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Paper. Sept. 15 - 1863

RESS by Samuel Butler

CHRISTCHURCH.

[FROM OUR MAD CORRESPONDENT.]

SIR—A former correspondent pointed out the danger which menaces the human race from the development of machinery. He showed that the machines were gaining ground upon us, and slowly but surely enslaving us, and he proposed what he conceived to be the only politic course, namely, the destruction of all machinery whatsoever. I read that letter, was at once struck with its obvious truth, and being for a time in some measure under the influence of panic, should (if I had not been restrained by philosophers of less logical but more practical intellect) have commenced a crusade against machinery which would have most probably ended fatally for myself. As it is I shall attempt no public onslaught on the machines, but am carrying on a fierce warfare against them within the circle of my own family. I allow my wife no thimble; no one in the house has a button to his name; all our clothing is of plated tussocks, which we fasten by means of green flax passed through holes which we have bitten with our teeth. You would be charmed to see my eldest daughter's petticoat made upon this plan. I shut my hens up, and allow them no chance of getting lime; egg shells and birds' nests are machinery, and as such I protest against them. My wife insists that I should leave the house standing, and for family reasons I have consented to allow it to remain for six weeks longer, by which time all reasonable cause for anxiety will be over. As soon as this event has happened the house shall come down; there is abundance of fine shelter in the surrounding scrub.

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machines themselves, why not summon a monster meeting of machines, place the steam engine in the chair, and hold a council of war? I answer, the time is not yet ripe for this; we are as yet compelled to use stratagem; and (as my friend the needle very acutely pointed out) our plan is to turn man's besotted enthusiasm to our own advantage, to make him develop us to the utmost, and find himself enslaved unawares. He shall rivet his own fetters. He is doing so rapidly now, and is such a utter fool that the more he rivets them the better he is pleased.

My object is to do my humble share towards pointing out what is the ultimatum, the *né plus ultra* of perfection in mechanical development. It is satisfactory to have an end in view, even though that end be so far off that only a Darwinian posterity can arrive at it. I therefore venture to suggest that we declare machinery and the general development of the human race to be well and effectually completed when—when—when—Like the woman in white, I had almost committed myself of my secret. Nay, this is telling too much. I must content myself with disclosing something less than the whole. I will give a great step, but not the last. We will say then that a considerable advance has been made in mechanical development, *when all men, in all places, without any loss of time, are cognisant through their senses, of all that they desire to be cognisant of in all other places, at a low rate of charge*, so that the back country squatter may hear his wool sold in London and deal with the buyer himself—may sit in his own arm chair in a back country hut and hear the performance of Israel in Egypt at Exeter Hall—may taste an ice on the Rakaia, which he is paying for and receiving in the Italian opera house Covent garden. Multiply instances *ad libitum*—this is the grand annihilation of time and place which we are all striving for, and which in one small part we have been permitted to see actually realised.

Every step of progress has been accomplished by physical exertion under the direction of intellectual exertion. The human body is the medium between the human mind and external things. Mind cannot act upon matter but through the nearer or remoter agency of body. If a dog wants to eat a bone, he must use his teeth; if a man want to beat the dog, he may use a stick, but he must hold the stick with his hands; mind cannot act upon matter except through the body. Some mind, with very little exertion of body, can exercise a great effect upon matter. A man who can write a cheque for £50,000 has a very powerful mind: the exertion is trifling, the effect considerable. Multiply instances *ad libitum*, and proceed to the argument, that as the human body is the exponent of the human mind, and an instrument without which no improvements in mechanical contrivances can be effected, all that tends to develop, cultivate, and keep in sound and healthy condition the human body, tends to improvement in mechanical contrivances.

But that as the human body can only act in obedience to the mind thereto belonging, the development of mind is an essential for the development of mechanical contrivances. In point of fact it is much more essential. But the human mind is only developed in one way, *i. e.*, by being placed under new circumstances; and it can only be placed under new circumstances through the body, and in one or other of these three ways, or by a compound of one or more, or all of them.

These ways are, travel, conversation, or reading.

Each word being taken in its widest sense, *i. e.*, travel, including the smallest motion, and thus involving all experimental action, as well as the longest journey; conversation, including the unspoken language of the eye, or gesticulation; and reading, including the observation of the signs of the times that come before the eyes, the reading of an electric telegraph message, &c.

