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The Colt Patent Extension.

From what we can see of the maneuvering in the lobby in certain patent extension cases now before Congress, it would seem that Col. Colt is bringing the strongest possible influence to bear upon his case by means of a series of testimonials and certificates from gentlemen of the highest military repute in the United States army. Each of these gentlemen bears testimony to the value of the Colonel's firearms, and declares their superiority over all others. The Secretary of War, the Hon. J. B. Floyd, remarks in his letter that "Colt's pistol has become essential to the public service." These are very flattering, and no doubt the honest expression of the testifiers' opinions, and at any other time we should like to congratulate Col. Colt on their reception; they are not addressed to him, but are addressed by the Secretary of War to the Hon. J. A. Stewart, Chairman of the Committee on Patents in the House of Representatives, and are intended to have influence in that committee in giving weight to the application for a special legislative act granting a fresh lease of life to the already expired patent of Col. Colt.

These testimonials appeared in the Washington Union of the 10th inst., a marked copy of which was sent to us by some one, for our perusal, and it is that perusal which has inspired us again to raise our voice against this attempted perpetration of a gross injustice. It must be recollected that Col. Colt has had all the advantages which the general law can allow to a patentee. He had first a patent of fourteen years duration, which was extended for seven more, and in that twenty-one years, he has made an enormous fortune, and collected around him a force of mechanical contrivances which will enable him for many years to exercise, in a great degree, a commercial monopoly without Congressional protection. But now the Colonel asks Congress to give him by special legislation what is really not his or theirs, but what belongs to the people. The patent which was Col. Colt's is now no longer such, but the free property of every one; and on the faith of this, many valuable improvements on the original Colt pistol and rifle have been invented and patented, which could not however be used until the present time, because of the monopoly exercised by Col. Colt, and now these are being largely manufactured. The revolver has been cheapened, and can be reduced in price much lower, if the public is allowed to retain possession of what is legally its own.

Should Congress grant this fresh lease, it will be in direct opposition to the principles of the fathers of our country, which were to give equal chance to every man and to abolish all monopolies after the monopolists had been suitably rewarded. It would be robbing many industrious inventors, it would be cramping the manufacturing interests, to thus tolerate the claims of one man who has already been more than amply rewarded. The principle is opposed to human justice and human reason.

But a more urgent reason than this is, that the Colt pistol has become "essential to the public service," and consequently there is a large demand for them. This being the case, they should be manufactured and sold as cheaply as possible, and not monopolized by one manufactory which could charge just what it liked and bleed Uncle Sam to any extent it wished. If the public demand them, then the public should have the right of making them, when the inventor, as in this case, has been thoroughly rewarded for his invention.

At the present time there are many persons engaged in the manufacture of revolving pistols who would all be cramped, if not ruined, by the granting of this monopoly; and yet

Col. Colt, with a feeling unworthy the citizen of an enlightened commonwealth, asks Congress to ruin these industrious men, and to make the government itself pay a high price for an article which it cannot do without. If Congress wishes to reward Colt, let him have a contract, but do not perpetuate or encourage this attempted imposition.

From whatever point of view you look at this application, it is either one of two things—a gross absurdity or a great injustice; and we sincerely trust that Congress will feel too much honor, and be possessed of enough common sense to prevent them from committing the one or the other, to the prejudice of the real interests of the country generally.

To return to the testimonials, we do not think that any department of the government should give its opinion or use its influence with another department, in this or any similar case, whether solicited or otherwise. The opinion of the War Department is sufficiently apparent from the fact that they contract with Col. Colt for a supply of his arms, without any additional testimony from the Secretary of War; and to say the least of it, the giving of governmental certificates in such cases is very reprehensible policy.

The Steamships of the Collins Line.

