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SAMUEL BUTLER'S CANTERBURY PIECES

by Samuel Butler

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DARWIN ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

Prefatory Note

As the following dialogue embodies the earliest fruits of Butler's

study of the works of Charles Darwin, with whose name his own was

destined in later years to be so closely connected, and thus

possesses an interest apart from its intrinsic merit, a few words as

to the circumstances in which it was published will not be out of

place.

Butler arrived in New Zealand in October, 1859, and about the same

time Charles Darwin's ORIGIN OF SPECIES was published. Shortly

afterwards the book came into Butler's hands. He seems to have read

it carefully, and meditated upon it. The result of his meditations

took the shape of the following dialogue, which was published on 20

December, 1862, in the PRESS which had been started in the town of

Christ Church in May, 1861. The dialogue did not by any means pass

unnoticed. On the 17th of January, 1863, a leading article (of

course unsigned) appeared in the PRESS, under the title "Barrel-

Organs," discussing Darwin's theories, and incidentally referring to

Butler's dialogue. A reply to this article, signed A .M., appeared

on the 21st of February, and the correspondence was continued until

the 22nd of June, 1863. The dialogue itself, which was unearthed

from the early files of the PRESS, mainly owing to the exertions of

Mr. Henry Festing Jones, was reprinted, together with the

correspondence that followed its publication, in the PRESS of June 8

and 15, 1912. Soon after the original appearance of Butler's

dialogue a copy of it fell into the hands of Charles Darwin, possibly

sent to him by a friend in New Zealand. Darwin was sufficiently

struck by it to forward it to the editor of some magazine, which has

not been identified, with the following letter:-

Down, Bromley, Kent, S.E.

March 24 [1863].

(Private).

Mr. Darwin takes the liberty to send by this post to the Editor a New

Zealand newspaper for the very improbable chance of the Editor having

some spare space to reprint a Dialogue on Species. This Dialogue,

written by some [sic] quite unknown to Mr. Darwin, is remarkable from

its spirit and from giving so clear and accurate a view of Mr. D.

[sic] theory. It is also remarkable from being published in a colony

exactly 12 years old, in which it might have [sic] thought only

material interests would have been regarded.

The autograph of this letter was purchased from Mr. Tregaskis by Mr.

Festing Jones, and subsequently presented by him to the Museum at

Christ Church. The letter cannot be dated with certainty, but since

Butler's dialogue was published in December, 1862, and it is at least

probable that the copy of the PRESS which contained it was sent to

Darwin shortly after it appeared, we may conclude with tolerable

certainty that the letter was written in March, 1863. Further light

is thrown on the controversy by a correspondence which took place

between Butler and Darwin in 1865, shortly after Butler's return to

England. During that year Butler had published a pamphlet entitled

THE EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST AS GIVEN BY THE

FOUR EVANGELISTS CRITICALLY EXAMINED, of which he afterwards

incorporated the substance into THE FAIR HAVEN. Butler sent a copy

of this pamphlet to Darwin, and in due course received the following

reply:-

Down, Bromley, Kent.

September 30 [1865].

My dear Sir,--I am much obliged to you for so kindly sending me your

Evidences, etc. We have read it with much interest. It seems to me

written with much force, vigour, and clearness; and the main argument

to me is quite new. I particularly agree with all you say in your

preface.

I do not know whether you intend to return to New Zealand, and, if

you are inclined to write, I should much like to know what your

future plans are.

My health has been so bad during the last five months that I have

been confined to my bedroom. Had it been otherwise I would have

asked you if you could have spared the time to have paid us a visit;

but this at present is impossible, and I fear will be so for some

time.

With my best thanks for your present,

I remain,

My dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,

Charles Darwin.

To this letter Butler replied as follows:-

15 Clifford's Inn, E.C.

October 1st, 1865.

Dear Sir,--I knew you were ill and I never meant to give you the

fatigue of writing to me. Please do not trouble yourself to do so

again. As you kindly ask my plans I may say that, though I very

probably may return to New Zealand in three or four years, I have no

intention of doing so before that time. My study is art, and

anything else I may indulge in is only by-play; it may cause you some

little wonder that at my age I should have started as an art student,

and I may perhaps be permitted to explain that this was always my

wish for years, that I had begun six years ago, as soon as ever I

found that I could not conscientiously take orders; my father so

strongly disapproved of the idea that I gave it up and went out to

New Zealand, stayed there for five years, worked like a common

servant, though on a run of my own, and sold out little more than a

year ago, thinking that prices were going to fall--which they have

since done. Being then rather at a loss what to do and my capital

being all locked up, I took the opportunity to return to my old plan,

and have been studying for the last ten years unremittingly. I hope

that in three or four years more I shall be able to go on very well

by myself, and then I may go back to New Zealand or no as

circumstances shall seem to render advisable. I must apologise for

so much detail, but hardly knew how to explain myself without it.

I always delighted in your ORIGIN OF SPECIES as soon as I saw it out

in New Zealand--not as knowing anything whatsoever of natural

history, but it enters into so many deeply interesting questions, or

rather it suggests so many, that it thoroughly fascinated me. I

therefore feel all the greater pleasure that my pamphlet should

please you, however full of errors.

The first dialogue on the ORIGIN which I wrote in the PRESS called

forth a contemptuous rejoinder from (I believe) the Bishop of

Wellington--(please do not mention the name, though I think that at

this distance of space and time I might mention it to yourself) I

answered it with the enclosed, which may amuse you. I assumed

another character because my dialogue was in my hearing very severely

criticised by two or three whose opinion I thought worth having, and

I deferred to their judgment in my next. I do not think I should do

so now. I fear you will be shocked at an appeal to the periodicals

mentioned in my letter, but they form a very staple article of bush

diet, and we used to get a good deal of superficial knowledge out of

them. I feared to go in too heavy on the side of the ORIGIN, because

I thought that, having said my say as well as I could, I had better

now take a less impassioned tone; but I was really exceedingly angry.

Please do not trouble yourself to answer this, and believe me,

Yours most sincerely,

S. Butler.

This elicited a second letter from Darwin:-

Down, Bromley, Kent.

October 6.

My dear Sir,--I thank you sincerely for your kind and frank letter,

which has interested me greatly. What a singular and varied career

you have already run. Did you keep any journal or notes in New

Zealand? For it strikes me that with your rare powers of writing you

might make a very interesting work descriptive of a colonist's life

in New Zealand.

I return your printed letter, which you might like to keep. It has

amused me, especially the part in which you criticise yourself. To

appreciate the letter fully I ought to have read the bishop's letter,

which seems to have been very rich.

You tell me not to answer your note, but I could not resist the wish

to thank you for your letter.

With every good wish, believe me, my dear Sir,

Yours sincerely,

Ch. Darwin.

It is curious that in this correspondence Darwin makes no reference

to the fact that he had already had in his possession a copy of

Butler's dialogue and had endeavoured to induce the editor of an

English periodical to reprint it. It is possible that we have not

here the whole of the correspondence which passed between Darwin and

Butler at this period, and this theory is supported by the fact that

Butler seems to take for granted that Darwin knew all about the

appearance of the original dialogue on the ORIGIN OF SPECIES in the

PRESS.

Enough, however, has been given to explain the correspondence which

the publication of the dialogue occasioned. I do not know what

authority Butler had for supposing that Charles John Abraham, Bishop

of Wellington, was the author of the article entitled "Barrel-

Organs," and the "Savoyard" of the subsequent controversy. However,

at that time Butler was deep in the counsels of the PRESS, and he may

have received private information on the subject. Butler's own

reappearance over the initials A. M. is sufficiently explained in his

letter to Darwin.

It is worth observing that Butler appears in the dialogue and ensuing

correspondence in a character very different from that which he was

later to assume. Here we have him as an ardent supporter of Charles

Darwin, and adopting a contemptuous tone with regard to the claims of

Erasmus Darwin to have sown the seed which was afterwards raised to

maturity by his grandson. It would be interesting to know if it was

this correspondence that first turned Butler's attention seriously to

the works of the older evolutionists and ultimately led to the

production of EVOLUTION, OLD AND NEW, in which the indebtedness of

Charles Darwin to Erasmus Darwin, Buffon and Lamarck is demonstrated

with such compelling force.

