

# Scientific American.

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 18, 1854.

## Sales of Patents—Suggestions.

Almost every mail brings to us letters from inventors, asking our advice as to the best method of disposing of patents which they have secured. Having had no experience in the sale of patents, we are not familiar with any peculiar *modus operandi* by which they are readily converted into cash, but we have a notion as to the manner we should adopt if we had property of this kind to dispose of. We will give our views upon the subject and leave our readers to determine whether to adopt them or not.

The best time to dispose of an invention is immediately after the patent is granted. It has then a freshness about it which strikes the public mind that it is not only the latest, but as a matter of course, it must be the best improvement extant for the purpose for which it is designed. The patent has only fourteen years to run, and is therefore growing proportionably less valuable every day.

The restless activity of genius is such as to render it highly probable that some new improvement in the same branch, will at almost any time spring upon public attention, and thus exercise a strong opposing tendency to the success of the prior patent; this is an important consideration, and we have frequently, in our experience, observed its injurious effect, when in reality it should have no effect whatever. After a patent has lain one, two, or three years under an accumulation of dust and doubt, it is somewhat like shop-goods which have been brushed for the counter, and fed upon by moths until the nap is all gone, and the saleable qualities entirely obliterated. It is the active and persevering who are always in the advance ground of all public and private enterprises. The drone is expelled from the bustling hive of industry; this is natural and should induce within us an active and persevering spirit. Mankind have something to do besides burrowing in obscurity and sucking their claws for a sustenance from strength gathered in a few days from the natural bounties of the earth. The higher and more intellectual pursuits require a greater degree of mental energy.

It is one thing to produce, and it is another to render your productions a source of value and importance to the world. Every one should labor to turn to useful purposes the energies of their minds and the results of their labors.

That man lives in vain from whose hand no worthy action proceeds. Now the inventor who toils in quest of some improvement to subserve the useful purposes of mankind, should not be content with an inactive obscurity which is sure to follow sluggish endeavor: he should suffer the world to learn what he has done, and afford some opportunity for the public to reap the advantages of his efforts, while at the same time some share of the reward may return to bless and to incite him to renewed activity. If you have an invention, and it is of any intrinsic value, let the public become sensible of the fact. If you live in *Quiltsburg*, there are ample facilities in this stirring age of steam, lightning, railroads, and newspapers in abundance to advise the public of your status or whereabouts, and of what you are doing to further the onward progress of the world in the arts and sciences. We can point to numerous instances where the publication of an invention in our columns has been the means of great profit to the inventor.

In No. 14 we published an engraving of a patented machine, and the inventor has lately written us, stating that he had sold nearly ten thousand dollars worth of rights, and received the cash. Poor as we knew him to be before he received his patent, he still had means to bring his invention publicly before at least sixty thousand readers, (for at the lowest computation three persons read every issued number of the "Scientific American,") all or nearly all of whom are directly interested in the improvements brought into existence by the worthy sons of genius.

Whether inventors select our paper or not as their medium, we urge upon them the importance of spreading before the people the fact that they have a good invention to dispose of and also where they can be found.

—At the mere cost of an engraving, (which is never beyond the means of the humblest,) we prepare and publish engravings of inventions, such as are likely to interest our readers. We cannot and will not accept of the ugly and uncouth efforts of those who sometimes attempt to palm off upon us what they are pleased to style engravings. We write and publish a paper for INTELLIGENT READERS, who look for some degree of perfection in what we present to them in weekly installments—whether it be in engravings or letter-press. Such engravings as we publish are executed by the best of artists in this line, and it is well known that our paper has a larger and more influential circulation than all the combined journals of its class now published; therefore it is right and proper that it should be the original medium through which inventors should present to the public a knowledge of their inventions. Second-hand engravings will be refused until our claim to their first use is more successfully contested than it now is by other scientific newspapers, —therefore, if inventors wish to make use of our unequalled facilities to let the public know what they have; they can do so by complying with our reasonable demands. We have no feelings of exclusiveness except those which rightfully belong to a publication of the circulation and influence of the "Scientific American."