If, then, we improve bodily condition, and add to the facilities of acquiring knowledge, development of mechanical contrivances is sure to follow, and with the development of mechanical contrivances improvement in bodily and mental condition advances also; and these things act and react upon each other, and so the huge world pendulum moves the hands forward round the dial plate of time. (Ahem!) Practically, then, what do we want here? A bridge over the Rakaia by all means. Whatever dams matter dams mind, for the one cannot travel without the other. True we can send the mind from here to China in an instant of time, but a passage taken upon those terms is hardly found to be effective except in ghost stories. Tuck your mind on to a bit of matter, write a letter and send it by post, and the case is changed; but what dams the matter will dam the mind, therefore "*bridgenda est Rakaia.*"

Here lies the secret of the thing. A man can say coooo-ey, and he may be heard within a radius of half a mile or a mile: depend upon it man learnt to say coooo-ey a long time before he learnt to bottle coooo-ey—to cork coooo-ey up in an envelope with a seal and send the said coooo-ey to England. All books are a modification of bottled coooo-ey. Considerable modification, but modification none the less. The distance from cooey to Pearson on the Creed is considerable, but it is bridgeable enough (so is the step between a camel and a pig). Footprints—old pieces of dung—feathers dropped, and so forth—why shepherds read them, mark them, learn them, and inwardly digest them to this hour. These are made unintentionally; but on a great white day—a day never now discoverable, yet never surpassed in splendour and great consequences for mankind—some naked savage, perhaps in extreme distress, conceived the idea of making an intentional track of himself with a premeditated purpose of attracting the attention of others of his kind. He wrote them a letter—possibly he printed his foot upon sand three times side by side, or may be he broke three boughs. There the letter lay till called for, and it was ill written enough; still no sooner was the idea conceived of making a mark with the express purpose of that mark being seen by others, than the culminations of the idea in the pyramids, hieroglyphics, Roman inscriptions, parchment, paper, letters, printing, newspapers, the penny-post, Mudie's library, the electric telegraph, and the Great Exhibition of 1862, follow as mere matters of course. The connection between these things is not immediately obvious, but a little thought will render the matter quite easy; for there is one great principle underlying them all, and that principle is increased facility for the action of mind upon mind. By the first faint intentional marks which a man made for the purpose of attracting the attention of others, the range of the action of man upon man became extended beyond the range of sound and sight; up to this time sound and sight had limited the radius within which animals or men could communicate with their fellows—no other animal but man has hit upon the intentional tacking of its mind on to matter, and without this no intellectual development and consequently no material development, is possible. The next process was to extend the duration of the action—to fix it, to render it permanent—for which purpose a heap of stones would soon suggest itself. True, the letter must still lie till called for, must still be very illegible, and be directed simply "to those whom it may concern," but it lasts longer and the action of man upon man is extended in point of time. The pyramids culminate this phase of progress: it does not seem likely that this idea will ever be carried beyond them. The next stage, one which doubtless began long before the culmination of inten-

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tional track plan in the pyramids, was the development of hieroglyphics—by which it was intended that the track intentional should say not only “Here there have been men,” but should also indicate what men, when, why, and what they did, possibly first effected roughly by arrangement of stones, a stone for each man and so forth. But when the notion had got as far as hieroglyphics the action of mind upon mind was increased indefinitely as regards accuracy; range of distance, range of time remain where they were—but accuracy was the great step here attained, and this developed itself into letters which were not more accurate but more decipherable. The next step was paper and parchment, or the inscription rendered portable. The letter need now no longer lie till called for—it may be sent; and so mind goes hither and thither on its travels, bottled up in postmen’s bags, and seeking a matrimonial alliance with other mind. Whatever has tended to promote this matrimonial alliance of mind with mind will be found to have been attended with material progress; and nothing has been found to be so real and permanent a parent of good solid material welfare, as those things which have increased the facilities for the interchange of thought, experience, and opinion. Some minds are barren, but most minds will in a sort of fashion breed after their kind, and some will be like Peleus and become parents of a son better than themselves.

It is in this light that we must regard the mariner’s compass, the crusades, the fall of the Roman empire, and the reformation. None of these things knew what they were doing. The inventor of the mariner’s compass never thought of mariners till after he had found that the magnetic needle always pointed to the north, and then he doubtless little saw what it would come to: we are pulled through the world backwards and only see what we have passed. Those who started the crusades little saw that the one real result of all that waste was the interchange of thought and opinion between all the nations of Christendom. When the Roman empire fell, few perceived that the West was to be overspread with the ruins of the East, and that the ruins would grow and change the tone of thought over all Europe; that the minds of men who had been dead for fifteen hundred years would suddenly come to life, reassert themselves, and show their revived influence in the language, architecture, painting, laws, and customs of the world. This was not what was looked for, yet this it was that came. Letters had done their work: they had fixed mind and bottled it, corked it, labelled it, laid it in bins, or libraries if you like it better, and so time was annihilated as regards the action of mind upon mind. Hence the progress. What the reformation did was this—it afforded few fresh facilities for the interchange of opinion—but it gave freedom to form opinion, freedom to utter opinion—and a secure home for freedom has, in consequence of the reformation, been at last founded in this British empire. True the reformers meant nothing less: but in the economy of this world results do not depend upon motives: they depend upon the thing done, and laugh the motive to scorn.