DARWIN ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES: A Dialogue

[From the Press, 20 December, 1862.]

F. So you have finished Darwin? Well, how did you like him?

C. You cannot expect me to like him. He is so hard and logical, and

he treats his subject with such an intensity of dry reasoning without

giving himself the loose rein for a single moment from one end of the

book to the other, that I must confess I have found it a great effort

to read him through.

F. But I fancy that, if you are to be candid, you will admit that

the fault lies rather with yourself than with the book. Your

knowledge of natural history is so superficial that you are

constantly baffled by terms of which you do not understand the

meaning, and in which you consequently lose all interest. I admit,

however, that the book is hard and laborious reading; and, moreover,

that the writer appears to have predetermined from the commencement

to reject all ornament, and simply to argue from beginning to end,

from point to point, till he conceived that he had made his case

sufficiently clear.

C. I agree with you, and I do not like his book partly on that very

account. He seems to have no eye but for the single point at which

he is aiming.

F. But is not that a great virtue in a writer?

C. A great virtue, but a cold and hard one.

F. In my opinion it is a grave and wise one. Moreover, I conceive

that the judicial calmness which so strongly characterises the whole

book, the absence of all passion, the air of extreme and anxious

caution which pervades it throughout, are rather the result of

training and artificially acquired self-restraint than symptoms of a

cold and unimpassioned nature; at any rate, whether the lawyer-like

faculty of swearing both sides of a question and attaching the full

value to both is acquired or natural in Darwin's case, you will admit

that such a habit of mind is essential for any really valuable and

scientific investigation.

C. I admit it. Science is all head--she has no heart at all.

F. You are right. But a man of science may be a man of other things

besides science, and though he may have, and ought to have no heart

during a scientific investigation, yet when he has once come to a

conclusion he may be hearty enough in support of it, and in his other

capacities may be of as warm a temperament as even you can desire.

C. I tell you I do not like the book.

F. May I catechise you a little upon it?

C. To your heart's content.

F. Firstly, then, I will ask you what is the one great impression

that you have derived from reading it; or, rather, what do you think

to be the main impression that Darwin wanted you to derive?

C. Why, I should say some such thing as the following--that men are

descended from monkeys, and monkeys from something else, and so on

back to dogs and horses and hedge-sparrows and pigeons and cinipedes

(what is a cinipede?) and cheesemites, and then through the plants

down to duckweed.

F. You express the prevalent idea concerning the book, which as you

express it appears nonsensical enough.

C. How, then, should you express it yourself?

F. Hand me the book and I will read it to you through from beginning

to end, for to express it more briefly than Darwin himself has done

is almost impossible.

C. That is nonsense; as you asked me what impression I derived from

the book, so now I ask you, and I charge you to answer me.

F. Well, I assent to the justice of your demand, but I shall comply

with it by requiring your assent to a few principal statements

deducible from the work.

C. So be it.

F. You will grant then, firstly, that all plants and animals

increase very rapidly, and that unless they were in some manner

checked, the world would soon be overstocked. Take cats, for

instance; see with what rapidity they breed on the different runs in

this province where there is little or nothing to check them; or even

take the more slowly breeding sheep, and see how soon 500 ewes become

5000 sheep under favourable circumstances. Suppose this sort of

thing to go on for a hundred million years or so, and where would be

the standing room for all the different plants and animals that would

be now existing, did they not materially check each other's increase,

or were they not liable in some way to be checked by other causes?

Remember the quail; how plentiful they were until the cats came with

the settlers from Europe. Why were they so abundant? Simply because

they had plenty to eat, and could get sufficient shelter from the

hawks to multiply freely. The cats came, and tussocks stood the poor

little creatures in but poor stead. The cats increased and

multiplied because they had plenty of food and no natural enemy to

check them. Let them wait a year or two, till they have materially

reduced the larks also, as they have long since reduced the quail,

and let them have to depend solely upon occasional dead lambs and

sheep, and they will find a certain rather formidable natural enemy

called Famine rise slowly but inexorably against them and slaughter

them wholesale. The first proposition then to which I demand your

assent is that all plants and animals tend to increase in a high

geometrical ratio; that they all endeavour to get that which is

necessary for their own welfare; that, as unfortunately there are

conflicting interests in Nature, collisions constantly occur between

different animals and plants, whereby the rate of increase of each

species is very materially checked. Do you admit this?

C. Of course; it is obvious.

F. You admit then that there is in Nature a perpetual warfare of

plant, of bird, of beast, of fish, of reptile; that each is striving

selfishly for its own advantage, and will get what it wants if it

can.

C. If what?

F. If it can. How comes it then that sometimes it cannot? Simply

because all are not of equal strength, and the weaker must go to the

wall.

C. You seem to gloat over your devilish statement.

F. Gloat or no gloat, is it true or no? I am not one of those

"Who would unnaturally better Nature

By making out that that which is, is not."

If the law of Nature is "struggle," it is better to look the matter

in the face and adapt yourself to the conditions of your existence.

Nature will not bow to you, neither will you mend matters by patting

her on the back and telling her that she is not so black as she is

painted. My dear fellow, my dear sentimental friend, do you eat

roast beef or roast mutton?

C. Drop that chaff and go back to the matter in hand.

F. To continue then with the cats. Famine comes and tests them, so

to speak; the weaker, the less active, the less cunning, and the less

enduring cats get killed off, and only the strongest and smartest

cats survive; there will be no favouritism shown to animals in a

state of Nature; they will be weighed in the balance, and the weight

of a hair will sometimes decide whether they shall be found wanting

or no. This being the case, the cats having been thus naturally

culled and the stronger having been preserved, there will be a

gradual tendency to improve manifested among the cats, even as among

our own mobs of sheep careful culling tends to improve the flock.

C. This, too, is obvious.

F. Extend this to all animals and plants, and the same thing will

hold good concerning them all. I shall now change the ground and

demand assent to another statement. You know that though the

offspring of all plants and animals is in the main like the parent,

yet that in almost every instance slight deviations occur, and that

sometimes there is even considerable divergence from the parent type.

It must also be admitted that these slight variations are often, or

at least sometimes, capable of being perpetuated by inheritance.

Indeed, it is only in consequence of this fact that our sheep and

cattle have been capable of so much improvement.

C. I admit this.

F. Then the whole matter lies in a nutshell. Suppose that hundreds

of millions of years ago there existed upon this earth a single

primordial form of the very lowest life, or suppose that three or

four such primordial forms existed. Change of climate, of food, of

any of the circumstances which surrounded any member of this first

and lowest class of life would tend to alter it in some slight

manner, and the alteration would have a tendency to perpetuate itself

by inheritance. Many failures would doubtless occur, but with the

lapse of time slight deviations would undoubtedly become permanent

and inheritable, those alone being perpetuated which were beneficial

to individuals in whom they appeared. Repeat the process with each

deviation and we shall again obtain divergences (in the course of

ages) differing more strongly from the ancestral form, and again

those that enable their possessor to struggle for existence most

efficiently will be preserved. Repeat this process for millions and

millions of years, and, as it is impossible to assign any limit to

variability, it would seem as though the present diversities of

species must certainly have come about sooner or later, and that

other divergences will continue to come about to the end of time.

The great agent in this development of life has been competition.

This has culled species after species, and secured that those alone

should survive which were best fitted for the conditions by which

they found themselves surrounded. Endeavour to take a bird's-eye

view of the whole matter. See battle after battle, first in one part

of the world, then in another, sometimes raging more fiercely and

sometimes less; even as in human affairs war has always existed in

some part of the world from the earliest known periods, and probably

always will exist. While a species is conquering in one part of the

world it is being subdued in another, and while its conquerors are

indulging in their triumph down comes the fiat for their being culled

and drafted out, some to life and some to death, and so forth ad

infinitum.

C. It is very horrid.

F. No more horrid than that you should eat roast mutton or boiled

beef.

C. But it is utterly subversive of Christianity; for if this theory

is true the fall of man is entirely fabulous; and if the fall, then

the redemption, these two being inseparably bound together.

