

**WASHINGTON.**

**Narrow Escape of Secretary Fish—A Muscular Demonstration—Congressional Election to be Contested—Mr. Motley's Recall and the Alabama Claims—The Secret Understanding with Russia—Treasury Statement.**

Special Dispatch to the New-York Times.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 19.—Secretary FISH came near meeting with serious injuries, last evening, by the wheel of his carriage coming off while turning a street corner. Luckily, the Secretary received only a few slight bruises.

**MUSCULAR REMONSTRANCES.**

Among Washington lawyers the cane still maintains the ascendancy as a means of remonstrance at the use of offensive personal language. Mr. S. STRONG made some allusion, yesterday, to Mr. R. T. MERRICK which the latter did not like, and in the vestibule of the City Hall, today, Mr. STRONG received the announcement in the approved mode of a few whacks over the head. No serious harm appears to have been done.

**A SEAT IN CONGRESS TO BE CONTESTED.**

The election for Representative in the Fifth Maryland District will be contested. Judge MERRICK, Democrat, was elected, and Mr. GARY, the Republican candidate, will contest the seat on these grounds: First, that in Charles and St. Mary's Counties colored voters were intimidated, in violation of the Congressional Election law; second, that separate polling-places were provided in some precincts for the white and colored voters.

**POLITICIANS CALLING ON THE PRESIDENT.**

E. D. WESTER, of Brooklyn, in company with several other politicians of that City, had a protracted interview with the President, about 1 o'clock today; and after they retired, Gov. WARD, of New-Jersey, called on the President.

**ALABAMA CLAIMS.**

It has been officially ascertained that the letter for the recall of Minister MOTLEY is now on its way to England. Until it shall have been received by him he will of course be regarded as the representative of this Government at the British Court, and, therefore, the report telegraphed from London that the American Secretary of Legation received a dispatch from Secretary FISH relative to the Alabama claims, with instructions to present it to Lord GRANVILLE, must be a mistake. The President this afternoon, on being asked as to the truth regarding the London telegram, replied that the first he had heard of the matter was in the morning papers.

**THANKSGIVING DAY.**

The different Departments and all places of public business here will be closed on Thursday next—Thanksgiving Day—and all work suspended during the day.

**COLLECTOR MURPHY.**

There is no truth in any reports that Collector MURPHY, of New-York, will be removed, or of his resignation having been tendered. There is authority for stating that the official conduct of Mr. MURPHY is thoroughly sustained by the Administration in every particular.

**THE SECRET UNDERSTANDING WITH RUSSIA.**

The assumption in England that Russia and the United States have a secret understanding does not appear to have a good foundation.

**TREASURY STATEMENT.**

The following is an official statement, covering the transactions of the past week:

Receipts of fractional currency.....	\$548,000
Shipments of notes.....	1,591,793
Shipment of fractional currency.....	313,121
Securities held for National Bank circulation.....	345,345,001
Securities held for public deposits.....	15,831,500
Mutilated bank notes burned.....	831,320
Total amount burned to date.....	32,377,138
Bank currency issued for bills destroyed.....	213,930
Balance due for mutilated notes.....	1,091,523
Bank circulation outstanding.....	302,919,894
Fractional currency redeemed and destroyed.....	758,830
Internal Revenue receipts today.....	270,565
For the fiscal year to date.....	70,504,430

The following are the Customs receipts from Nov. 1 to 5, inclusive:

New-York.....	\$2,680,651
Boston.....	296,983
Philadelphia.....	74,173
San Francisco.....	105,409
Total.....	\$2,557,257

**WRECKS ON THE BAHAMA BANKS.**

SAMUEL P. SAUNDERS, United States Vice-Consul at Nassau, W. I., on the 10th inst. reports the total loss of the bark *W. K. Brown* upon the Salt Key Bank, Bahamas, during a terrible hurricane which passed over those islands and the coast of Cuba during the middle of October last. A small portion of this vessel's cargo has been saved, and taken, with the captain and crew, to Key West. During the same hurricane six other vessels were wrecked upon the Salt Key Bank, no one surviving to tell the tale of their disaster. The crews and cargoes were all lost. It is inferred that some of them are American vessels, but the truth will probably never be known.

**FOREIGN LEGATIONS.**

The members of Diplomatic Corps have very generally returned to their respective positions in Washington, and present but few changes in the legations for the new year.

**THE NEW COPYRIGHT LAW.**

**How it Works—Simplification of the System—Gathering the Old Records—The Work of the Librarian of Congress.**

From Our Own Correspondent.

WASHINGTON, Monday, Nov. 14, 1870.

The new Copyright laws, transferring the whole copyright business to the care of the library of Congress, took effect July 8 last. Before that date there were upward of sixty distinct offices for the issue of copyrights, corresponding with the number of District Courts. The system was complicated, not understood by the people, and uncertain in securing even to those most earnestly seeking to comply with the requirement of law a valid title to their productions. This was owing to the imperfect manner in which the law was executed, either from the carelessness or ignorance of officers, or the difficulty of any one person's knowing whether all others having duties under the law had complied with them in any one case. The principal change made by the revision of the law was the one just noted, placing the authority in a single office, with one responsible head. There are other wholesome changes, but of less importance. When the law was approved and took effect, the business was organized by the Librarian of Congress, in connection with the library immediately, and the "Copyright office," as it is known to law, has been in operation about three months and a half. The leading publishing houses of the country have all expressed satisfaction with the working of the new system.

