

Scientific American.

NEW YORK, AUGUST 19, 1854.

The Colt Patent in Congress.

It is well known to our readers that application was made to have the patent of Col. Colt, for revolving fire arms, extended by special act of Congress, and that while the bill to meet his case was before the House of Representatives, on the 8th of last month, the Hon. Mr. Clingman, of N. C., rose up and stated, that "from extraordinary means resorted to he had no doubt very large sums of money had been offered to gentlemen to induce them either to vote for the Bill or absent themselves." This was a direct charge to bribe the representatives of the people, and coming from such a source it was like the falling of a bomb shell in the midst of a crowded court. Instantly there was an erection of ears and an elevation of member's heads, for this was nearly a direct charge against the integrity and purity of those friendly to the Bill. The names of informants were called for, but these Mr. Clingman refused to give, and demanded the appointment of a committee to investigate the subject. This was done two days afterwards by the appointment of one consisting of five members, with power to send for witnesses. We know that the committee exerted themselves to obtain the testimony of witnesses from many parts of our country, and were at no small amount of trouble to sift the matter thoroughly. A majority of that Committee, consisting of the Hons. J. Letcher, T. Ruffin, and N. Eddy, have made a partial report on the subject, in which it is stated that they had prosecuted their investigations since the 12th of July, with the exception of one legislative day only, but many witnesses who had been summoned could not be examined before the close of the session. They therefore recommend that the investigation be resumed at the opening of the next session, as the matter is of such importance as to justify a more careful and thorough examination. We really think so to, for the investigation has developed a mass of facts enough to make every true American blush for some of his countrymen. We have always condemned the extension of patents—except for very extraordinary cases—by Congress, well knowing the disreputable practices and influences which have been employed to disgrace our country in its legislative capacity as connected with the extension of some patents. The committee holds up the character of a member of Congress as something which should reach the highest standard of moral propriety, but the evidence which they present respecting the qualities of some of them composing the present Congress, falls far short of this mark. They concede that the evidence does not show that money was offered to members for their aid in this case, to influence their votes, but they say that "the means and appliances which are resorted to by interested parties to secure the success of their measures are numerous, and such as are supposed to be adapted to the characters, views, necessities, and objects of those who are to be influenced." Now what do our readers think were the means and influences brought to bear upon honorable gentlemen in order to predispose them to favor the passage of the Bill for Colt's patent? Would they believe that they consisted of gloves and wine? Yet such was the fact. The report says:—

"The money has been used, as the evidence shows, in paying the costs and charges incurred in getting up costly and extravagant entertainments, to which ladies and members of Congress and others were invited, with a view of furthering the success of this measure. The ladies having been first duly impressed with the importance of Colt's pistol extension, by presents of Parisian gloves, are invited to these entertainments, and the evidence shows that while there, members are appealed to by them to favor this particular measure. In the language of a witness, 'a dead set' was made at Hon. Gilbert Dean, to induce him 'to go for the renewal of Colt's patent.' Whether the

same sort of social influence and appliance was brought to bear upon others, who were invited to dine or sup at that handsome establishment, we have no means of ascertaining, as Mr. Dickerson has not given us the names of his guests, and has not therefore furnished us with the means of getting at the facts. Mr. Dickerson seems to have adopted the rule, that

"To reach the heart or get the vote
The surest way is down the throat."

The committee believe that all such means of operating upon the social disposition of those who are to decide the question, are improper, and they cannot excuse their use by the agent and attorney of Col. Colt."

It is stated that \$15,000 were given to the agent of Colt in this case, but the witnesses could not be made to answer how it was spent, but it was well known that splendid entertainments were given, and the influence of ladies over members through handsome sets of white kids, were sought with a tact worthy of Walpole, who asserted that "every man had his price."

There is not a single patent sought to be extended by Congress but has some opponents, and some of these, no doubt, exert their influence for the sake of being bought off. "It is in evidence," says the report, "that a contingent fee of \$10,000 has been offered by Dickerson to an active opponent of Colt's Bill to buy off his opposition and to secure his countenance and support to that measure." The parties met on several occasions, and their conversations on the subject perfectly disgusted the committee, and was entirely unfavorable to "Dickerson and Day,"—the agent and the opposition.