The transportation of the mails and of passengers between the United States and Great Britain was, a few years ago, divided almost entirely between two great companies, the Cunard Company, entirely English, and the Collins Company, understood to be mainly American. Great efforts were made by each to excel the other in the splendor and speed of their vessels. The former company has been under the patronage of the British, and the latter of the American government, and each nation has reserved the right to seize the ships of its respective line and convert them into war steamers in case of hostility with any other powerful nation. Great interest has been manifested by the whole world in the contest for superiority by these vessels, and it is painful to acknowledge that the American line has at last been fairly beaten. The remaining steamers, the Atlantic, the Baltic, and the Ericsson, (formerly the Caloric ship, hired to supply the deficiency occasioned by the disasters,) have been run at a loss for some time. The Adriatic, a very large new steamer, owned by this company, was badly botched in the arrangement of the engine department, as we have several times had occasion to notice during the progress of the work, and the Collins Company has become almost bankrupt. A sale at auction of all the ships of this line has been actually made, but as the purchasers are connected with Messrs. Brown Brothers & Company, who were the chief owners of the line, the property can hardly be said to have changed hands; and an ultimate sale to Russia or some other party, which has been a long time in contemplation, remains yet to be negotiated before the company can be said to have fairly abandoned the field. Meanwhile its rivals, the Cunard Company, have kept up their reputation for regularity and tolerable speed, and have extended their operations until they run screw and paddle vessels to the West Indies and other places, as well as to New York and Boston. But they do not, as they did before the organization of the Collins Company, monopolize all the best travel between the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon family. A number of American lines run from our principal ports to the continent of Europe, stopping at English ports on the way; and these, as also the various independent lines to Glasgow and other ports, have been quite successful without special aid from either government.

There appears to have been a kind of fatality, or what is the same thing, bad management, attending the operations of the Collins line, and it is probably better that its existence be terminated, and that new enterprises be allowed to take its place. A portion of the ill success of this line has been due, no doubt, to an unfortunate contract at the com-

mencement, by which the agent was allowed a commission on all the business transacted, whether profitable or otherwise, instead of, as should have been done, allowing a liberal per centage of the actual profits realized. A similar arrangement caused, we think, serious embarrassment to the success of one or more of our California lines at one period. If it had been rendered imperatively necessary for the Collins line to have realized a profit on each transaction before the parties in charge could have received any payment for their services, it is possible that the result of the enterprise might have been very different.

It may interest our readers to know that the sale of these steamers, whether real or nominal, was for a sum almost incredibly small, compared with the cost, and what is generally believed the actual value of the vessels. The three ships, the Atlantic, Baltic and Adriatic, were sold together, and but one bid was made. The debts of the line, as stated at the sale, amounted to about \$600,000, principally on account of money advanced to the company by the Messrs. Brown, besides a lien of doubtful validity held by the Government for a failure to fulfil the stipulations of the mail contract. Purchasers were to assume these debts and this risk of forfeiture to our kind and liberal Uncle Samuel. The only bid was \$50,000, offered by a relative of the Messrs. Brown; this was accepted, and the three magnificent relics of this great national struggle now stand in his name.

Poisonous Beauty.

The natural desire of all to display what personal attractions they may possess to the best possible advantage, and the pleasure which all mankind, whether civilized or savage, take in looking upon a beautiful female face, has led the weaker sex in many instances to commit violations of common sense, which cause feelings of deep regret and commiseration in the breast of every true man and woman. There is no custom so foolish and frivolous as that of painting the face, or endeavoring to obtain by artificial means an unnatural complexion; and this custom, which at first we are inclined to regard as simply childish, assumes the graver nature of a crime when we regard the means adopted to attain this silly end. For example:—Arsenic is used in great quantities to produce a healthy look, ruby lips, and rotundity of form, and we have it on good authority that in many parts of Europe, and for aught we know to the contrary, in America, arsenic is eaten in large quantities, and Dr. Tschudi, the well known traveler, says "it does not seem to have any more pernicious effect than opium eating," as if that was not bad enough! Many tuns weight of arsenic are sold annually in the form of cosmetic powders for outward application. Bismuth and antimony are also largely used in the manufacture of these articles, without which ladies do not consider their toilets complete, and much as they may abhor the character of a Borgias or Brinvilliers, they are themselves provided with weapons as dangerous as either of those two females; the difference being that one is doing all she can to poison herself, and the others poisoned their friends. It is said of a celebrated actress that she must in her life time have used half a hundred weight of oxyd of bismuth in the shape of cosmetic powders, and the pearl powders, rouges, and the whole army of so-called beautifiers, are all more or less highly poisonous. It surely cannot be right to use or encourage the use of these articles, more especially when we know that there are plenty of vegetable compounds which will answer just as well, and will not stop up the pores with poisonous metals. The Spanish ladies use a harmless cosmetic composed of almonds, and another of pistachio nuts, ground in water, and which are said to have no deleterious effects. We have not space to expatiate as fully as we would wish on the moral or the physiology of these facts, but we fulfill our duty in calling public attention to them, that the good sense of the people may rise in mutiny against painted beauty, especially