F. My dear friend, there I am not bound to follow you. I believe in

Christianity, and I believe in Darwin. The two appear

irreconcilable. My answer to those who accuse me of inconsistency

is, that both being undoubtedly true, the one must be reconcilable

with the other, and that the impossibility of reconciling them must

be only apparent and temporary, not real. The reconciliation will

never be effected by planing a little off the one and a little off

the other and then gluing them together with glue. People will not

stand this sort of dealing, and the rejection of the one truth or of

the other is sure to follow upon any such attempt being persisted in.

The true course is to use the freest candour in the acknowledgment of

the difficulty; to estimate precisely its real value, and obtain a

correct knowledge of its precise form. Then and then only is there a

chance of any satisfactory result being obtained. For unless the

exact nature of the difficulty be known first, who can attempt to

remove it? Let me re-state the matter once again. All animals and

plants in a state of Nature are undergoing constant competition for

the necessaries of life. Those that can hold their ground hold it;

those that cannot hold it are destroyed. But as it also happens that

slight changes of food, of habit, of climate, of circumjacent

accident, and so forth, produce a slight tendency to vary in the

offspring of any plant or animal, it follows that among these slight

variations some may be favourable to the individual in whom they

appear, and may place him in a better position than his fellows as

regards the enemies with whom his interests come into collision. In

this case he will have a better chance of surviving than his fellows;

he will thus stand also a better chance of continuing the species,

and in his offspring his own slight divergence from the parent type

will be apt to appear. However slight the divergence, if it be

beneficial to the individual it is likely to preserve the individual

and to reappear in his offspring, and this process may be repeated ad

infinitum. Once grant these two things, and the rest is a mere

matter of time and degree. That the immense differences between the

camel and the pig should have come about in six thousand years is not

believable; but in six hundred million years it is not incredible,

more especially when we consider that by the assistance of geology a

very perfect chain has been formed between the two. Let this

instance suffice. Once grant the principles, once grant that

competition is a great power in Nature, and that changes of

circumstances and habits produce a tendency to variation in the

offspring (no matter how slight such variation may be), and unless

you can define the possible limit of such variation during an

infinite series of generations, unless you can show that there is a

limit, and that Darwin's theory over-steps it, you have no right to

reject his conclusions. As for the objections to the theory, Darwin

has treated them with admirable candour, and our time is too brief to

enter into them here. My recommendation to you is that you should

read the book again.

C. Thank you, but for my own part I confess to caring very little

whether my millionth ancestor was a gorilla or no; and as Darwin's

book does not please me, I shall not trouble myself further about the

matter.

BARREL-ORGANS: [From the Press, 17 January, 1863.]

Dugald Stewart in his Dissertation on the Progress of Metaphysics

says: "On reflecting on the repeated reproduction of ancient

paradoxes by modern authors one is almost tempted to suppose that

human invention is limited, like a barrel-organ, to a specific number

of tunes."

It would be a very amusing and instructive task for a man of reading

and reflection to note down the instances he meets with of these old

tunes coming up again and again in regular succession with hardly any

change of note, and with all the old hitches and involuntary squeaks

that the barrel-organ had played in days gone by. It is most amusing

to see the old quotations repeated year after year and volume after

volume, till at last some more careful enquirer turns to the passage

referred to and finds that they have all been taken in and have

followed the lead of the first daring inventor of the mis-statement.

Hallam has had the courage, in the supplement to his History of the

Middle Ages, p. 398, to acknowledge an error of this sort that he has

been led into.

But the particular instance of barrel-organism that is present to our

minds just now is the Darwinian theory of the development of species

by natural selection, of which we hear so much. This is nothing new,

but a rechauffee of the old story that his namesake, Dr. Darwin,

served up in the end of the last century to Priestley and his

admirers, and Lord Monboddo had cooked in the beginning of the same

century. We have all heard of his theory that man was developed

directly from the monkey, and that we all lost our tails by sitting

too much upon that appendage.

We learn from that same great and cautious writer Hallam in his

History of Literature that there are traces of this theory and of

other popular theories of the present day in the works of Giordano

Bruno, the Neapolitan who was burnt at Rome by the Inquisition in

1600. It is curious to read the titles of his works and to think of

Dugald Stewart's remark about barrel-organs. For instance he wrote

on "The Plurality of Worlds," and on the universal "Monad," a name

familiar enough to the readers of Vestiges of Creation. He was a

Pantheist, and, as Hallam says, borrowed all his theories from the

eclectic philosophers, from Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists, and

ultimately they were no doubt of Oriental origin. This is just what

has been shown again and again to be the history of German Pantheism;

it is a mere barrel-organ repetition of the Brahman metaphysics found

in Hindu cosmogonies. Bruno's theory regarding development of

species was in Hallam's words: "There is nothing so small or so

unimportant but that a portion of spirit dwells in it; and this

spiritual substance requires a proper subject to become a plant or an

animal"; and Hallam in a note on this passage observes how the modern

theories of equivocal generation correspond with Bruno's.

No doubt Hallam is right in saying that they are all of Oriental

origin. Pythagoras borrowed from thence his kindred theory of the

metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls. But he was more

consistent than modern philosophers; he recognised a downward

development as well as an upward, and made morality and immorality

the crisis and turning-point of change--a bold lion developed into a

brave warrior, a drunken sot developed into a wallowing pig, and

Darwin's slave-making ants, p. 219, would have been formerly

Virginian cotton and tobacco growers.

Perhaps Prometheus was the first Darwin of antiquity, for he is said

to have begun his creation from below, and after passing from the

invertebrate to the sub-vertebrate, from thence to the backbone, from

the backbone to the mammalia, and from the mammalia to the manco-

cerebral, he compounded man of each and all:-

Fertur Prometheus addere principi

Limo coactus particulam undique

Desectam et insani leonis

Vim stomacho apposuisse nostro.

One word more about barrel-organs. We have heard on the undoubted

authority of ear and eyewitnesses, that in a neighbouring province

there is a church where the psalms are sung to a barrel-organ, but

unfortunately the psalm tunes come in the middle of the set, and the

jigs and waltzes have to be played through before the psalm can

start. Just so is it with Darwinism and all similar theories. All

his fantasias, as we saw in a late article, are made to come round at

last to religious questions, with which really and truly they have

nothing to do, but were it not for their supposed effect upon

religion, no one would waste his time in reading about the

possibility of Polar bears swimming about and catching flies so long

that they at last get the fins they wish for.

DARWIN ON SPECIES: [From the Press, 21 February, 1863.]

To the Editor of the Press.

Sir--In two of your numbers you have already taken notice of Darwin's

theory of the origin of species; I would venture to trespass upon

your space in order to criticise briefly both your notices.

The first is evidently the composition of a warm adherent of the

theory in question; the writer overlooks all the real difficulties in

the way of accepting it, and, caught by the obvious truth of much

that Darwin says, has rushed to the conclusion that all is equally

true. He writes with the tone of a partisan, of one deficient in

scientific caution, and from the frequent repetition of the same

ideas manifest in his dialogue one would be led to suspect that he

was but little versed in habits of literary composition and

philosophical argument. Yet he may fairly claim the merit of having

written in earnest. He has treated a serious subject seriously

according to his lights; and though his lights are not brilliant

ones, yet he has apparently done his best to show the theory on which

he is writing in its most favourable aspect. He is rash, evidently

well satisfied with himself, very possibly mistaken, and just one of

those persons who (without intending it) are more apt to mislead than

to lead the few people that put their trust in them. A few will

always follow them, for a strong faith is always more or less

impressive upon persons who are too weak to have any definite and

original faith of their own. The second writer, however, assumes a

very different tone. His arguments to all practical intents and

purposes run as follows:-

Old fallacies are constantly recurring. Therefore Darwin's theory is

a fallacy.

They come again and again, like tunes in a barrel-organ. Therefore

Darwin's theory is a fallacy.

Hallam made a mistake, and in his History of the Middle Ages, p. 398,

he corrects himself. Therefore Darwin's theory is wrong.

Dr. Darwin in the last century said the same thing as his son or

grandson says now--will the writer of the article refer to anything

bearing on natural selection and the struggle for existence in Dr.

Darwin's work?--and a foolish nobleman said something foolish about

monkey's tails. Therefore Darwin's theory is wrong.

