

Scientific American.

NEW YORK, MARCH 19, 1859.

REMOVAL.

The SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN Office has removed from its old location, 128 Fulton st. (Sun Building), to No. 37 Park Row (Park Building), where all letters, packages, and models should hereafter be addressed. Entrance is had to the office also at No. 145 Nassau st. Munn & Co.'s American and European Patent Agency is at the above office.

Commissioner Holt appointed Postmaster-General.

One of the advantages of a government—right and true in theory—is, that it is perpetual, and no hiatus can exist in the administration of its affairs, for as one official is removed, in the natural rotation of office, or by the hand of the Grim Conqueror, there should be always ready a qualified and able successor. Such is now the case with us. The office of Postmaster-General having been rendered vacant by the death of the Hon. A. V. Brown, the President has appointed the Hon. Joseph Holt, so well known to our readers as Commissioner of Patents, to take this important place in his Cabinet. Whatever difference of opinion may be entertained of the Federal Head, through the bitterness of party strife, this appointment will be endorsed by every one who is at all acquainted with the new incumbent.

Mr. Holt is a gentleman possessed of as much common sense, capability of administrative work, and clear and unprejudiced judgment, as any one to be found within the charmed circle around the White House. He is son-in-law of ex-Postmaster General Wickliffe, and brother-in-law of Senator Yulee, of Florida, and is a sound lawyer, an elegant writer, and all his reports and decisions have been specimens of good diction, and have breathed forth an interest in the true and progressive welfare of our country, which fact is both pleasing and unique.

In his official position, we have had frequent intercourse with him, and have ever found him alive to the duties of his office; eminently just and rigid in the discharge of his duty, yet ever showing a genuine sympathy for the inventor, so that, while his decisions might disappoint the expectation of the claimants, the grace exhibited in the discharge of this duty would conquer vexation, and disarm prejudice.

In common with all who have had business with the Patent Office, we regret this change, and no class of our citizens will regret it more than the great body of inventors. These regrets, however, are overcome in a measure by the fact of Mr. Holt's appointment to a more distinguished position under the government. If, as Postmaster-General, Mr. Holt is diligent and single-minded, and exercises his judgment with the same fidelity, as in his former position, he will prove a most valuable member of the Cabinet. Mr. Holt is a thoroughly honest and capable man, and if the Contractors get the best of Uncle Sam in his department, they must be exceedingly industrious and persevering.

Machinery and Labor.

While the Homestead bill was recently under discussion in the House of Representatives, Mr. Leiter, of Ohio, delivered a speech in its favor, which has been characterized by some of our cotemporaries as one of great ability. We decidedly differ in opinion with those who have regarded his effort with any degree of admiration. Arguments founded on false statistics, however plausible they may appear, are like houses built upon quicksands—unreliable and dangerous. Such we conceive the rhetorical structure which Mr. Leiter built up for this bill; not that we oppose its objects, but the ridiculous arguments ad-

vanced to promote them. These arguments are founded on the erroneous idea that machinery has been exceedingly injurious to the laboring and mechanical classes, and that its extension has reduced them from comparative independence and comfort to penury and suffering. This orator says:—"Within the last fifty years steam power and labor-saving machinery have wrought a mighty revolution in industry, and rendered almost superfluous manual labor in the great department of mechanical industry. In the British Islands the work done by machine power is computed by Lord Brougham to be equal to the labor of eight hundred millions of men; while it has made the nation the wealthiest and most powerful on the globe, it, with monopoly of the soil, has reduced the mass of her people to abject misery."

