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THE NEW PRESIDENT AND THE COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS.

The President elect has recently passed through this city, on his way to Washington, to assume the duties of Chief Magistrate; but, while he has been warmly welcomed everywhere by thousands of people, if we take the concurrent testimony of the daily press, a crowd of hungry office-seekers have followed the Presidential train, the number increasing at every point of arrival and departure, doubtless much to the annoyance of the "coming man." Even the legislative and executive authorities of this State got into a petty squabble as to which should do the honors at the State Capital, one facetious Senator, looking on and enjoying the fun, having moved to telegraph the President elect to switch off at Schenectady, and proceed direct to New York by the way of Troy. All the way down to the Federal Capital the expectants pushed on, and are now waiting under the eaves of the Presidential mansion, in breathless suspense, for the working of the political machine.

These free demonstrations are entirely in consonance with our ideas of enlarged freedom. All native-born citizens being eligible to the highest office in the gift of the people, and few unwilling to accept it, or almost any other on the sliding scale; patriotism to serve the State thus becomes a business commodity, which drought and rains cannot affect. It is supposed that no office has less than one hundred applicants, while for some a State or city directory might be filed in with a list of patriots to be selected from at random. We understand that there are half a hundred aspirants for the office of Commissioner of Patents, fifty of whom we hope to see doomed to disappointment. This matter is not to be left to the free choice of the President, to whose judgment we would gladly defer, but that special engineering is to be resorted to, in order to fill the office with a Simon Pure politician, one who will be true to all the blinding behests of party.

Our readers will bear witness that we have earnestly contended against debasing the Patent Office into a political cesspool, to be groveled in by a mess of loafers, such as hang about Custom Houses and other hot beds of political corruption. The Patent Office has gradually become demoralized, and is losing that dignified position which it enjoyed even but a short time ago, some of its attaches being unfitted, either mentally or morally, to fill the places they now occupy; and inventors have become, in some degree, disgusted with the whole concern. Who is qualified to assume the important office of renovating this great national repository of genius, and administering its legal and scientific details? who shall succeed Judge Mason and Joseph Holt in this important office? are questions that concern every citizen. Shall he be a Congressional lobbyist? Shall he be a broken down politician, without wit, wisdom or reliability? Or shall he be a man against whom the breath of suspicion cannot be raised? It is well understood that no man can administer the duties of that office acceptably, without proper legal qualifications. He may have all the scientific knowledge of Solomon Gills, be able to make a clock, take down the north star and weigh it, solve all the difficult problems in Euclid, operate for cataract on the eye, stuff patients with gamboge, bleed, blister and bolus—he may even have been a mem-

ber of Congress—served in patent committees and tried his hand in vain attempts to patch up the patent system, and yet utterly fail to make an acceptable Commissioner of Patents.

For our part (and we utter the views of thousands), the office can best be filled by the appointment of some one who has had little or no experience in the corrupting influence of Washington life—a new man—who can grasp the details of the office, and administer its duties without fear or favor. Such a man can succeed, and gain the approbation of all. But if certain aspirants who are struggling for the office succeed in imposing themselves upon Mr. Lincoln, he will have occasion to regret his unwise choice, as such an appointment will surely degrade the office, and disappoint the just expectations of the people.

We referred, a few weeks ago, to the fact that Hon. Butler G. Noble, of Wisconsin, had been suggested as the person most likely to be appointed to the office of Commissioner of Patents. That his appointment would give general satisfaction, we have no doubt; but what his views of the matter are we do not know, as we never exchanged a word with Mr. Noble, either directly or indirectly, upon this subject, nor do we intend to. Some of his friends are urging his appointment on the ground of fitness, a question upon which there is but one opinion among those who know him: We wish very distinctly to be understood that we have no candidate for this office, and are prepared to support any man who is able and reliable. We think the selection should be made of some Western or Southern man, who is above all suspicion of complicity with patent schemes. We have no favors to ask, and shall expect none, from whoever is appointed, and shall support or oppose him according to his official acts. There are very many inventors who would rejoice to see Judge Mason returned to the office; but political considerations would overrule this. A few patent agents and their political friends are at work trying to secure the office for Hon. C. C. Chaffee, an ex-member of the House, and now Librarian of Congress. Dr. Chaffee is a very clever and deserving gentleman, and would make a polite and accessible Commissioner; but he is now enjoying a good office, for which he is well qualified, and this renders his appointment improbable. Dr. Chaffee, while in the House, was a member of the Patent Committee; but this Committee did nothing to benefit either inventors or the Patent Office, and his appointment therefore would not give satisfaction. Thaddeus Hyatt at one time had his eye on the office, but the wants of Kansas have called him off. Not to name others, we would state that the most formidable candidate, and the man most likely to succeed, is the Hon. Thomas C. Theaker, of Ohio. He has a host of friends, who are working for his appointment, knowing him to be not only free from all objection, but well qualified for the position. We have no personal acquaintance with Mr. Theaker, but letters to us, from reliable and influential sources, speak of him in the very highest terms. Such a man is wanted to fill this important position, and such a man only can succeed. We believe, from all we can learn about Mr. Theaker, that he would make a popular and able Commissioner—one who can be trusted.

