

a simple conventional flower or geometrical pattern can often be used to great advantage, care being taken not to make it too prominent; the great aim being to keep the general work subservient, and in no way to form a dark molded frame for the mass of light ceiling. The ordinary system of stencil decoration can be carried out at a very small expense, and with a few good patterns, very good effect can be obtained in ceilings, where generally little or nothing is done; nor is it a very costly matter to lay on to the flat ceiling, small deaf moldings formed into panels, and painted, with the panels filled in some very light diaper paper or stencil enrichment.

Michael Angelo, Domenichino, Vasari and other artists, covered their ceilings with paintings and fresco, beautiful in themselves, but trying to those who have to look long at them. Michael Angelo, much against his will, painted in elaborate decoration the ceiling of the Sistine chapel; but Giotto, who knew thoroughly well how to decorate, declined generally to waste his work where it was, at its best, but difficult to see; and in the ceiling of the Arena Chapel we find only a plain light tint of pale blue, contrasting well with his fresco decoration on the walls.

In French ceilings we find many graceful enrichments, especially those designed by La Pôtre, from whom Inigo Jones probably took many of his ideas and thoughts; afterwards Vanbrugh and Gibbs followed with work of similar character, until the perfection of this kind of cast enrichment was attained by Athenian Stewart and the brothers Adam, whose delicate detail, fanciful and flowing treatment of design may yet be seen in some of the old houses of London, and are well worthy of study in all plaster decoration.

TAMPERING WITH THE PATENT LAW.

Most of our readers are aware that there is a movement on foot to induce the United States Congress to make some important changes in the patent law—changes of such a nature that, if passed, they will inflict a most serious blow upon the inventive genius of this country, the progress of which has so greatly been aided by the fostering protection which the law, as it now exists, has extended to it. The proposed changes, while being detrimental to inventors, patentees, and owners of patents, will be highly profitable to such manufacturers, corporations, or any other parties whose interest it is to make use of valuable patents or inventions not patented, at the least possible expense, or without any expense whatever. At the same time it will be a blow against the Patent Office itself, and considerably diminish its income, as many inventors, seeing the increased expense of securing patent rights, and the still more increased uncertainty of maintaining or enforcing the rights when obtained, will not be so ready to apply for patents, being debarred either for want of sufficient means or unwilling to pay more under diminished chances for protection in the ownership of the laborious product of their brains.

The nature of the changes in the patent laws proposed, proves that the proposal comes from: 1st. Parties who thus far have succeeded in secretly infringing various patent rights, and are tired of this secrecy, and at the same time in fear that at any time patentees may prosecute them for damages. 2d. Parties who are dissatisfied because they are prevented from using certain patented inventions, which, if they could use without paying the patentee, would enable them to earn immense profits. We know of several patent rights, which, if they could be annulled or made difficult to enforce by a new law, it could truly be said "there are millions in them."

In order to justify our unfavorable opinion of the proposed changes, we will mention a few of them, with our comments.

"Section 1. No damages can be recovered for infringements that have taken place more than four years before beginning the suit."

The result of such a law would be, that if an infringement escapes the notice of the patentee for four years, the infringer goes free and the patentee gets—*nil*, minus his costs, as a remuneration for the value of his invention.

"Section 2. Any one will have a right to use any invention upon paying the patentee a price, the amount of which is to be settled by the courts."

This is downright robbery, as by such a law a patentee would no longer be master over his own invention, and would have to accept a price not agreed to by himself, but fixed by his antagonists. His patent would fall to the level of a description of an invention, which anybody could use without even asking him.

"Section 3. If an inventor proves an infringement and the judgment allows him less than \$20, he must pay all the costs of the court, his own as well as those of the defendant—the infringer."

This is practically a threatened heavy fine upon an inventor who dares to sue an infringer, as by sharp law practice the latter may often succeed in obtaining a judgment against himself for less than \$20.

"Section 4. Infringers have the right to continue their infringement, during any procedure by the patentee, until a verdict is rendered against them."

"Section 5. Infringers have the right to remove any injunctions against them, in order to have the privilege to continue infringing."

"Section 6. No re-issues shall be granted, unless applied for within seven years from date of patent."

These sections are evidently for the direct benefit of infringers.

"Section 7. Inventors cannot base any prosecution for infringement upon a re-issued patent, but only upon the original."

This shuts off the benefit of any correction of a deficient claim by a re-issue, so that in the future re-issues would become worthless, and no inventor would hereafter apply for one.

"Section 8. A patent taken out jointly, when only one was the inventor, is void."

"Section 10. Infringers may commence suits against patentees to declare their patents void."

This is simply intended to assist infringers to break down patents that stand in their way, and to do it quite easily if the patentee is poor, absent, or dead.

"Section 11. If patentees do not commence suits against infringers whom they have warned, within a reasonable time, the infringer may continue the infringement during the entire term of the patent without paying the patentee anything."

"Section 12. Besides the \$35 to be paid at the issue of the patent, the patentee must pay \$50 more in four years, and \$100 more in nine years; total, \$185 for the price of a patent, as failure to pay any of these sums annuls the claim."

The increased liability of poor patentees would be another cause of diminished applications, and the result would be the same as experienced by a merchant who doubles and trebles his prices while he deteriorates the quality of his goods—namely, a decrease in business. In this case the old advice may be given: "Let well enough alone."

In saying this, we do not mean to convey the idea that we consider our patent laws of the highest perfection, but certainly if the proposed laws were adopted things would be a great deal worse than they are now. The principal evil to be corrected is of a very different nature from that reached by any of the provisions above detailed. It is this:

Frequently a party takes out a patent for an invention, with which he does nothing whatever, debarring others from using it; and if, in ignorance of his claim, some manufacturer uses a process similar to his, and the patentee discovers it and thinks he can prove an infringement, he comes down on the poor manufacturer, bleeds, and often ruins him.

Another evil is that some patentees have such exaggerated ideas of the value of their inventions that they ask exorbitant prices or royalties that no one feels justified in introducing the invention, however good it may be in itself, fearing that it will not pay. For this reason many otherwise valuable inventions have been kept out of use. These cases have been reached better by the patent laws in France. There, when an inventor does not prove that he has not neglected to introduce his invention within a certain period, in such a way that the public could reap the benefit of it, his invention becomes public property.

We hope and trust that the good sense of our legislators will prevent them from making changes for the worse in the patent laws, which certainly would be the case if the law at present proposed were adopted, which, while it does not reach the evil, is a glaring injustice to all inventors and patentees.

Since putting this article in type, we understand that the movement to induce the United States Congress to make the above changes, has, from the strong representations made against such alteration, been abandoned.

IMITATION MARBLE.—A German glass company near Freden, Hanover, make imitations of marble from glass, which, on account of its superior hardness, is preferable for some purposes. They imitate marble table and floor slabs.