The achievements of machinery, as set forth, are rather under than over-rated, but the concluding part of the paragraph is not entitled to the least confidence. Instead of machinery having tended to reduce the mass of the people of the British Isles to misery, it has elevated and improved their condition, and at the present moment their circumstances are far superior, in every respect, to what they were at any other period of their history. Instead of reducing them to abject misery, it has elevated the laboring classes from the condition of being "yoked with the brutes and fettered to the soil," to the position of intelligent beings, and made them a great power in the commonwealth. That man is profoundly ignorant of the history of England who teaches such doctrines as the above. The complaints urged against machinery are like those of a moping owl complaining to the moon. Watt, Arkwright and other inventors of machinery have done more for the people of England than all the wisdom of Bacon or the discoveries of Newton; and yet, according to Mr. Leiter, the steam-engine, the spinning-jenny, the power-loom, and the printing-press have been curses not blessings to the Ecuador classes. Such sentiments as those expressed above might well be expected from a denizen of the forests of Ecuador, not from a citizen of this free and enlightened republic. But he does not stop in his charges against machinery as applied to England; he carries the imputation home to our own country. He also says:—"The effect of machinery upon the prosperity of the industrial classes is beginning to be felt in this country as well as in Europe. Until the steam-engine took the place of human muscles in the production of wealth, scarcity and want had not been known in this country. But how is it now? Whenever the operations of manufacture cease, the laborers are thrown out of employment, and wide-spread misery follows."

Never were statements uttered in or out of Congress more untrustworthy than these. It is distinctly stated that machinery, and the steam-engine especially, has caused scarcity and want in our country. When it is recollected that machinery has wonderfully increased the products of labor, and that it neither eats human food nor wears clothing, it appears to be one of the most stupid conceptions possible, to charge it with causing scarcity and want. As every implement above the teeth and nails is a machine, the above extracts furnish a brilliant panegyric upon the logic and intelligence of some Congressional representatives. In order to bring about the good old times when Adam delved and Eve span and to prevent scarcity and want, we must go back upon human muscle, cease manufacturing operations, and throw all our steam-engines into the ocean! Such are the derivable conclusions from the above; they are far from being creditable to any American citizen.

By the most recent news received from Europe, we learn that a large force is engaged on the Great Eastern steamer, and it is positively asserted that she will be able to make her first trip to Portland, Me., in the month of August next.

Decoration for Houses.

The civilizing, softening influence of art is acknowledged by all who have studied their fellow-man's moral and mental development, and the accumulation of objects of interest and beauty in a house tends to knit more closely the bonds of family affection, and changes the four walls from a cold dwelling-place into a sacred and holy home. All the feelings which spring up in every true man's or woman's breast at the utterance of that word, home, are feelings of association, and not of mere locality, and hence wherever we go, and at every stage of our lives, if the associations are pleasant ones, we look back with glowing emotion on the home of our childhood, and to the one we have ourselves created. Dryden beautifully says:—

"Home is the sacred refuge of our life."

And it should be our endeavor to decorate this place, of all others, with lovely objects, and nature's beauties or simple works of art. Unfortunately, there are many that cannot afford to buy these decorations, who still have all the desire to possess them and the taste to appreciate; therefore, we will tell our readers how some very beautiful and interesting objects of art and nature may be made at little or no expense.

Green is a color that is ever suggestive of pleasure, and it is stimulating to the eye, and Nature's own tints may be obtained at any season of the year, combined with graceful vegetable forms, by either of the following ways:—Take a carrot, and having cut off the green, cut about the thickness of a cent off the top, let this float on a saucer of water in a warm room, and it will quickly begin to sprout, presenting an object of beauty not excelled by any artist, because it is the work of the laws established by the Grand Artificer of the universe. Another beautiful decoration may be made from a pine cone. One should be procured that is dried and opened, and the different circles should have grass seed or mustard and cress sprinkled in them, and then placed in a wine-glass of water; in a few days the warmth and moisture will give the burr or cone life, and the circles will close upon the seed, which, in its turn, shortly germinates, and, sprouting out all over the burr, makes an harmonious contrast of color between the lively green and sombre brown that has a truly pleasing and novel effect, actually refreshing all who look upon it.