Giordano Bruno was burnt in the year 1600 A.D.; he was a Pantheist;

therefore Darwin's theory is wrong.

And finally, as a clinching argument, in one of the neighbouring

settlements there is a barrel-organ which plays its psalm tunes in

the middle of its jigs and waltzes. After this all lingering doubts

concerning the falsehood of Darwin's theory must be at an end, and

any person of ordinary common sense must admit that the theory of

development by natural selection is unwarranted by experience and

reason.

The articles conclude with an implied statement that Darwin supposes

the Polar bear to swim about catching flies for so long a period that

at last it gets the fins it wishes for.

Now, however sceptical I may yet feel about the truth of all Darwin's

theory, I cannot sit quietly by and see him misrepresented in such a

scandalously slovenly manner. What Darwin does say is that sometimes

diversified and changed habits may be observed in individuals of the

same species; that is that there are eccentric animals just as there

are eccentric men. He adduces a few instances and winds up by saying

that "in North America the black bear was seen by Hearne swimming for

hours with widely open mouth, thus catching--almost like a whale--

insects in the water." This and nothing more. (See pp. 201 and

202.)

Because Darwin says that a bear of rather eccentric habits happened

to be seen by Hearne swimming for hours and catching insects almost

like a whale, your writer (with a carelessness hardly to be

reprehended in sufficiently strong terms) asserts by implication that

Darwin supposes the whale to be developed from the bear by the latter

having had a strong desire to possess fins. This is disgraceful.

I can hardly be mistaken in supposing that I have quoted the passage

your writer alludes to. Should I be in error, I trust he will give

the reference to the place in which Darwin is guilty of the nonsense

that is fathered upon him in your article.

It must be remembered that there have been few great inventions in

physics or discoveries in science which have not been foreshadowed to

a certain extent by speculators who were indeed mistaken, but were

yet more or less on the right scent. Day is heralded by dawn, Apollo

by Aurora, and thus it often happens that a real discovery may wear

to the careless observer much the same appearance as an exploded

fallacy, whereas in fact it is widely different. As much caution is

due in the rejection of a theory as in the acceptation of it. The

first of your writers is too hasty in accepting, the second in

refusing even a candid examination.

Now, when the Saturday Review, the Cornhill Magazine, Once a Week,

and Macmillan's Magazine, not to mention other periodicals, have

either actually and completely as in the case of the first two,

provisionally as in the last mentioned, given their adherence to the

theory in question, it may be taken for granted that the arguments in

its favour are sufficiently specious to have attracted the attention

and approbation of a considerable number of well-educated men in

England. Three months ago the theory of development by natural

selection was openly supported by Professor Huxley before the British

Association at Cambridge. I am not adducing Professor Huxley's

advocacy as a proof that Darwin is right (indeed, Owen opposed him

tooth and nail), but as a proof that there is sufficient to be said

on Darwin's side to demand more respectful attention than your last

writer has thought it worth while to give it. A theory which the

British Association is discussing with great care in England is not

to be set down by off-hand nicknames in Canterbury.

To those, however, who do feel an interest in the question, I would

venture to give a word or two of advice. I would strongly deprecate

forming a hurried opinion for or against the theory. Naturalists in

Europe are canvassing the matter with the utmost diligence, and a few

years must show whether they will accept the theory or no. It is

plausible; that can be decided by no one. Whether it is true or no

can be decided only among naturalists themselves. We are outsiders,

and most of us must be content to sit on the stairs till the great

men come forth and give us the benefit of their opinion.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

A. M.

DARWIN ON SPECIES: [From the Press, March 14th, 1863.]

To the Editor of the Press.

Sir--A correspondent signing himself "A. M." in the issue of February

21st says: --"Will the writer (of an article on barrel-organs) refer

to anything bearing upon natural selection and the struggle for

existence in Dr. Darwin's work?" This is one of the trade forms by

which writers imply that there is no such passage, and yet leave a

loophole if they are proved wrong. I will, however, furnish him with

a passage from the notes of Darwin's Botanic Garden:-

"I am acquainted with a philosopher who, contemplating this subject,

thinks it not impossible that the first insects were anthers or

stigmas of flowers, which had by some means loosed themselves from

their parent plant; and that many insects have gradually in long

process of time been formed from these, some acquiring wings, others

fins, and others claws, from their ceaseless efforts to procure their

food or to secure themselves from injury. The anthers or stigmas are

therefore separate beings."

This passage contains the germ of Mr. Charles Darwin's theory of the

origin of species by natural selection:-

"Analogy would lead me to the belief that all animals and plants have

descended from one prototype."

Here are a few specimens, his illustrations of the theory:-

"There seems to me no great difficulty in believing that natural

selection has actually converted a swim-bladder into a lung or organ

used exclusively for respiration." "A swim-bladder has apparently

been converted into an air-breathing lung." "We must be cautious in

concluding that a bat could not have been formed by natural selection

from an animal which at first could only glide through the air." "I

can see no insuperable difficulty in further believing it possible

that the membrane-connected fingers and forearm of the galeopithecus

might be greatly lengthened by natural selection, and this, as far as

the organs of flight are concerned, would convert it into a bat."

"The framework of bones being the same in the hand of a man, wing of

a bat, fin of a porpoise, and leg of a horse, the same number of

vertebrae forming the neck of the giraffe and of the elephant, and

innumerable other such facts, at once explain themselves on the

theory of descent with slow and slight successive modifications."

I do not mean to go through your correspondent's letter, otherwise "I

could hardly reprehend in sufficiently strong terms" (and all that

sort of thing) the perversion of what I said about Giordano Bruno.

But "ex uno disce omnes"--I am, etc.,

"THE SAVOYARD."

DARWIN ON SPECIES: [From the Press, 18 March, 1863.]

To the Editor of the Press.

Sir--The "Savoyard" of last Saturday has shown that he has perused

Darwin's Botanic Garden with greater attention than myself. I am

obliged to him for his correction of my carelessness, and have not

the smallest desire to make use of any loopholes to avoid being

"proved wrong." Let, then, the "Savoyard's" assertion that Dr.

Darwin had to a certain extent forestalled Mr. C. Darwin stand, and

let my implied denial that in the older Darwin's works passages

bearing on natural selection, or the struggle for existence, could be

found, go for nought, or rather let it be set down against me.

What follows? Has the "Savoyard" (supposing him to be the author of

the article on barrel-organs) adduced one particle of real argument

the more to show that the real Darwin's theory is wrong?

The elder Darwin writes in a note that "he is acquainted with a

philosopher who thinks it not impossible that the first insects were

the anthers or stigmas of flowers, which by some means, etc. etc."

This is mere speculation, not a definite theory, and though the

passage above as quoted by the" Savoyard" certainly does contain the

germ of Darwin's theory, what is it more than the crudest and most

unshapen germ? And in what conceivable way does this discovery of

the egg invalidate the excellence of the chicken?

Was there ever a great theory yet which was not more or less

developed from previous speculations which were all to a certain

extent wrong, and all ridiculed, perhaps not undeservedly, at the

time of their appearance? There is a wide difference between a

speculation and a theory. A speculation involves the notion of a man

climbing into a lofty position, and descrying a somewhat remote

object which he cannot fully make out. A theory implies that the

theorist has looked long and steadfastly till he is clear in his own

mind concerning the nature of the thing which he is beholding. I

submit that the "Savoyard" has unfairly made use of the failure of

certain speculations in order to show that a distinct theory is

untenable.

Let it be granted that Darwin's theory has been foreshadowed by

numerous previous writers. Grant the "Savoyard" his Giordano Bruno,

and give full weight to the barrel-organ in a neighbouring

settlement, I would still ask, has the theory of natural development

of species ever been placed in anything approaching its present clear

and connected form before the appearance of Mr. Darwin's book? Has

it ever received the full attention of the scientific world as a duly

organised theory, one presented in a tangible shape and demanding

investigation, as the conclusion arrived at by a man of known

scientific attainments after years of patient toil? The upshot of

the barrel-organs article was to answer this question in the

affirmative and to pooh-pooh all further discussion.