BREECH-LOADING CANNON.

Both of the great military powers—France and England—after a long series of experiments by the ablest engineers of each country, have adopted rifled cannon for their armies and navies; but the two governments have come to opposite conclusions in regard to breech-loading cannon. Louis Napoleon's extensive experiments satisfied him that it is best to load heavy guns at the muzzle, while the government of England is expending an immense amount of money in providing the army with the Armstrong gun, which is loaded at the breech.

The disadvantages of breech-loading cannon are very manifest. The greatest and most palpable of these is their complicated structure. In an implement which is subjected to the rough usage unavoidable in the transportation and handling of field artillery, simplicity of structure is of prime importance. An ordinary cannon consists of one single piece of metal with no joints or movable parts, while the Armstrong gun is made up of a number of pieces, and at least one of the parts has to be so nicely fitted to the others that it is

necessary to carry a file into the field in order to repair it after every two or three discharges.

Besides this great objection to breech-loading cannon, arising from their complicated structure, rendering some of the joints or parts liable to become impaired by smoke or wear or rust, there is another very manifest one that has certainly not been overcome in the Armstrong gun. In large guns the explosive force of the powder re-acts against the breech with such tremendous power that it seems impossible to make any arrangement of iron or steel that will resist it, except the single one of welding or casting the metal into a solid mass. We have seen accounts of several series of experiments with the Armstrong gun, and in a considerable number of them some part of the breech was blown away.

We have read many columns and pages of discussions on the subject in the London papers in the endeavor to learn what the advantages are which compensate for these great and manifest disadvantages. It has been distinctly stated that an Armstrong gun cannot be loaded as quickly as a muzzle-loader. We have seen no contradiction of this statement, but if it has not been contradicted it is almost the only assertion in connection with the whole subject that has been suffered to pass undisputed. In truth, the treatment of this matter has not been creditable to the English press; we have had descriptions and engraving of the gun which were publicly pronounced by Sir William Armstrong himself to be entirely erroneous; and if the publishers of the London *Engineer* would now send an artist to make a sketch of this famous weapon as it actually appears, and would accompany the engraving with an intelligible description which they could warrant to be correct, they would convey an interesting piece of intelligence to their readers.

In one respect there is no doubt of the great excellence of the Armstrong gun—the wonderful accuracy with which it carries. We recently republished the statement from an English paper that, at a late trial, a target one foot square, at a distance of more than half a mile, was hit at every shot! Whether this precision results from anything connected with the breech-loading we are not informed, and if it does, it is doubtful whether it would give any greater efficiency in the field than the degree of precision which is obtained with the French muzzle-loaders.

The experiments by the officers of our own army have established a general, if not universal opinion in favor of rifled cannon; but we think that Congress should at least wait for further developments before adopting any breech-loading device yet suggested.

THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS.

Our readers will not fail to peruse the brief report of the Acting Commissioner of Patents, Mr. Shugert. It is a modest and business-like document, and the statistics, which are very suggestive, represent the condition of the Patent Office in a favorable light.

The number of applications for patents, it will be seen, have increased in a healthy ratio since 1837, as during that year only 435 patents were granted. During the year 1859, 6,225 applications were made for patents, 4,538 of which were granted. In 1860, the number of applications was 7,635, and the number of patents granted, 4,819. The receipts of the office during the year amounted to \$256,352.50; expenditures, \$252,820.80. There is now to the credit of the Patent fund \$89,437.41, thus showing that the Patent Office is not only a self-sustaining, but an independent office, asking no other favor of the government than the appointment of honest and faithful men to manage its affairs. No stronger argument can possibly be adduced in favor of a speedy reduction in the amount of fees required of the applicant for a patent, and instead of 38 applications for patents from foreign countries the number would be increased ten fold. Reference is made to the eminently satisfactory manner in which cases of interference have been decided; but not one solitary crumb of comfort is thrown out to Commissioner Thomas' monolith of folly, the Revisionary Board. Why was not some sop thrown out to this modern Cerberus, which has kept such close guard over the subordinate examiners?

We suppose this ridiculous farce must go on, at least until a new Commissioner is appointed, when some much-needed reformation will be required, or the public will not rest satisfied.