It also seems that in Washington there is a kind of united agency of ex-members of Congress, lawyers, and others—a second House of Congress—that undertake, we suppose, for so much, to get bills passed, by feasting the honorables and making presents to their ladies. Of such a body of men the report says:—

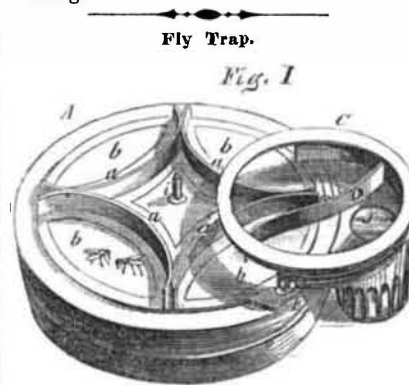
"This combination is evidenced by another fact of striking force and significance. We find the same agents and attorneys acting in behalf of the same bills—patents, railroads, &c. This would hardly be the case unless such combination were indispensable to success. Men who have good measures are generally willing to allow them to stand or fall on their own merits or demerits, without seeking support from other sources. Such has not been the case, however, with Colt's application, if the evidence is to be believed."

It has also been found by the committee, that the correspondents of the daily papers who have been admitted to desks on the floor of the house, were regarded as the most efficient agents that could be employed by those who had measures to advance, and although these gentlemen are required to give a personal pledge of honor that they are not employed as agents to prosecute any claim, the committee say, "we find that in utter disregard of this pledge and its spirit, they (the correspondents) have been employed in many of the railroad, patent, and other schemes which have engaged the attention of Congress during the present session."

We have quoted enough from this report to show what the tenor of it is. It does not spare the agents of Col. Colt, nor any connected with prosecuting his claims, but while it is bold and manly in this respect, it is neither bold, open, nor candid, in respect to those members of Congress who sipped the wine and eat the beef provided by Col. Colt's money. It may be asserted that it would not be honorable to present the names of those members of Congress who were guests at such entertainments, but if the members of the committee considered it their duty to present the names of the providers of these feasts, surely it was a more imperative duty for them to give the names of the public representatives who were so amply provided for at those feasts.

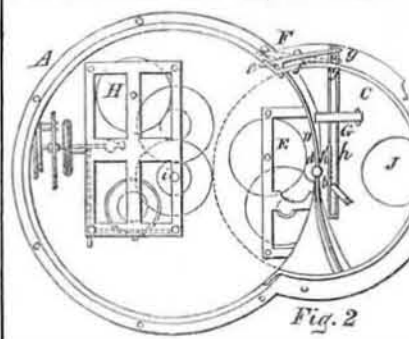
Again and again have we heard it asserted, that Washington was a den of corruption, and this report is confirmatory of such charges. If all members of Congress possessed such lofty characters for honesty and uprightness which this report asserts they should possess, no such

combinations of men, and no such practices as are described in this report, would exist in Washington.



On the 18th of last April, a patent was issued to David and Samuel Flanders, of Parishville, N. Y., for a Trap for Catching Flies, which is represented by the annexed engravings. Figure 1 being a perspective and figure 2 a top view—the rotating disk and wiper-box of the trap being removed. The same letters which occur on both figures refer to similar parts. The nature of the invention consists in having a horizontal circular rotating disk divided in its upper surface, by four upright ledges into four sections, which, as the disk rotates, pass in succession underneath a portion of a circular cover or top of a box, which contains a wiper that sweeps the surface of the sections, and throws the flies into the box behind the wiper. The sections on the disk are baited, in order to attract the flies upon them; and a glass vessel containing water is placed underneath an aperture in the bottom of the wiper box, into which the flies fall. Motion is communicated to the disk and wiper by clock machinery or its equivalent.

A represents a circular box of suitable dimensions, on the upper part of which is a disk having upon its upper surface four upright ledges, a a a a, which are curved inward, or in a reverse direction to the edge of the disk, H,



the edges of said ledges terminating at the edge of the disk, see figure 1. These ledges divide the disk into four sections, b b b b.