It would be mere presumption on my part either to attack or defend

Darwin, but my indignation was roused at seeing him misrepresented

and treated disdainfully. I would wish, too, that the "Savoyard"

would have condescended to notice that little matter of the bear. I

have searched my copy of Darwin again and again to find anything

relating to the subject except what I have quoted in my previous

letter.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

A. M.

DARWIN ON SPECIES: [From the Press, April 11th, 1863.]

To the Editor of the Press.

Sir--Your correspondent "A. M." is pertinacious on the subject of the

bear being changed into a whale, which I said Darwin contemplated as

not impossible. I did not take the trouble in any former letter to

answer him on that point, as his language was so intemperate. He has

modified his tone in his last letter, and really seems open to the

conviction that he may be the "careless" writer after all; and so on

reflection I have determined to give him the opportunity of doing me

justice.

In his letter of February 21 he says: "I cannot sit by and see

Darwin misrepresented in such a scandalously slovenly manner. What

Darwin does say is 'that SOMETIMES diversified and changed habits may

be observed in individuals of the same species; that is, that there

are certain eccentric animals as there are certain eccentric men. He

adduces a few instances, and winds up by saying that in North America

the black bear was seen by Hearne swimming for hours with widely open

mouth, thus catching, ALMOST LIKE A WHALE, insects in the water.'

THIS, AND NOTHING MORE, pp. 201, 202."

Then follows a passage about my carelessness, which (he says) is

hardly to be reprehended in sufficiently strong terms, and he ends

with saying: "This is disgraceful."

Now you may well suppose that I was a little puzzled at the seeming

audacity of a writer who should adopt this style, when the words

which follow his quotation from Darwin are (in the edition from which

I quoted) as follows: "Even in so extreme a case as this, if the

supply of insects were constant, and if better adapted competitors

did not already exist in the country, I can see no difficulty in a

race of bears being rendered by natural selection more and more

aquatic in their structure and habits, with larger and larger mouths,

till a creature was produced as monstrous as a whale."

Now this passage was a remarkable instance of the idea that I was

illustrating in the article on "Barrel-organs," because Buffon in his

Histoire Naturelle had conceived a theory of degeneracy (the exact

converse of Darwin's theory of ascension) by which the bear might

pass into a seal, and that into a whale. Trusting now to the

fairness of "A. M." I leave to him to say whether he has quoted from

the same edition as I have, and whether the additional words I have

quoted are in his edition, and if so whether he has not been guilty

of a great injustice to me; and if they are not in his edition,

whether he has not been guilty of great haste and "carelessness" in

taking for granted that I have acted in so "disgraceful" a manner.

I am, Sir, etc.,

"The Savoyard," or player

on Barrel-organs.

(The paragraph in question has been the occasion of much discussion.

The only edition in our hands is the third, seventh thousand, which

contains the paragraph as quoted by "A. M." We have heard that it is

different in earlier editions, but have not been able to find one.

The difference between "A. M." and "The Savoyard" is clearly one of

different editions. Darwin appears to have been ashamed of the

inconsequent inference suggested, and to have withdrawn it.--Ed. the

Press.)

DARWIN ON SPECIES: [From the Press, 22nd June, 1863.]

To the Editor of the Press.

Sir--I extract the following from an article in the Saturday Review

of January 10, 1863, on the vertebrated animals of the Zoological

Gardens.

"As regards the ducks, for example, inter-breeding goes on to a very

great extent among nearly all the genera, which are well represented

in the collection. We think it unfortunate that the details of these

crosses have not hitherto been made public. The Zoological Society

has existed about thirty-five years, and we imagine that evidence

must have been accumulated almost enough to make or mar that part of

Mr. Darwin's well-known argument which rests on what is known of the

phenomena of hybridism. The present list reveals only one fact

bearing on the subject, but that is a noteworthy one, for it

completely overthrows the commonly accepted theory that the mixed

offspring of different species are infertile inter se. At page 15

(of the list of vertebrated animals living in the gardens of the

Zoological Society of London, Longman and Co., 1862) we find

enumerated three examples of hybrids between two perfectly distinct

species, and even, according to modern classification, between two

distinct genera of ducks, for three or four generations. There can

be little doubt that a series of researches in this branch of

experimental physiology, which might be carried on at no great loss,

would place zoologists in a far better position with regard to a

subject which is one of the most interesting if not one of the most

important in natural history."

I fear that both you and your readers will be dead sick of Darwin,

but the above is worthy of notice. My compliments to the "Savoyard."

Your obedient servant,

May 17th. A. M.

DARWIN AMONG THE MACHINES

"Darwin Among the Machines" originally appeared in the Christ Church

PRESS, 13 June, 1863. It was reprinted by Mr. Festing Jones in his

edition of THE NOTE-BOOKS OF SAMUEL BUTLER (Fifield, London, 1912,

Kennerley, New York), with a prefatory note pointing out its

connection with the genesis of EREWHON, to which readers desirous of

further information may be referred.

[To the Editor of the Press, Christchurch, New Zealand, 13 June,

1863.]

Sir--There are few things of which the present generation is more

justly proud than of the wonderful improvements which are daily

taking place in all sorts of mechanical appliances. And indeed it is

matter for great congratulation on many grounds. It is unnecessary

to mention these here, for they are sufficiently obvious; our present

business lies with considerations which may somewhat tend to humble

our pride and to make us think seriously of the future prospects of

the human race. If we revert to the earliest primordial types of

mechanical life, to the lever, the wedge, the inclined plane, the

screw and the pulley, or (for analogy would lead us one step further)

to that one primordial type from which all the mechanical kingdom has

been developed, we mean to the lever itself, and if we then examine

the machinery of the Great Eastern, we find ourselves almost

awestruck at the vast development of the mechanical world, at the

gigantic strides with which it has advanced in comparison with the

slow progress of the animal and vegetable kingdom. We shall find it

impossible to refrain from asking ourselves what the end of this

mighty movement is to be. In what direction is it tending? What

will be its upshot? To give a few imperfect hints towards a solution

of these questions is the object of the present letter.

We have used the words "mechanical life," "the mechanical kingdom,"

"the mechanical world" and so forth, and we have done so advisedly,

for as the vegetable kingdom was slowly developed from the mineral,

and as in like manner the animal supervened upon the vegetable, so

now in these last few ages an entirely new kingdom has sprung up, of

which we as yet have only seen what will one day be considered the

antediluvian prototypes of the race.

We regret deeply that our knowledge both of natural history and of

machinery is too small to enable us to undertake the gigantic task of

classifying machines into the genera and sub-genera, species,

varieties and sub-varieties, and so forth, of tracing the connecting

links between machines of widely different characters, of pointing

out how subservience to the use of man has played that part among

machines which natural selection has performed in the animal and

vegetable kingdoms, of pointing out rudimentary organs {1} which

exist in some few machines, feebly developed and perfectly useless,

yet serving to mark descent from some ancestral type which has either

perished or been modified into some new phase of mechanical

existence. We can only point out this field for investigation; it

must be followed by others whose education and talents have been of a

much higher order than any which we can lay claim to.

Some few hints we have determined to venture upon, though we do so

with the profoundest diffidence. Firstly, we would remark that as

some of the lowest of the vertebrata attained a far greater size than

has descended to their more highly organised living representatives,

so a diminution in the size of machines has often attended their

development and progress. Take the watch for instance. Examine the

beautiful structure of the little animal, watch the intelligent play

of the minute members which compose it; yet this little creature is

but a development of the cumbrous clocks of the thirteenth century--

it is no deterioration from them. The day may come when clocks,

which certainly at the present day are not diminishing in bulk, may

be entirely superseded by the universal use of watches, in which case

clocks will become extinct like the earlier saurians, while the watch

(whose tendency has for some years been rather to decrease in size

than the contrary) will remain the only existing type of an extinct

race.

The views of machinery which we are thus feebly indicating will

suggest the solution of one of the greatest and most mysterious

questions of the day. We refer to the question: What sort of

creature man's next successor in the supremacy of the earth is likely

to be. We have often heard this debated; but it appears to us that

we are ourselves creating our own successors; we are daily adding to

the beauty and delicacy of their physical organisation; we are daily

giving them greater power and supplying by all sorts of ingenious

contrivances that self-regulating, self-acting power which will be to

them what intellect has been to the human race. In the course of

ages we shall find ourselves the inferior race. Inferior in power,

inferior in that moral quality of self-control, we shall look up to

them as the acme of all that the best and wisest man can ever dare to

aim at. No evil passions, no jealousy, no avarice, no impure desires

will disturb the serene might of those glorious creatures. Sin,

shame, and sorrow will have no place among them. Their minds will be

in a state of perpetual calm, the contentment of a spirit that knows

no wants, is disturbed by no regrets. Ambition will never torture

them. Ingratitude will never cause them the uneasiness of a moment.

The guilty conscience, the hope deferred, the pains of exile, the

insolence of office, and the spurns that patient merit of the

unworthy takes--these will be entirely unknown to them. If they want

"feeding" (by the use of which very word we betray our recognition of

them as living organism) they will be attended by patient slaves

whose business and interest it will be to see that they shall want

for nothing. If they are out of order they will be promptly attended

to by physicians who are thoroughly acquainted with their

constitutions; if they die, for even these glorious animals will not

be exempt from that necessary and universal consummation, they will

immediately enter into a new phase of existence, for what machine

dies entirely in every part at one and the same instant?

We take it that when the state of things shall have arrived which we

have been above attempting to describe, man will have become to the

machine what the horse and the dog are to man. He will continue to

exist, nay even to improve, and will be probably better off in his

state of domestication under the beneficent rule of the machines than

he is in his present wild state. We treat our horses, dogs, cattle,

and sheep, on the whole, with great kindness; we give them whatever

experience teaches us to be best for them, and there can be no doubt

that our use of meat has added to the happiness of the lower animals

far more than it has detracted from it; in like manner it is

reasonable to suppose that the machines will treat us kindly, for

their existence is as dependent upon ours as ours is upon the lower

animals. They cannot kill us and eat us as we do sheep; they will

not only require our services in the parturition of their young

(which branch of their economy will remain always in our hands), but

also in feeding them, in setting them right when they are sick, and

burying their dead or working up their corpses into new machines. It

is obvious that if all the animals in Great Britain save man alone

were to die, and if at the same time all intercourse with foreign

countries were by some sudden catastrophe to be rendered perfectly

impossible, it is obvious that under such circumstances the loss of

human life would be something fearful to contemplate--in like manner

were mankind to cease, the machines would be as badly off or even

worse. The fact is that our interests are inseparable from theirs,

and theirs from ours. Each race is dependent upon the other for

innumerable benefits, and, until the reproductive organs of the

machines have been developed in a manner which we are hardly yet able

to conceive, they are entirely dependent upon man for even the

continuance of their species. It is true that these organs may be

ultimately developed, inasmuch as man's interest lies in that

direction; there is nothing which our infatuated race would desire

more than to see a fertile union between two steam engines; it is

true that machinery is even at this present time employed in

begetting machinery, in becoming the parent of machines often after

its own kind, but the days of flirtation, courtship, and matrimony

appear to be very remote, and indeed can hardly be realised by our

feeble and imperfect imagination.

Day by day, however, the machines are gaining ground upon us; day by

day we are becoming more subservient to them; more men are daily

bound down as slaves to tend them, more men are daily devoting the

energies of their whole lives to the development of mechanical life.

The upshot is simply a question of time, but that the time will come

when the machines will hold the real supremacy over the world and its

inhabitants is what no person of a truly philosophic mind can for a

moment question.

Our opinion is that war to the death should be instantly proclaimed

against them. Every machine of every sort should be destroyed by the

well-wisher of his species. Let there be no exceptions made, no

quarter shown; let us at once go back to the primeval condition of

the race. If it be urged that this is impossible under the present

condition of human affairs, this at once proves that the mischief is

already done, that our servitude has commenced in good earnest, that

we have raised a race of beings whom it is beyond our power to

destroy, and that we are not only enslaved but are absolutely

acquiescent in our bondage.

For the present we shall leave this subject, which we present gratis

to the members of the Philosophical Society. Should they consent to

avail themselves of the vast field which we have pointed out, we

shall endeavour to labour in it ourselves at some future and

indefinite period.

I am, Sir, etc.,

CELLARIUS

LUCUBRATIO EBRIA

"Lucubratio Ebria," like "Darwin Among the Machines," has already

appeared in THE NOTE-BOOKS OF SAMUEL BUTLER with a prefatory note by

Mr. Festing Jones, explaining its connection with EREWHON and LIFE

AND HABIT. I need therefore only repeat that it was written by

Butler after his return to England and sent to New Zealand, where it

was published in the PRESS on July 29, 1865.

There is a period in the evening, or more generally towards the still

small hours of the morning, in which we so far unbend as to take a

single glass of hot whisky and water. We will neither defend the

practice nor excuse it. We state it as a fact which must be borne in

mind by the readers of this article; for we know not how, whether it

be the inspiration of the drink or the relief from the harassing work

with which the day has been occupied or from whatever other cause,

yet we are certainly liable about this time to such a prophetic

influence as we seldom else experience. We are rapt in a dream such

as we ourselves know to be a dream, and which, like other dreams, we

can hardly embody in a distinct utterance. We know that what we see

is but a sort of intellectual Siamese twins, of which one is

substance and the other shadow, but we cannot set either free without

killing both. We are unable to rudely tear away the veil of phantasy

in which the truth is shrouded, so we present the reader with a

draped figure, and his own judgment must discriminate between the

clothes and the body. A truth's prosperity is like a jest's, it lies

in the ear of him that hears it. Some may see our lucubration as we

saw it, and others may see nothing but a drunken dream or the

nightmare of a distempered imagination. To ourselves it is the

speaking with unknown tongues to the early Corinthians; we cannot

fully understand our own speech, and we fear lest there be not a

sufficient number of interpreters present to make our utterance

edify. But there! (Go on straight to the body of the article.)

The limbs of the lower animals have never been modified by any act of

deliberation and forethought on their own part. Recent researches

have thrown absolutely no light upon the origin of life--upon the

initial force which introduced a sense of identity and a deliberate

faculty into the world; but they do certainly appear to show very

clearly that each species of the animal and vegetable kingdom has

been moulded into its present shape by chances and changes of many

millions of years, by chances and changes over which the creature

modified had no control whatever, and concerning whose aim it was

alike unconscious and indifferent, by forces which seem insensate to

the pain which they inflict, but by whose inexorably beneficent

cruelty the brave and strong keep coming to the fore, while the weak

and bad drop behind and perish. There was a moral government of this

world before man came near it--a moral government suited to the

capacities of the governed, and which unperceived by them has laid

fast the foundations of courage, endurance, and cunning. It laid

them so fast that they became more and more hereditary. Horace says

well fortes creantur fortibus et bonis, good men beget good children;

the rule held even in the geological period; good ichthyosauri begot

good ichthyosauri, and would to our discomfort have gone on doing so

to the present time had not better creatures been begetting better

things than ichthyosauri, or famine or fire or convulsion put an end

to them. Good apes begot good apes, and at last when human

intelligence stole like a late spring upon the mimicry of our semi-

simious ancestry, the creature learnt how he could of his own

forethought add extra-corporaneous limbs to the members of his own

body, and become not only a vertebrate mammal, but a vertebrate

machinate mammal into the bargain.

It was a wise monkey that first learned to carry a stick, and a

useful monkey that mimicked him. For the race of man has learned to

walk uprightly much as a child learns the same thing. At first he

crawls on all fours, then he clambers, laying hold of whatever he

can; and lastly he stands upright alone and walks, but for a long

time with an unsteady step. So when the human race was in its

gorilla-hood it generally carried a stick; from carrying a stick for

many million years it became accustomed and modified to an upright

position. The stick wherewith it had learned to walk would now serve

to beat its younger brothers, and then it found out its service as a

lever. Man would thus learn that the limbs of his body were not the

only limbs that he could command. His body was already the most

versatile in existence, but he could render it more versatile still.

With the improvement in his body his mind improved also. He learnt

to perceive the moral government under which he held the feudal

tenure of his life--perceiving it he symbolised it, and to this day

our poets and prophets still strive to symbolise it more and more

completely.

