the main he is believed to be friendly to the bill reported at the last session, and proposes to engraft upon it some important changes, whereby questions of interference may be more readily settled and thus give more stability to patents after their issue, or in other words, to put an *estoppel* upon the right of one inventor to contest the patent of another on a question of priority (except in cases of fraud), unless this claim is set up within a reasonable time after the patent has issued; leaving the question of the validity of the patent thus granted properly in charge of courts of competent jurisdiction. Such a provision is much needed, as I believe there is now a question of interference pending between an applicant and a patent of some eight years' standing.

A very important patent case was argued before the Commissioner of Patents on the 27th ult. Thaddeus Hyatt, the original patentee of his peculiar illuminated tile or load-sustaining grating (now becoming so extensively used in large cities for lighting vaults and basement extensions), has asked for a renewal of his patent for a period of seven years, as provided for by the section of the act of 1836. The applicant presents a formidable array of testimony to sustain his claim, and is confronted by remonstrants who scrupled not to bestow upon him some pretty choice compliments. The attention of the Hon. Commissioner was called by one of the counsel to the "stupendous audacity" of the applicant. The case, for the most part, was ably conducted; and its more spicy passages afforded considerable amusement to the spectators present. At the time of my writing, the case has not been decided; and it is impossible to foreshadow, with any degree of certainty, the result. There are some interesting points involved in this case which will invite examination. I forbear to touch upon them at present.

I observe that an extract in the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, page 288 (copied from the Baltimore *Sun*), mentions that the Commissioner of Patents would not put in an estimate, as usual, for printing the agricultural report. This is an error. An estimate will be put in, and the responsibility of adopting or rejecting it will rest solely with Congress.

MARE'S NESTS IN PORKOPOLIS.

A cotemporary attempts to "corner" us in the following style:—

DO HOGS HAVE HORNS?—The prussiate of potash is made in large quantities in Cincinnati, from hoofs, horns, and other refuse of slaughtered grunters.—*Scientific American.*

Begging your pardon, Mr. Scientific, allow us to remark that swine do not wear "horns" in this region. Please add that to your scientific information.—*Cincinnati Gazette.*

We had frequently heard of the "horned hoss," and it seems probable from the above quotation that, while undertaking to muckle a piece of Cincinnati hog, the idea floated through our imagination that they were chiefly made up of hoofs and horns. We are happy to know that they are like other people's hogs.

ARE COW HIDES MIXED WITH MORTAR?—Cow hides taken from the hides in tanneries is employed for making plastering mortar, to give it a sort of fibrous quality.—*Scientific American.*

Cow hides "is" also sometimes "employed" in facilitating the acquisition of the rudiments of grammar, among very dull scholars.—*Cincinnati Gazette.*

We are of the opinion that cow hides work better into boots and shoes than they do into mortar for plastering walls. Our cotemporary, however, never saw any such paragraph as the above in the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, and must have found it in some other journal. We don't feel willing to shoulder other people's blunders if we can help it. We find the type sufficiently treacherous in our own office without being held responsible for the pranks they play in other offices.

A NEW ANTHRACITE FURNACE.—The Reading *Times* says that a large anthracite furnace, situated on the canal, one mile above Douglasville, will be completed in about a week. It is capable of making 100 tuns of iron per week, but will not go into operation at present, or indeed until some radical change is made in the tariff.

PATENT CASES.

Caustic Alkali.—We have received the record of the case tried before Judge Grier, Oct. 27th, at Philadelphia, in which the Pennsylvania Salt Manufacturing Company were the complainants, and T. Conrow and Isaac Barber were the defendants. The plaintiffs alleged that George Thompson was the true, original and first inventor of an improvement in devices for putting up caustic alkalies, not known or used at the time of his application for a patent, which was issued on the 21st day of October, 1856, to Thompson, and on the 26th day of January, 1857, transferred to the complainants. On the 1st day of February, 1859, re-issued Letters Patent were made to Thompson for the improvement, and he again transferred his right to the complainants. They complained that the defendants have infringed upon their rights, as they are using the improvement in the eastern district of Pennsylvania, without authority from them. A motion was made in the case, asking for an injunction restraining the defendants from selling caustic alkalies, packed in tin cans, called "Condensed Lye." After argument, the Court granted the prayer of the bill, and an injunction was issued to restrain from selling said improvement.

Gates.—Before Judge Grier, the case of Robert Wood, complainant, C. White and several others, defendants, for infringing the patent for a gate, was decided on Oct. 31st. The complainant alleged that he was the assignee of the patent granted to H. E. Wesche, on Feb. 12, 1856, for an improvement on gates. Mr. Wood brought suit against the defendants, asking for a special injunction against them, restraining them from using said design for gates. After argument, the Court allowed the injunction to issue, upon the filing of an additional affidavit.

A BEETLE IN A TRAVELER'S EAR.

The whole interior of the tent became covered with a host of small black beetles, evidently attracted by the glimmer of the candle. They were so annoyingly determined in their choice of place for peregrinating, that it seemed hopeless my trying to brush them off the clothes or bedding, for as one was knocked aside, another came on, and then another, till at last, worn out, I extinguished the candle, and with difficulty—trying to overcome the tickling annoyance occasioned by these intruders crawling up my sleeves and into my hair, or down by back and legs—fell off to sleep. Repose that night was not destined to be my lot. One of these horrid little insects awoke me in his struggles to penetrate my ear, but just too late; for in my endeavor to extract him, I aided his immersion. He went his course, struggling up the narrow channel, until he got arrested by want of passage-room. This impediment evidently enraged him, for he began with exceeding vigor, like a rabbit at a hole, to dig violently away at my tympanum. The queer sensation this amusing measure excited in me surpassed description. I felt inclined to act as our donkey's once did, when beset by a swarm of bees, who buzzed about their ears and stung their heads and eyes until they were so irritated and confused that they galloped about in the most distracted order, trying to knock them off by treading on their heads, or by rushing under bushes, into houses, or through any jungles they could find. Indeed, I do not know which was the worst off. The bees killed some of them, and this beetle nearly did for me. What to do I knew not. Neither tobacco oil, nor salt, could be found; I therefore tried melted butter; that failing, I applied the point of a penknife to his back, which did more harm than good; for though a few thrusts kept him quiet, the point also wounded my ear so badly, that inflammation set in, and severe suppuration took place, and all the facial glands extending from that point down to the point of the shoulder become contorted and drawn aside, and a string of bobus decorated the whole length of that region. It was the most painful thing I ever remember to have endured; but, more annoying still, I could not open my mouth for several days, and had to feed on broth alone. For many months the tumor made me deaf, and ate a hole between that orifice and the nose. Six or seven months after this accident happened, bits of the beetle, a leg, a wing, or parts of its body, came away in the wax. It was not altogether an unmixed evil, for the excitement occasioned by the beetle's operations acted towards my blindness as a counter-irritant by drawing the inflammation from my eyes. Indeed, it operated far better than any other artificial appliance.—*Journey of a Cruise on the Tanganyika Lake, Central Africa.*