

berish to those outside the trade, or if they convey any meaning at all, convey an erroneous one, and frequently an absurd one.

Once more—take Crompton—there goes the man who invented "the mule;" that does not sound very well, but the mule itself has details. One is "Twist at the head;" imagine a man being introduced into London society as the inventor of "Twist at the head," a pretty burlesque his life would be made to him. Imagine Stephenson's claim to respect and attention being based upon his improvement of the "clab motion." It would be an unpardonable waste of your time to multiply examples. Moreover, statues, even if good, and public addresses, though eloquent, would not pay our taxes nor find us in clothes. I feel that in this room I ought not to undervalue honorary rewards. Its walls are adorned with pictures showing that in times gone by competitors were content with the applause of their fellow-men, or at the utmost a crown of leaves gratified all their ambition, but I doubt whether those ages produced many inventions, except improvements in weapons, to enable man to more conveniently kill his fellow-man. Further, in those golden ages and genial climes, I think we may take it men were but lightly taxed, and certainly the tailors' and dressmakers' bills (to judge by the representations on the wall) must have been at a minimum. Under such circumstances men might be content with honorary rewards, the hard realities of our times and our climate, however, make such rewards, alone and unaccompanied by something more substantial, a mere mockery of the need that they were destined to cheer. For the last time I will refer to Crompton; he, or rather his spirit, has had honorary reward. Long after his death the town of Bolton erects a statue to his memory: there was an unveiling, there were speeches. The opponents of a patent law might say, "What more can a man want, to cause him to devote his life to improvement, than such a posthumous reward as this?" In answer to such a demand, I think the inventor would refer the opponent of a patent law to Shakespeare. What says he of honour?

"Who hath it? He that died on Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Is it insensible, then? Yes, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it, therefore I'll none of it."

Among all the papers on the patent law that I have read, and among all the discussions on that question I have attended, I do not recall any other suggestions put forward by the opponents of patent law, as affording adequate grounds for the continuance of invention in the absence of such a law, than those I have now considered:—1st. That an inventor cannot refrain from inventing; 2nd. That the inventor is the man who of all others can best reap a profit from the commercial exercise of his invention; 3rd. That there should be a system of national rewards; 4th. That there should be a system of purely honorary rewards.

I can have left you in no doubt as to my opinion of the inadequacy of each and all of these suggested incentives to invention, and I will trust that most, if not all those, who honour me by their presence here to-night concur in my views; but there are men who say, "Be it even as you state, and take it that in the absence of a patent law there will not be an adequate incentive to invention, still it is expedient that such a law should not exist, because greater evils arise from it than would arise from a cessation of invention."

They say the evils are:

Interference with the freedom of trade.

That British manufacturers are put at a disadvantage, as compared with those of countries where there is not a patent law.

That a patent for an invention, by barring the road, stops further inventions.

That patents are granted for useless things.

That patents are granted for things which are old.

That the existence of patents gives rise to expensive and difficult litigation.

That patentees are great losers by patents, and that it would be a charity to protect them against themselves.

Let us, as briefly as possible, examine into the value of these charges.

"Interference with freedom of trade." This I admit has a solemn sound; it is enough to cause many wise heads to be shaken; but don't let us be frightened at an expression, let us examine and see what it means.

Some forms of words are very startling when heard for the first time.

Let me give you an instance. Within the month, a letter was written to the *Times*, by a person using the initials F. R. S., entreating that the Devastation should not be sent to sea, as she must be unsafe because she had "heavy weights above her centre of gravity." This is a most alarming statement until it comes to be considered, and then it turns out to mean no more than that the Devastation is not a floating miracle, as she must have been if she were the first body in creation that had not as much effect from the weights above its centre of gravity as from those below it.

Now, as to interference with freedom of trade. It is said, were it not that the inventor blocks the way with his patent, manufacturers generally would use the invention, and thus the public would be benefitted. I unhesitatingly assert, as the result of many years' close attention to this question, that such a statement is entirely at variance with the fact and before I have done I hope you will agree with me.

Take any one of the important industries, industries such as cotton or wool. The very last thing the established manufacturer wishes for is a substantive improvement, and for the following obvious reasons: He has got his good business and his connexion; his customers are pleased with that which he makes and are satisfied with the price they have to pay for his production, because they have no experience of any better quality or of any more advantageous price, inasmuch as, by the supposition, this manufacturer is a man doing as well as the bulk of those in his trade. He, his foremen, and his workmen are all accustomed to their own way of work, and they don't want to learn a fresh system. But there is one reason of far more consequence than all these together, and that is, the manufacturer has many thousands of pounds embarked in the machinery with which he conducts his manufacture, and that machinery is of the full value at which it stands in his books, but compel him to adopt a substantive invention in his manufacture, what will then become of those thousands of pounds' worth of machinery? They will lose their worth at once, they will be degraded from their condition as machines to the state of old metal, and their value will fall from many thousands to perhaps not the same number of hundreds, and contemporaneously with this fall will be the necessity of finding a large sum to be expended on the machinery required by the new process. Coupled with this, there is the annoyance of partial stoppage of works during alteration, of bad work being produced for some time under the new process, because it is new, and has to be learned, of the chance of offending customers by delay, and by the inferiority of products arising from the bad work of which I have spoken, and all this has to be incurred in the hope of success by the new process, with the certainty that directly it is found to succeed, competitors in trade will one by one follow the example, leaving the adopter of the new method no better off in comparison with his competitors than he was before the alteration, and with the certainty that if the plan fails, even if he be not ruined, he will be laughed at for his pains. Moreover, there is not only the difficulty of teaching men new ways, there is also to be overcome the frequent exhibition of sullen ill humour which breaks forth when a proposition is made to some trusted and honest, but narrow-minded manager or foreman, that the process he has so long followed can be improved. What is the "consecrated" expression used under such circumstances? "Here have I been working man and boy for forty years at this work, and my father before me, and I am to be told that some man, who is ten years my junior, and who never worked at the trade at all, knows more than I do, and can teach me my own business." This is a dire offender. I have seen much of it, and it has practically a greater weight than might, on a first consideration, be attributed to it. Remember that frequently the principal of a manufactory has to rely on such men for all questions connected with the manufacture, and that even in those cases where he knows enough of his own business to be able to judge for himself, the amount of resistance to improvement that can be offered by men of the class I have been considering is most serious, and they can offer such resistance covertly and passively, without the possibility of their employer being able to fix them with an absolute disobedience of orders, or with an active opposition.

(To be continued.)