The mind grew because the body grew; more things were perceived, more

things were handled, and being handled became familiar. But this

came about chiefly because there was a hand to handle with; without

the hand there would be no handling, and no method of holding and

examining is comparable to the human hand. The tail of an opossum is

a prehensile thing, but it is too far from his eyes; the elephant's

trunk is better, and it is probably to their trunks that the

elephants owe their sagacity. It is here that the bee, in spite of

her wings, has failed. She has a high civilisation, but it is one

whose equilibrium appears to have been already attained; the

appearance is a false one, for the bee changes, though more slowly

than man can watch her; but the reason of the very gradual nature of

the change is chiefly because the physical organisation of the insect

changes, but slowly also. She is poorly off for hands, and has never

fairly grasped the notion of tacking on other limbs to the limbs of

her own body, and so being short lived to boot she remains from

century to century to human eyes in statu quo. Her body never

becomes machinate, whereas this new phase of organism which has been

introduced with man into the mundane economy, has made him a very

quicksand for the foundation of an unchanging civilisation; certain

fundamental principles will always remain, but every century the

change in man's physical status, as compared with the elements around

him, is greater and greater. He is a shifting basis on which no

equilibrium of habit and civilisation can be established. Were it

not for this constant change in our physical powers, which our

mechanical limbs have brought about, man would have long since

apparently attained his limit of possibility; he would be a creature

of as much fixity as the ants and bees; he would still have advanced,

but no faster than other animals advance.

If there were a race of men without any mechanical appliances we

should see this clearly. There are none, nor have there been, so far

as we can tell, for millions and millions of years. The lowest

Australian savage carries weapons for the fight or the chase, and has

his cooking and drinking utensils at home; a race without these

things would be completely ferae naturae and not men at all. We are

unable to point to any example of a race absolutely devoid of extra-

corporaneous limbs, but we can see among the Chinese that with the

failure to invent new limbs a civilisation becomes as much fixed as

that of the ants; and among savage tribes we observe that few

implements involve a state of things scarcely human at all. Such

tribes only advance pari passu with the creatures upon which they

feed.

It is a mistake, then, to take the view adopted by a previous

correspondent of this paper, to consider the machines as identities,

to animalise them and to anticipate their final triumph over mankind.

They are to be regarded as the mode of development by which human

organism is most especially advancing, and every fresh invention is

to be considered as an additional member of the resources of the

human body. Herein lies the fundamental difference between man and

his inferiors. As regard his flesh and blood, his senses, appetites,

and affections, the difference is one of degree rather than of kind,

but in the deliberate invention of such unity of limbs as is

exemplified by the railway train--that seven-leagued foot which five

hundred may own at once--he stands quite alone.

In confirmation of the views concerning mechanism which we have been

advocating above, it must be remembered that men are not merely the

children of their parents, but they are begotten of the institutions

of the state of the mechanical sciences under which they are born and

bred. These things have made us what we are. We are children of the

plough, the spade, and the ship; we are children of the extended

liberty and knowledge which the printing press has diffused. Our

ancestors added these things to their previously existing members;

the new limbs were preserved by natural selection and incorporated

into human society; they descended with modifications, and hence

proceeds the difference between our ancestors and ourselves. By the

institutions and state of science under which a man is born it is

determined whether he shall have the limbs of an Australian savage or

those of a nineteenth-century Englishman. The former is supplemented

with little save a rug and a javelin; the latter varies his physique

with the changes of the season, with age and with advancing or

decreasing wealth. If it is wet he is furnished with an organ which

is called an umbrella and which seems designed for the purpose of

protecting either his clothes or his lungs from the injurious effects

of rain. His watch is of more importance to him than a good deal of

his hair, at any rate than of his whiskers; besides this he carries a

knife and generally a pencil case. His memory goes in a pocket-book.

He grows more complex as he becomes older and he will then be seen

with a pair of spectacles, perhaps also with false teeth and a wig;

but, if he be a really well-developed specimen of the race, he will

be furnished with a large box upon wheels, two horses, and a

coachman.

Let the reader ponder over these last remarks and he will see that

the principal varieties and sub-varieties of the human race are not

now to be looked for among the negroes, the Circassians, the Malays,

or the American aborigines, but among the rich and the poor. The

difference in physical organisation between these two species of man

is far greater than that between the so-called types of humanity.

The rich man can go from here to England whenever he feels inclined,

the legs of the other are by an invisible fatality prevented from

carrying him beyond certain narrow limits. Neither rich nor poor as

yet see the philosophy of the thing, or admit that he who can tack a

portion of one of the P. and O. boats on to his identity is a much

more highly organised being than one who cannot. Yet the fact is

patent enough, if we once think it over, from the mere consideration

of the respect with which we so often treat those who are richer than

ourselves. We observe men for the most part (admitting, however,

some few abnormal exceptions) to be deeply impressed by the superior

organisation of those who have money. It is wrong to attribute this

respect to any unworthy motive, for the feeling is strictly

legitimate and springs from some of the very highest impulses of our

nature. It is the same sort of affectionate reverence which a dog

feels for man, and is not infrequently manifested in a similar

manner.

We admit that these last sentences are open to question, and we

should hardly like to commit ourselves irrecoverably to the

sentiments they express; but we will say this much for certain,

namely, that the rich man is the true hundred-handed Gyges of the

poets. He alone possesses the full complement of limbs who stands at

the summit of opulence, and we may assert with strictly scientific

accuracy that the Rothschilds are the most astonishing organisms that

the world has ever yet seen. For to the nerves or tissues, or

whatever it be that answers to the helm of a rich man's desires,

there is a whole army of limbs seen and unseen attachable; he may be

reckoned by his horse-power, by the number of foot-pounds which he

has money enough to set in motion. Who, then, will deny that a man

whose will represents the motive power of a thousand horses is a

being very different from the one who is equivalent but to the power

of a single one?

Henceforward, then, instead of saying that a man is hard up, let us

say that his organisation is at a low ebb, or, if we wish him well,

let us hope that he will grow plenty of limbs. It must be remembered

that we are dealing with physical organisations only. We do not say

that the thousand-horse man is better than a one-horse man, we only

say that he is more highly organised and should be recognised as

being so by the scientific leaders of the period. A man's will,

truth, endurance, are part of him also, and may, as in the case of

the late Mr. Cobden, have in themselves a power equivalent to all the

horse-power which they can influence; but were we to go into this

part of the question we should never have done, and we are compelled

reluctantly to leave our dream in its present fragmentary condition.

A NOTE ON "THE TEMPEST"

Act III, Scene I

The following brief essay was contributed by Butler to a small

miscellany entitled LITERARY FOUNDLINGS: VERSE AND PROSE, COLLECTED

IN CANTERBURY, N.Z., which was published at Christ Church on the

occasion of a bazaar held there in March, 1864, in aid of the funds

of the Christ Church Orphan Asylum, and offered for sale during the

progress of the bazaar. The miscellany consisted entirely of the

productions of Canterbury writers, and among the contributors were

Dean Jacobs, Canon Cottrell, and James Edward FitzGerald, the founder

of the PRESS.

When Prince Ferdinand was wrecked on the island Miranda was fifteen

years old. We can hardly suppose that she had ever seen Ariel, and

Caliban was a detestable object whom her father took good care to

keep as much out of her way as possible. Caliban was like the man

cook on a back-country run. "'Tis a villain, sir," says Miranda. "I

do not love to look on." "But as 'tis," returns Prospero, "we cannot

miss him; he does make our fire, fetch in our wood, and serve in

offices that profit us." Hands were scarce, and Prospero was obliged

to put up with Caliban in spite of the many drawbacks with which his

services were attended; in fact, no one on the island could have

liked him, for Ariel owed him a grudge on the score of the cruelty

with which he had been treated by Sycorax, and we have already heard

what Miranda and Prospero had to say about him. He may therefore

pass for nobody. Prospero was an old man, or at any rate in all

probability some forty years of age; therefore it is no wonder that

when Miranda saw Prince Ferdinand she should have fallen violently in

love with him. "Nothing ill," according to her view, "could dwell in

such a temple--if the ill Spirit have so fair an house, good things

will strive to dwell with 't." A very natural sentiment for a girl

in Miranda's circumstances, but nevertheless one which betrayed a

charming inexperience of the ways of the world and of the real value

of good looks. What surprises us, however, is this, namely the

remarkable celerity with which Miranda in a few hours became so

thoroughly wide awake to the exigencies of the occasion in

consequence of her love for the Prince. Prospero has set Ferdinand

to hump firewood out of the bush, and to pile it up for the use of

the cave. Ferdinand is for the present a sort of cadet, a youth of

good family, without cash and unaccustomed to manual labour; his

unlucky stars have landed him on the island, and now it seems that he

"must remove some thousands of these logs and pile them up, upon a

sore injunction." Poor fellow! Miranda's heart bleeds for him. Her

"affections were most humble"; she had been content to take Ferdinand

on speculation. On first seeing him she had exclaimed, "I have no

ambition to see a goodlier man"; and it makes her blood boil to see

this divine creature compelled to such an ignominious and painful

labour. What is the family consumption of firewood to her? Let

Caliban do it; let Prospero do it; or make Ariel do it; let her do it

herself; or let the lightning come down and "burn up those logs you

are enjoined to pile";--the logs themselves, while burning, would

weep for having wearied him. Come what would, it was a shame to make

Ferdinand work so hard, so she winds up thus: "My father is hard at

study; pray now rest yourself--HE'S SAFE FOR THESE THREE HOURS."

Safe--if she had only said that "papa was safe," the sentence would

have been purely modern, and have suited Thackeray as well as

Shakspeare. See how quickly she has learnt to regard her father as

one to be watched and probably kept in a good humour for the sake of

Ferdinand. We suppose that the secret of the modern character of

this particular passage lies simply in the fact that young people

make love pretty much in the same way now that they did three hundred

years ago; and possibly, with the exception that "the governor" may

be substituted for the words "my father" by the young ladies of three

hundred years hence, the passage will sound as fresh and modern then

as it does now. Let the Prosperos of that age take a lesson, and

either not allow the Ferdinands to pile up firewood, or so to arrange

their studies as not to be "safe" for any three consecutive hours.

It is true that Prospero's objection to the match was only feigned,

but Miranda thought otherwise, and for all purposes of argument we

are justified in supposing that he was in earnest.

THE ENGLISH CRICKETERS

The following lines were written by Butler in February, 1864, and

appeared in the PRESS. They refer to a visit paid to New Zealand by

a team of English cricketers, and have kindly been copied and sent to

me by Miss Colborne-Veel, whose father was editor of the PRESS at the

time that Butler was writing for it. Miss Colborne-Veel has further

permitted to me to make use of the following explanatory note: "The

coming of the All England team was naturally a glorious event in a

province only fourteen years old. The Mayor and Councillors had 'a

car of state'--otherwise a brake--'with postilions in the English

style.' Cobb and Co. supplied a six-horse coach for the English

eleven, the yellow paint upon which suggested the 'glittering chariot

of pure gold.' So they drove in triumph from the station and through

the town. Tinley for England and Tennant for Canterbury were the

heroes of the match. At the Wednesday dinner referred to they

exchanged compliments and cricket balls across the table. This early

esteem for cricket may be explained by a remark made by the All

England captain, that 'on no cricket ground in any colony had he met

so many public school men, especially men from old Rugby, as at

Canterbury.'"

[To the Editor, the Press, February 15th, 1864.]

Sir--The following lines, which profess to have been written by a

friend of mine at three o'clock in the morning after the dinner of

Wednesday last, have been presented to myself with a request that I

should forward them to you. I would suggest to the writer of them

the following quotation from "Love's Labour's Lost."

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

S.B.

"You find not the apostrophes, and so miss the accent; let me

supervise the canzonet. Here are only numbers ratified; but for the

elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy, caret . . . Imitari

is nothing. So doth the hound his master, the ape his keeper, the

tired horse his rider."

Love's Labour's Lost, Act IV, S. 2.

HORATIO . . .

. . . The whole town rose

Eyes out to meet them; in a car of state

The Mayor and all the Councillors rode down

To give them greeting, while the blue-eyed team

Drawn in Cobb's glittering chariot of pure gold

Careered it from the station.--But the Mayor -

Thou shouldst have seen the blandness of the man,

And watched the effulgent and unspeakable smiles

With which he beamed upon them.

His beard, by nature tawny, was suffused

With just so much of a most reverend grizzle

That youth and age should kiss in't. I assure you

He was a Southern Palmerston, so old

In understanding, yet jocund and jaunty

As though his twentieth summer were as yet

But in the very June o' the year, and winter

Was never to be dreamt of. Those who heard

His words stood ravished. It was all as one

As though Minerva, hid in Mercury's jaws,

Had counselled some divinest utterance

Of honeyed wisdom. So profound, so true,

So meet for the occasion, and so--short.

The king sat studying rhetoric as he spoke,

While the lord Abbot heaved half-envious sighs

And hung suspended on his accents.

CLAUD. But will it pay, Horatio?

HOR. Let Shylock see to that, but yet I trust

He's no great loser.

CLAUD. Which side went in first?

HOR. We did,

And scored a paltry thirty runs in all.

The lissom Lockyer gambolled round the stumps

With many a crafty curvet: you had thought

An Indian rubber monkey were endued

With wicket-keeping instincts; teazing Tinley

Issued his treacherous notices to quit,

Ruthlessly truthful to his fame, and who

Shall speak of Jackson? Oh! 'twas sad indeed

To watch the downcast faces of our men

Returning from the wickets; one by one,

Like patients at the gratis consultation

Of some skilled leech, they took their turn at physic.

And each came sadly homeward with a face

Awry through inward anguish; they were pale

As ghosts of some dead but deep mourned love,

Grim with a great despair, but forced to smile.

CLAUD. Poor souls! Th' unkindest heart had bled for them.

But what came after?

HOR. Fortune turned her wheel,

And Grace, disgraced for the nonce, was bowled

First ball, and all the welkin roared applause!

As for the rest, they scored a goodly score

And showed some splendid cricket, but their deeds

Were not colossal, and our own brave Tennant

Proved himself all as good a man as they.

\* \* \* \* \*

Through them we greet our Mother. In their coming,

We shake our dear old England by the hand

And watch space dwindling, while the shrinking world

Collapses into nothing. Mark me well,

Matter as swift as swiftest thought shall fly,

And space itself be nowhere. Future Tinleys

Shall bowl from London to our Christ Church Tennants,

And all the runs for all the stumps be made

In flying baskets which shall come and go

And do the circuit round about the globe

Within ten seconds. Do not check me with

The roundness of the intervening world,

The winds, the mountain ranges, and the seas -

These hinder nothing; for the leathern sphere,

Like to a planetary satellite,

Shall wheel its faithful orb and strike the bails

Clean from the centre of the middle stump.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mirrors shall hang suspended in the air,

Fixed by a chain between two chosen stars,

And every eye shall be a telescope

To read the passing shadows from the world.

Such games shall be hereafter, but as yet

We lay foundations only.

CLAUD. Thou must be drunk, Horatio.

HOR. So I am.

Footnotes:

{1} We were asked by a learned brother philosopher who saw this

article in MS. what we meant by alluding to rudimentary organs in

machines. Could we, he asked, give any example of such organs? We

pointed to the little protuberance at the bottom of the bowl of our

tobacco pipe. This organ was originally designed for the same

purpose as the rim at the bottom of a tea-cup, which is but another

form of the same function. Its purpose was to keep the heat of the

pipe from marking the table on which it rested. Originally, as we

have seen in very early tobacco pipes, this protuberance was of a

very different shape to what it is now. It was broad at the bottom

and flat, so that while the pipe was being smoked the bowl might rest

upon the table. Use and disuse have here come into play and served

to reduce the function to its present rudimentary condition. That

these rudimentary organs are rarer in machinery than in animal life

is owing to the more prompt action of the human selection as compared

with the slower but even surer operation of natural selection. Man

may make mistakes; in the long run nature never does so. We have

only given an imperfect example, but the intelligent reader will

supply himself with illustrations.

End of Project Gutenberg Etext of Canterbury Pieces, by Samuel Butler