

equal to that which his observations imply, and that in this particular he has added to my determinations the confirmation of specific evidence.

T. C. CHAMBERLIN.

#### TWO EXTRAORDINARY BRITISH PATENTS.

PATENT No. 14,204, granted 27th October, 1884, by Her Majesty's Commissioner of Patents to Harry Fell, Mercantile Clerk, of South Norwood Park, is described as a 'New Method for getting Gold from Wheat.' The complete specification is as follows:

"That in the steeping of the mixture of half, measure, 'the whole wheat straw cut into fine square snips the width of the straw and half' the grains in a jar of ordinary cold water "I let the steep remain still for ten hours at a temperature of fifty-nine degrees Fahrenheit varying with temperature, and then straining off the liquor into a shallow pan of some such cool substance as china or earthenware, I leave this liquor to stand in this pan for yet twenty-four hours at sixty degrees also varying with temperature; these durations of times of ten hours and twenty-four hours speaking for a very inferior brown straw much knocked about and the grains those, of a very good quality, of red wheat; and then catch up the skim on a cylinder of some such cool substance as china or earthenware," and then let this skim dry, so getting some results of films of Gold."

The simplicity of this process for getting gold from wheat is as extraordinary as the language used in describing it; the above being a literal transcript, including the peculiar use of punctuation marks. The specification occupies two pages in quarto form and can be had at the Patent Office, Sale Branch, 38 Cursitor street, Chancery Lane, for two pence.

The second of these curious patents is numbered 1919 and bears the date 2d February, 1889. It is described as an 'improved means of detecting the presence of gold and silver underground,' and was granted to Samuel Adams Goodman, Jr., of Tyler, in the county of Smith and State of Texas, U. S. A. This specification also occupies two pages and is accompanied by a plate representing an ordinary glass bottle containing a solid body and a liquid, corked and sealed with wax; to the cork is fastened a string terminating in a loop.

Mr. Goodman, farmer, of Texas, makes the following statement:

"The object of this invention is to enable precious

metals to be discovered by a process of divination; and it consists in a composition which has a strong attraction and affinity for gold and silver, the attraction resembling somewhat that of magnetism. In carrying my invention into practice, I place the composition in a vial or flask, seal it tightly and suspend it by means of a string. The composition referred to is made up of gold, silver, quicksilver and copper, the ingredients being placed in a small vial or flask, together with a quantity of dilute nitric, or tartaric acid or pure alcohol. \* \* \*

"In using my gold and silver finder the instrument is held, preferably by the thumb and forefinger of the right hand and steadied with the left hand; it should be held steady but not cramped. Then, if there are any precious metals in the immediate neighborhood, the flask will be attracted by such metals and will move towards them at first and will then vibrate, thus indicating the presence of the metal sought for.

"To protect and conceal the contents of the flask, I cover it with paper, cloth or tin."

This is substantially the whole claim, in securing which Mr. Goodman was assisted by A. M. and Wm. Clark, patent agents of 53 Chancery Lane.

It is satisfactory to note that Texan farmers write English much more clearly than London mercantile clerks.

Western farmers are hereby warned against attempting to get gold out of their wheat by the Fell process and against seeking for precious metals by the Goodman method. But seriously why are patents granted to persons making such absurd claims?

H. CARRINGTON BOLTON.

#### COMPLIMENT OR PLAGIARISM.

THE following letter is sent for publication, at Mr. Lefevre's request, by Professor Beman.

MESSRS. BEMAN AND SMITH,

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN.

GENTLEMEN: I have just seen your reply to Dr. Halsted on page 275 of the current number of SCIENCE.

Much as I regret the unhappy chance that led to the furthest association of my name with that deplorable controversy—being a rational and just man—I do not reproach you, even for omitting to state the intrinsically trivial nature of the parallelism of that sentence in my book with a sentence in Sandeman's preface to his *Pelicotetics*. It was entirely proper to make