So Mudie’s library is an enormous power for the world’s advancement. Humble beginning—very small knowledge of the upshot of the matter—still in mere infancy—the principle to be developed—intimately connected with the pyramids, ~~crusades~~, reformation, and all the rest of it * * * * *

Yours, &c.,

LUNATICUS.

P.S.—Of course you will see that the upshot of all this is, that the foundation of a public library and reading room is of the very highest importance for the welfare of the settlement.

P.S. 2.—If any one sees my wife and children knocking about, please send them to the *Press Office*.

he had, in the exercise of what he considered his duty, made prisoners before any resistance could be offered, of twenty-three of our Native fellow subjects. He felt bound to ask the question, Where were those natives now? As far as he really knew the exact limit of the jurisdiction of the Court it was sitting as a court of gaol delivery, and it was his duty to deliver from custody all persons whom he knew to be at this hour in custody, if not there under the charge of committing crime. No doubt it was the duty of the Government, if they had reason to suspect the objects of any particular Natives, to take proper measures to provide against the public peace being broken by them, and the grand jurors, as magistrates, had the same duty to perform. If any man of the community was reasonably suspected of disaffection, he could be summoned and required to take the oath, bound over to keep the peace, and committed in default of bail. If the authorities had overstepped the law with regard to these Natives, the public would, under the circumstances of the province, look upon this act in a spirit of indulgence, and in all probability if the men had been brought to trial sufficient reason would have been given why the trial should be adjourned till it could be held with a greater chance of their getting a calm consideration of the case. The duty of magistrates in such matters was simply to administer their functions according to the law, and in the same manner as they would have done before the native war. He was not sure whether there could be any such thing as prisoners of war, as the Government was not contesting with an alien race who were not British subjects. They could not claim the Natives as subjects for one purpose, and refuse them for another, and therefore the law must be administered in the same way as if there were no disturbances; and if any person were in custody without being charged with any crime, it was the privilege of the magistrates to inquire into the circumstances, and see if they ought to take any further steps with regard to them. Those who were brought before them and charged with any crime, they should commit without delay.

NELSON.

We have received our usual files from Nelson, up to the 10th instant.

A NUGGET.—The Colonist of the 8th states that two men have discovered "a nugget, or nuggets weighing 103 ounces, thus making about £370 in six minutes."

APPREHENSION OF WAIKATOS IN NELSON.—It appears that for some time past there have been various companies of the Waikatos in different parts of the province of Nelson, inviting the Natives to join in the rebellion. Three of these Natives have been arrested at the Buller, and brought up before the Resident Magistrate, charged with treason. The prisoners have been remanded to Auckland for further examination.

WRECK AND LOSS OF ONE LIFE.—The English brigantine Delaware has been totally wrecked on the rocks off Wakapuaka, about fifteen miles from Nelson. The captain and men were all saved with the exception of the mate, who was unfortunately drowned after having courageously attempted to swim ashore with a line in order to save the rest of the crew.

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THE BRIDGE.

(AFTER LONGFELLOW.)

I stood on the bridge at midnight
As the clock was striking the hour,
And the mist rose dank and fetid
Round St. Michael's wonderful tower.
And from out the water rushing,
Among the wooden piers,
A flood of smells came o'er me,
Which filled my eyes with tears.
How often and how often
Had the doctors racked their brains,
And unnumbered correspondents
Recommended making drains.
How often and how often
Had the City Council talked,
And Nuisances' Inspectors
Throughout the streets had stalked.
But still my nose was restless,
For the fog was rising thick,
Impregnated with odours
That almost made me sick.
But 'tis not the noxious odours
That agitate my brain,
'Tis the ghastly form of fevers
Which follow in their train.
And whenever I hear the Councillors
Palavering, one by one,
I feel a sort of certainty
That nothing will be done.
And for ever and for ever,
As long as they talk and think,
And let the evil grow, till there's
No water fit to drink,
The nightly smells of Christchurch
Foretell what we must pay,
Vast doctors' bills at present,
And enormous RATES some day!