C is a box of segmental form, placed at the side of the disk, the bottom of the box being flush or even with the disk. The cover or top of the box, C, is circular, and projects over the disk at a distance equal to the breadth of one of the sections, b, or a little more than this. At the edge of the disk and box, C, there is a wiper, D, which is a metal strip placed edge-wise in the box, C, and working upon a spindle, d, which is attached at the center of the wiper. The wiper is of such height as to correspond with the depth of the box, C. Upon the spindle, d, of the wiper, and directly underneath it there are two teeth which project at opposite points from the spindle. The spindle, d, of the wiper, D, is attached to or is a portion of the strike movement, E, of an ordinary clock, and the stroke movement causes the wiper to rotate when liberated from a catch lever, F. This catch lever is at one side of the box, C, and has a small projection, e, which hooks over one end of the wiper. The fulcrum of the catch lever is at f, and its outer end fits between pins, g g, attached to one end of a bar, G, the opposite end of which is provided with teeth, h.

H is the time movement of a clock, and the top disk is suspended upon or attached to a shaft, i, of the movement. This movement, H, causes the disk to rotate. I is a glass vessel which is filled with a requisite quantity of water, and placed underneath an aperture, J, in the bottom of the box, C.

OPERATION.—The time and strike movements

are wound up and the sections, b b b b, properly baited; the implement is then placed in the desired spot, and as the top disk, B, rotates the sections, b, will pass in succession underneath the cover of the box, C. When one of the sections, b, is directly underneath the cover of the box, C, the ends of the ledges, a, will have moved back the catch lever, F, and free the wiper from the projection, e, when the catch lever was thrown back, the bar, G, was thrown further back, or past the spindle, d, of the wiper, as shown by dotted lines, figure 2. When the wiper is freed from the catch lever, it rotates, owing to the movement, E, and sweeps the surface of the section throwing all the flies upon the surface of the section into the box, C; the wiper making one revolution and a half, and is then stopped by the catch lever. The teeth on the spindle, d, catch into the teeth, h, on the bar, G; and the bar, G, and catch lever, F, are thrown back to their original position, as the spindle, d, rotates, by the time one revolution and a half of the wiper is made. Thus the sections pass under the cover of the box, C, and the flies swept off of their surfaces. The two movements are wound up with a key similar to an ordinary clock.

It is intended that the disk should move or rotate gradually, so that the flies will alight upon the sections, and remain upon them till the sections pass under the cover of C.

The surfaces of the sections may be corrugated, or have indentations made in them to receive the bait, it order that it may not be swept off by the wiper. The box, C, behind the wiper being dark, the flies, as they are thrown into the box behind the wiper, will, attracted by the light, pass down the aperture, J, and will fall into the vessel of water, I.

More information may be obtained by letter addressed to the patentees.

Steam Carriages for Common Roads.

In the new York "Daily Times" of Wednesday, last week, there appeared an article on the above subject, in which a great number of epithets were bestowed upon the Editor of the "Scientific American." These can neither hurt nor move him, but with his ideas of a pure newspaper literature, he cannot conceive how any paper desiring to maintain a respectable character could admit such language into its columns. The object of the letter is to deceive the public in reference to the entire failure of all steam coaches to run economically on common roads. A brief history of such efforts in our next number will show this to a discerning community, so that they may not be led astray by any vamped scheme now brought before them.

To Our Readers.

We request the attention of our readers to our "New Prospectus," which will be found on another page; and also to the prizes which are here offered for subscribers to our next volume. Those prizes are liberal in their character, and we conceive them to be devoted to beneficial objects both as it respects those who obtain prizes and the purpose for which they are given. This is all we will say on this subject, at present, but next week we will take occasion to invite the attention of our readers to some views worthy of their serious consideration.

\$ 570 IN PRIZES.

The Publishers of the "Scientific American" offer the following Cash Prizes for the fourteen largest lists of subscribers sent in by the 1st of January, 1855.

\$100 will be given for the largest list,	
\$75 for the 2nd.	\$35 for the 8th,
65 for the 3rd,	30 for the 9th,
55 for the 4th,	25 for the 10th,
50 for the 5th,	20 for the 11th,
45 for the 6th,	15 for the 12th,
40 for the 7th,	10 for the 13th,
	and \$5 for the 14th.

The cash will be paid to the order of each successful competitor; and the name, residence and number of Subscribers sent by each will be published in the "Scientific American," so as to avoid mistakes.

Subscriptions can be sent at any time and from any post town. A register will be kept of the number as received, duly credited to the person sending them.

See new prospectus on the last page.