when that paint carries with it the breath of poison; and we would let every one know that some ladies actually, as well as figuratively, deal out to their admirers killing glances.

Cisterns—Hint to Potters.

In a late communication by Mr. Smirke to the Institute of British Architects, he directed attention to cisterns for containing water, describing three different kinds as used in England. First, the hogshead sunk in the ground; second, a wooden cistern lined with sheet lead; third, the slate cistern, a vast improvement upon its predecessors, but too expensive for general adoption among the working classes. The object of Mr. Smirke was to bring to notice another material for cisterns, namely coarse earthenware of large size and low price. He had seen and measured earthenware cylinders of two feet five inches internal diameter, forming the lining of a well more than two thousand years old, amidst the ruins of ancient Selinuntum, and they were as sound as when first made. A vessel of this material, three feet square and four feet deep, would hold upwards of two hundred gallons.

Coarse earthenware would no doubt be an excellent material for cisterns, but more expensive than brick and hydraulic cement, of which the majority of cisterns in this part of America are made. It would seem, from Mr. Smirke's communication that such cisterns are unknown to him. We would recommend them to the attention of the Institute of British Architects. They are made by excavating a deep circular hole in the ground, below the reach of frost, then laying a stratum of clay or cement on the bottom, paving the floor, and raising the sides with brick, surmounting the whole with an arched roof. The outside of the side walls should be coated with hydraulic cement, or puddled round between the ground with clay, and the whole interior plastered with a thick coat of hydraulic cement. A small opening is left for the entrance water pipe, and another for the suction tube of a pump. A square mouth covered with a lid is usually made at the center of the top for admission to clean it out, or for repairs. Such cisterns, if carefully constructed, will last for centuries.

A Petrifying Stream.

There is a little stream which empties into Shasta Valley, California, which possesses the property of incrusting everything which falls into its waters with a complete coat of stone. Flowers, leaves, grass, pine buds, and things of that sort, will become completely enameled in the course of a week or so, retaining in the process their natural form.—Exchange.

[There are several lakes, rivers and streams in the world which petrify wood, changing it into stone, but none so rapidly as the above Californian stream, so far as we are aware. It must be very strongly charged with the carbonate of lime. There is a dropping spring at Knaresborough, England, which possesses petrifying powers nearly as great. We have seen willow baskets, birds' nests, and various curious articles, said to have been transformed into stone by this spring in the course of a few months' exposure.

A Railway in Turkey.

The first railroad in Turkey has been commenced under somewhat favorable auspices. It is to run from the port of Smyrna to the interior, a distance of 70 about miles, and will open up a rich portion of Asia Minor to direct communication with the sea trade. The engineers are English, but the stockholders are Turks; and the government has taken a lively interest in this innovation of the rail over the camel train in the land of the Moslem.

Novel Application of Science.

A man was arrested the other day in this city for stealing hens; he had first stupefied them with chloroform while at roost, and then quietly carried them off. We believe the first popular application of this same drug in England was for the same purpose. "When thieves get scientific, what should the police do?" Why, read the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN.