

dry and leisurely style, upon patents, and the law of patents. He did not seem to be addressing anybody in particular, but before him were seated four or five very shrewd-looking and very attentive gentlemen, all in a row, and habited in black gowns—a rather curious spectacle in the republican hemisphere. There were also many ladies and gentlemen present, evidently in the character of amateurs. I had scarcely recovered from the first surprise occasioned by my accidentally stumbling on such a scene, when the conviction flashed upon my mind that I was in the Supreme Court of the United States.

As the subject which engaged the attention of the Court was very crotchety, and the argument of the “constitutional lawyer” exceedingly dry, my mind soon took counsel of its free will, and wandered to topics more relevant to the place than to the case. I was astonished to find the first tribunal in the land so very wretchedly lodged. The chamber resembled a small section, but prettily well lighted, of the London Dock vaults, its space being broken by the short massive pillars, which supported its low half-arched looking roof. It is in fact neither more nor less than a sort of cellar to the Senate Chamber, the floor of which is partly supported by the pillars in question. It may be more convenient than becoming, thus to have the laws, which are made above, sent down stairs to be executed. And yet, as we shall see by-and-by, there are cases in which the gentlemen in the area are the constitutional superiors of the occupants of the first-floor.

I seated myself on one of the back benches, and, taking no interest in the immediate question, inasmuch as I was not a patentee, amused myself with jotting down some memoranda, by the help of which