The growing acorn is a very pretty and interesting object to study, and an ornament that teaches while it gives delight. It is thus prepared: Cut a circular piece of card to fit the top of a hyacinth-glass, so as to rest upon the ledge and exclude the air. Pierce a hole through the center of the card, and pass through it a strong thread, having a small piece of wood tied to one end, which resting transversely on the card, prevents its being drawn through. To the other end of the thread attach an acorn; and having half-filled the glass with water suspend the acorn a short distance from the surface. The glass must be kept in a warm room; and in a few days the vapor from the water will hang from the acorn in a large drop. Shortly afterwards the acorn will burst, the root will protrude, and thrust itself into the water, and in a few days more the stem will shoot out at the other end, and, rising upwards, will press against the card, in which an orifice must be made to allow it to pass through. From this stem small leaves will soon be observed to sprout, and in a few weeks there will be a handsome, though dwarf, oak plant.

The forms of crystals are very educative, in an artistic sense, their cold and distinct outlines cultivating an acquaintance with geometric forms, and they are capable of combinations that produce a broad and rugged effect. Alum is a good substance to crystallize. A piece of wire may be taken and bent to form any object that fancy may dictate, and then placed in a hot saturated solution of alum, which as it cools will deposit crystals upon the wire, thus producing a crystal ornament of great beauty. These crystals

are translucent, but may be colored to suit the fancy by the addition of coloring matter, tumeric making them yellow; litmus, red; logwood, purple; and common writing ink, black. A piece of coke may be made to assume the appearance of a new mineral by placing it in an alum solution, as the crystals will avoid the smooth portions, and deposit themselves only on the rough and broken parts. Sulphate of copper or blue vitriol may be substituted for alum, but this is a positive blue, and the color cannot be changed.

We think we have for the present given a sufficient number of hints how each home may be made cheaply into a place of ornament as well as necessity, and these little things scattered about the rooms of a house decorate and soften the asperities of papered walls and rigid furniture, adding a look of comfort and a feeling of repose that is the very concentration of true home life. As a people, we neglect taste in the surroundings of our lives, which should be cultivated; and such little things as we have been describing are important aids, and help the man, the woman and the child to better appreciate the truth of that line of Keats'—

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

Weights and Measures.

Although a radical reform is urgently demanded in our harlequin systems of weights and measures—subjects which belong entirely to the Federal government—yet Congress is generally too much employed in the mean and petty pursuits of party and pelf to give them that attention which their importance would warrant. This is the reason why session after session passes away, and nothing is effectually done to meet the case. We had thought that the Congress which has just adjourned would have done something to remedy the defects in our Patent laws, and those connected with this question, but its time was too much occupied with investigations regarding the corruptions of office-holders and others, and in contests for party spoils. Good measures and noble objects were "laid upon the table" to make way for those of the most greedy and selfish purposes.

We sometimes give Uncle John Bull a thrust under the ribs for his conservative tendencies, but of late years he has far surpassed us in political progress, commercial and social reforms. He has driven our steamships from the Atlantic Ocean, and we think he will distance us shortly in weight and measure reforms. At a meeting recently held at the Corn Exchange, Liverpool, by the merchants of that city, resolutions were adopted sanctioning a uniform system of weight for grain, flour and meal of all kinds; and there can be no doubt but Parliament will soon give the subject the attention which it deserves, because the policy which the British government has pursued for the past twenty years, has been to adopt every measure which the people want, when competent testimony is elicited to show that it would be for their benefit. Such a measure is admitted to be necessary and would be beneficial, and we doubt not it will soon be carried out.

It is well that the prosperity of our country does not depend on its politicians, or it would soon sink into the miserable condition of the republics of South America.

Gallant Act of an Engineer.

On the night of the 22nd ult., as a passenger train was passing along the New Albany & Salem railway, near Linden, Indiana, the engineer perceived a human figure ahead, and instantly blew his whistle and shut down the brakes. The figure continued on the track, and the engineer finding it impossible to check the speed of the train, went out upon the cow-catcher and grasped the man, as it proved to be, lifting him on to the cow-catcher unhurt. He was a deaf mute and the gratitude of the poor fellow, when he saw the danger from which the bravery of the engineer had rescued him, was fully displayed by the most exciting gestures.