The procuring of a copyright is very simple. A printed copy of the title of the book, map, chart, dramatic or musical composition, engraving, cut, print, photograph, chromo, or a description of any design for a work of the fine arts, must be sent by mail to the Librarian of Congress. It must be done previous to the publication, and \$1 must be inclosed for fees, fifty cents of which is for recording the title of the book or other article, and fifty cents for the certificate of copyright which is returned. Within ten days after the publication of the article copyrighted, two complete copies of the best edition must be mailed to the Librarian of Congress. This renders the copyright valid, and is a full compliance with the law. For the complete assurance of publishers, however, the Librarian is accustomed to return by mail a receipt for the articles sent him when they arrive. As the law now stands, this is only done by the courtesy of the Librarian, as it is provided that the postmasters where the books and titles are mailed shall give receipts for them when requested. The titles and books pass free of postage. The time when a copyrighted article shall be published is unlimited, except by the discretion of

the publisher. Authors can reserve the right to translate or dramatize their works by giving notice below the imprint of copyright entry. Each copyright secures exclusive ownership in a publication for twenty-eight years, and at the end of that time a renewal may be obtained for fourteen additional years, making forty-two years in all that an author, his heirs, or assignees, may reap the fruit of his labor.

In the Copyright Office, questions of priority, infringement, originality, usefulness, and the like, are not considered, but every applicant who complies with the requirements of law is entitled to, and receives, a certificate of copyright. The questions of what is secured by any particular copyright, what is an infringement and the extent of damage, are left for the determination of the Courts of the United States. The Patent Office has the means of determining whether an invention is new, or an infringement, and accordingly has the power to refuse to issue letters patent when proper. But it can be readily perceived that no Copyright Office could determine whether all the pages of a book were original, or the fact of plagiarism and the extent of it, at least not without such a prodigious amount of indexing and cataloguing as would require a fee greater than only the most valuable copyrights would be worth. Give every applicant a copyright, and let him maintain its validity before the Courts if he can, is the practice.

This principle is of course not a feature of the new law, but its statement is suggested by the fact that it is not generally understood, and, in consequence, there is a large class of correspondence which the Copyright Office answers by printed circulars. The substantial facts of a case in illustration may be given. Sometime ago a publisher in a city north of this, issued a cheap print of some kind, a chromo perhaps, representing a body of colored soldiers paraded in a street on the occasion of a celebration of the emancipation proclamation, and underneath an appropriate inscription. The next week a rival publisher sent out a similar print, with the inscription left off and other slight changes. "How dare the man steal my ideas?" and "What can I do?" writes publisher No. 1. He did not live in New-York or he would have sought an "injunction." He was informed that his only remedy was in the Courts of the United States.

Under the present law, an artist who wishes to restrain the multiplication of any work of his brush or chisel can do so by obtaining a copyright before the work leaves his possession or ownership. Several sculptors and painters have already availed themselves of the privilege, and of works of art thus entered, no photograph, engraving or reproduction of any kind can be made without the artist's consent. Nearly or quite all the magazines were copyrighted under the old law, but the copyrighting of newspapers was not practiced. Nor is it now, very generally; still, several weekly newspapers and literary papers are entered regularly—among others, the pictorial papers of FRANK LESLIE, and the *Harper's*, the *Hearth & Home*, the *Ledger*, the *Christian Union*: and the time may not be so very distant when all our important weekly and daily papers will secure in the same way their rights to what they print.

Trade marks are not copyrighted, but patented. It is quite common, however, for the owners of trade marks to obtain a copyright for the engraving or print with which the trade mark is generally united, so as to protect themselves against those who might otherwise imitate the general appearance of the label without actually appropriating the patented trade mark itself. For instance, a certain article of manufacture may be covered by an elaborately designed label, on which is printed the trade mark as a subordinate feature. For all the rights secured by the patent on the trade mark, another maker of the same article might copy exactly the rest of the label except the trade mark, covering his own manufacture with it and deceiving the public. By entering the label as an engraving the imitator is deprived of this last resort of fraud.

The new law provides for the transmission of all the records of copyrights to the Copyright Office by the clerks of the District Courts where they have been kept. The records from the Eastern and Middle States have all been received by the Librarian. Nearly all the districts in the Northern States have responded, but from many of the Southern States and the States of the North-west, nothing has been heard. In the South, doubtless, many of the record-books were lost or destroyed during the war, but where they have been preserved from the beginning—1791—they are singularly meagre, showing the inactivity of that section in publishing business. From the Albemarle district of North Carolina the book of records comes in with only one entry, and that for a label. The New-Hampshire district sends two volumes filled; the Maine district, three volumes; the Boston district, forty-four large volumes; the Philadelphia district, thirty-six very large volumes, and the Rhode Island district two small ones. New-York has but just sent in her records, and the number of volumes is not yet known. It is safe to say that in New-York, Boston and Philadelphia were made more than two-thirds of the entries from 1791 to the date of the new law.

Many of the duplicates of books which come to the library under the law are not needed for use in the library, while of some works from twelve to twenty sets are required. The duplicates that are not used are stored away and appropriately numbered and marked. What will ultimately be done with them is a question of the future. No proposition regarding them has yet been considered. The Library Committee is the proper authority to deal with the subject.

The copyright business has thus far been done without any increase of the force employed in the library, but when Congress meets, more clerical assistance will be demanded, the present number of assistants being only sufficient to do the work in the library, demanded during the session of Congress. There have been already about 4,000 entries of copyrights with the Librarian, and the season has been, as everybody knows, a dull one for the publishers. J. E. C.