## Biography of an Inventor.

"Hunt's Merchant's Magazine" is an excellent work, and has no equal of its kind in the world, yet we must say that some of the autobiographies which are presented to the world through its columns contain statements altogether too highly colored; they may answer very well for fancy sketches, but scarcely come within the province of sober fact. In the last number (February, 1854) of this respectable periodical, there is a biography of E. B. Bigelow, a distinguished inventor and one whose name is more conspicuously associated with the power-loom for weaving figured fabrics than that of any other man, still we think that the author (N. Cleveland) is rather given to the use of a *free pencil*. Respecting the subject of the article—which is illustrated with a bad engraving of a very good-looking man—it is stated that having but *accidentally* witnessed the process of weaving coach lace, and having taken no notes of details—only remembering that hand looms were employed—and with only a piece of coach lace to guide him, he went home, invented and perfected a power-loom to weave the intricate fabric, and had it in operation within six weeks after its first conception. The plain inference to be drawn from such statements is, that Mr. Bigelow, perfectly ignorant of the art of weaving figured fabrics, and with only a piece of figured cloth to guide him, invented and finished a power-loom to weave such fabrics in about forty days. This we cannot credit. If it were true, then he certainly must be the greatest inventive genius that ever lived,—and before whose efforts, those of Fulton, Watt, Whitney, Evans, Morse, and Jacquard, become pale and spiritless,—those great men never performed a feat in invention like that recorded of Mr. Bigelow in this biography. That he has made many excellent improvements on carpet power-looms, we admit, and for this he deserves the thanks of the whole world, and we rejoice to know that he has been justly rewarded with something more substantial than mere thanks—pecuniary success—yet let us say that such highly colored and overdrawn statements as are made in this biography do him no good, but rather detract from his true fame. Those who are acquainted with the history of weaving will be inclined to believe that the information was furnished personally, and will be ready to attribute more than an ordinary share of vanity to its author; but we have the charity to believe that it is the product of an admiring and warm friend, who was not aware that Jacquard had invented the most ingenious and intricate apparatus con-

nected with the figured fabric loom, before Mr. Bigelow appeared upon the stage of time, and that he only adapted this loom, as it was, and of which he must have had much knowledge, to be operated by steam or water in place of hand power.

If we are not much mistaken Mr. Bigelow obtained the second American patent for carpet power-looms; the first patent he purchased. In his undertakings he has been most successful, and to him our country is no doubt indebted for the splendid triumph of weaving figured carpets by power. He has a carpet factory now in operation at Lancaster, Mass., said to be the model one of the world. He has secured more patents for improvements in power-looms, than any person in our country. His looms are employed in all our principal carpet factories, and the carpets manufactured in his own factory, which were exhibited in the Crystal Palace, did credit to his genius and the taste of his pattern designer. It was he who adapted the power-looms for weaving the beautiful silk brocatelles, also exhibited in the Crystal Palace, and the only fabrics of the kind woven by power in the world. We are glad to know that he has obtained fortune as well as fame, and that while still a young man, these have been acquired by his inventions; may he live many years to enjoy the fruits of his genius and industry.

His life presents a hopeful example to all our young inventors. His first improvements were made when he was only 23 years of age, and his occupation—that of a physician—was altogether out of the line of making coach-lace and carpet looms. Many of the best inventions have been made by men who lived and labored at occupations very far removed from those which they improved and advanced by their genius.

Arkwright, the improver of the spinning frame was a barber, Cartwright, the inventor of the plain power-loom, was a clergyman; Fulton, the successful steamboat inventor, was a painter; Whitney, the inventor of the cotton gin, was a teacher. Genius is confined to no station, nor to any occupation. To every man, however high or low he may be, all the experience of the past and all the reasoning and wisdom of the present, reverberate in the injunction,

"Act well your part, there all the honor lies."

## Inventions New and Old.

Our cotemporary, the New York "Tribune," of the 4th inst., contained a goodly amount of very useful and interesting notices of new inventions, four of which were obtained from the columns of the "Scientific American." We were very glad to see these, as the information—through our cotemporary—will reach a large class to whom it is of no small importance. At the same time it would have afforded us greater pleasure, had due credit been given to the source from whence such information was derived. There is no weekly paper in our country, from the columns of which so many original extracts are taken by our cotemporaries, as from the "Scientific American," and while some honestly give us credit, the great majority do not. We are not accustomed to make complaints on account of this, and we merely state the fact at present, relying on the generosity of our cotemporaries to do what is just and proper toward us in the future.

