

If fuel of too rapidly combustible nature, as gunpowder or dynamite, were used, the result would be too stimulating, so to speak, and immediate disaster likely to ensue. If the liquids consumed in the boiler were not in accordance with the organism, the proper motive power would not be generated; if impure water were used the surfaces of internal organs would be corroded or the passages walled up with obstructive secretions; or if the fluid be of the best, and it be expanded into steam too rapidly or in excess, damage or destruction would ensue from that source.

If all these things were properly adjusted, then the neglect of piston-rods, cylinders and journals, or the use of unfit materials for lubrication, would result in difficulties analogous to rheumatisms and inflammations, with ultimate decrepitude and dissolution. If, to strain the figure a little, we could for illustration fancy the engine, for the time being, a sentient creature, able to select its own combustibles and other materials, manage its own steam-gauge, and it were to use coal when constructed for wood, or wood when constructed for coal, or were to fill its furnaces with indigestible, that is to say, with incombustible material, as stone or brick or earth, or if it were to use for steady diet tallow or tar or rosin, or were to swallow powder or dynamite, or permit its steam to rise above the limit of its strength, or were to use liquids that would obstruct or corrode its inner surfaces, then the same damage or destruction would ensue as in the case first supposed, nor would it make the slightest difference in the imposition of these penalties whether the engine exposed itself to them by accident or design, or through ignorance, or whether any or all these dangers were forced upon it by some agency to which it might have been subject, or which it could not resist.

The law of its organization would only take notice of the fact that its conditions were violated and the penalty would be inflicted. Nor would the law of its structure take the least notice of the reputable or disreputable character of what the engine might be doing at the time; whether it were forging guns to arm traitors, or dressing lumber to build a church, would in no way aggravate or palliate its non-observance of the law of its own being, nor render the punishment more or less certain or severe.

The human machinery—I trust you will for the sake of argument pardon the expression—is, apart from what is generally understood