INDIA RUBBER WASHING MACHINE.—The "Tribune" of the above date describes an india rubber washing machine, which has recently been exhibited at Cincinnati. The description given of it by our cotemporary is taken word for word from page 348, Vol. 8, "Scientific American." We notice this fact merely that we may not hereafter be charged with copying remarks from the "Tribune" of 1854, into the "Scientific American" of 1853—six months previous.

The same washing machine has been on exhibition in this city, since the Crystal Palace was opened, and it is not a little surprising that it should not have been noticed by our cotemporary until it had traveled to Ohio, notwithstanding an engraving of it appeared in our columns.

THE STEAM BLAST.—We notice in the "Tribune" of the same date, that its Paris corres-

pondent describes a wonderful new invention by Prof. Delabarre, which is stated to consist of the introduction of a jet of steam into the bottom of the chimney to increase the draught of steam boilers. The fact is, that this is the very principle which is employed on every locomotive in our country, and has been in use on every one we have seen, excepting the "Dummy" of Mr. Waterman, which was used for a short time, to propel the cars of the Hudson River Railroad through the streets of this city. In place of the blast, the "Dummy" used a blower—an old device, which was employed on the "Novelty," in 1828. M. Delabarre has certainly stumbled upon a modern *antique*; we did not suppose there was a single adult person living in a civilized country ignorant of the fact that the effect of every locomotive is regulated by its steam blast.

## Notice to Subscribers.

HALF OF VOLUME NINE.—In three weeks from the present date the half-yearly term of a number of our subscribers will expire. We take occasion to direct the attention of such subscribers to the importance of renewing their subscriptions as soon as possible. It has often happened that subscribers have delayed doing this in the expectation of obtaining all their back numbers at any moment afterwards; but when they did apply, found to both their own and our regret, that we could not supply them. As so many of our readers desire to have their volumes bound, let no one delay sending in his subscription.

We also take occasion to say to our readers that the present is an excellent time for them to solicit their friends to become subscribers. No article will be left unfinished in No. 26, so that we shall commence the next half of the present, the same as if it were a new volume. The "Scientific American" is allowed on all hands to be the cheapest and best mechanical paper in the world.

## Steam Carriages for Common Roads.

We see that steam carriages for common roads, are being again advocated and commented upon by a number of our cotemporaries. How in the name of science and common sense they can do this is surprising to us, in these days of railways and cheap locomotion. It might have appeared sensible to advocate steam carriages for common roads before railroads were invented, but not now. When it is considered that heavy rails and straight lines lessen the running expenses of railroads about 40 per cent.; and when it is considered that a 40 horse power engine will draw as much on a railroad as a 200 horse power engine, on a common road, the idea of using them on common roads is preposterous. The question is one of economy, and the man who advocates locomotives for common roads, when such superior advantages are obtained from railroads, forgets, that Rip Van Winkle sleeps no more.

## A Marine Locomotive.

In answer to the letter of H. A. Frost, which was published in our columns two weeks since, respecting his sea-locomotive, we have received a communication from Morrison Foster, of Pittsburgh, Pa., in which he states, that he invented a marine locomotive eight years ago, and in June, 1853, constructed a small machine which weighed about 1000 lbs, with which he moved over the water, carrying four persons with a considerable velocity; since that time, it has remained at the Hope Cotton Factory, in that place. He has not informed us of the plan nor construction of his vessel, and it may be entirely different from that of Mr. Frost, which we publish in this number.

## Franking Letters.

Members of Congress who frank letters as a favor to private individuals are guilty of swindling the Government in a very low and contemptible manner. Parties who ask or accept such favors are engaged in a very small business. We would no sooner ask such a favor than we would beg the loan of three cents to buy a drink of New England rum. We almost daily receive letters franked by an M. C., from parties who have no connection with the Government, and upon business of a strictly private nature. Is this right? Is this honest? We do not believe it is.