

EARLY PRESENTMENTS OF THE ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH.

From the London Spectator. One of the most extraordinary facts in the whole history of the sciences and arts, is the strong presentiment which existed for a century or more at the revival of learning that magnetism would be used to convey intelligence without regard to time or space.

In his very interesting account of the gradual triumph of the electric telegraph, Mr. Dodd has referred to this strange presentiment, and has given a quotation of the passage in the "Proteus" of Strada, published in 1617, which describes in the most exact manner the working of the telegraph in 1867.

Who has used the latest form of Mr. Wheatstone's household letter telegraph try to describe the procedure, and we think he could not describe it better than in the following words:—"If you wish your distant friend, to whom no letter can come, to learn something, take a die (or dial), and write around the edge of it the letters of the alphabet, in the order in which children learn them, and in the centre place horizontally two iron needles, one a magnet, so that it may move and indicate whatever letter you wish."

A similar die being in the possession of your friend:—"If you desire privately to speak to the friend whom you have in your hand on the globe, and turn the movable iron on you so as to expose a certain margin of all the letters which are required for the words, Hither and thither, turn the style and touch the letters, not this one, and now that one."

Wonderful to relate, the far distant friend sees the volume of the globe without the touch of any person, and runs hither, now thither; conscious, he bends over it, and marks the teaching of the rod. When he thinks the rod stand still, he in his turn, if he thinks there is anything to be answered, in like manner, by touching the various letters, writes it back to his friend."

No wonder that Strada, as he finishes his description, should break forth into the prayer:—"O human race! ratio scribendi prodest! nulli ratione non est insensibilis, epistola, nulli Latronum verba insensibilis, sine moribus."

Mr. Dodd suggests that in this wonderful description Strada was merely giving play to his imagination. In the midst of Strada's classical trifles, it was doubtless a mere play of the imagination. When Addison, in the Spectator (No. 241), alludes to Strada's description, he speaks of it as "an account of a chimerical correspondence between two friends by the help of a certain loadstone."

"I am a certain loadstone," he continues, "or any other writer of romances had introduced a character, who is generally in the train of a knight-errant, making a present to two lovers of a couple of these above-mentioned needles, the reader would not have been a little pleased to have seen the lovers, in the manner of a watch, or separated by casles and adventures. In the meanwhile, if ever this invention should be revived or put in practice, would propose that the lover of the lady should be supplied with a watch not only the four-and-twenty letters, but several entire words, which have always a place in passionate epistles."

But though in the hands of poets and literary men this notion of a space-destroying telegraph was a fanciful chimaera, among the scientific men of the day it was gravely discussed, or mysteriously hinted at. From about the middle of the sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth century it is alluded to in most works on magnetism, and many other books of science. The Marquis of Worcester was a diligent collector of all the ingenious notions of his age, and he probably alludes to magnetism when he speaks of "intelligence at a distance communicative, and not limited to distance, nor by it the time prolonged."

Sir Thomas Browne, in his "Pseudodoxia Epidemica," says of a supposed magnetic telegraph that "the conceit is excellent, and if he speaks of it as a conceit 'whispered throv the world with some attention, credulous and vulgar auditors readily believing it, and more judicious and distinctive heads not altogether rejecting it.' But it would appear that, like a true fellow-countryman of Bacon, old Sir Thomas submitted the thing to the test of experiment, and though the needles were at the distance of half a span, when one was held in the hand, the other would stand like Heulow's needles." He raises several objections to his supposed telegraph, such as that the needles would move contrary ways, and the difference of longitude would prevent two persons from watching their telegraph needles exactly at the same moment.

Joseph Glanvill, in his "Scopis Scientifia" (1655), devotes a chapter to considering three instances of reputed impossibilities. One of these is the magnetic telegraph, which he describes as composed of sympathetic needles and an abecedarian circle. He mentions and answers the objections of Sir Thomas Browne, suggesting that "there are some stints in natural operations that give us probability that it is feasible." And it is with a strange feeling of wonder that we find a writer two hundred years ago concluding in these words:—"Though this pretty contrivance possibly may not yet answer the expectation of inquisitive experiment, yet it is no respectable item, that by some other way of magnetic efficiency, it may hereafter be made to answer the riper investigations; and that present discoveries shall be improved to the performance." Predictions of men are not often so cautiously stated or so completely fulfilled, that we can afford to overlook a sentence such as the above.

Gilbert, the contemporary of Bacon, and the founder of the science of magnetism, does not allude to this imaginary telegraph, so far as we can find, or if he does, he dismisses it, among other fables, as unworthy of his great name. "De Magnete." Much about the time (1629) Nicholas Cabanis, the Jesuit name, wrote in "Philosophie Magique." "It is a fable," he says, "that two men can converse with each other between the most remote and separate places, by the aid of revolving needles," and he considers that those ought to be severely castigated who

with such portentous fables deter men from the study of their causes. Such an effect he says cannot be produced by magnets, and he proves the fable to be an error, "lest any one should be deluded by a vain hope." Vague and erroneous though the notions of a telegraph then were, they were truer than the refutation of Cabanis, grounded on the false principle that "every physical agent determines for itself a certain sphere of activity, beyond which it cannot have any influence."

But the interesting question remains, to whom is due the first suggestion that intelligence may be conveyed by magnetism or electricity? Strada attributed it to the celebrated Cardinal Bentivo, the Secretary of Leo X. But Bembo, who died in 1547, was a historian and literary character, and would hardly be likely to form so new a conception of a purely scientific kind.

The earliest work in which we have been able to trace the description of the supposed telegraph is the celebrated "Natural Magic" of the Neapolitan Baptista Porta, published in the year 1589. This work is a collection of all that was most wonderful in the sciences, then aroused from a long sleep in Italy. His seventh book is on the "Wonders of the Magnet." In the preface he enumerates these wonders, such as the mariner's compass, the perpetual motion, and the sympathetic needles. "I do not fear," he says, "that with a long absent friend, even though he be confined by prison walls, we can communicate what we wish by means of two compass needles circumscribed by the alphabet." A few lines later we find him mentioning with great respect Marco Polo, the source of some of his information. But in the eighth chapter of the same book we get more, probably, of the origin of the notions in question. The fact that if a magnet be placed beneath a table it will affect a magnetic needle above the table, in spite of the intervening matter, is mentioned by Porta with much wonder. This is the experiment which seems to have suggested the power of two magnetic needles to act upon each other at a distance, even though prison walls intervened. And, strange to say, this experiment may be traced back to the great St. Augustine. "Novit hoc experimentum Divus Augustinus," says Porta, and an exact description will accordingly be given in Augustine's treatise, "De Civitate Dei," a work believed to have been begun A. D. 413.

It is the fashion in these days to fall into raptures of wonder and exultation over the magnetic telegraph, but it is not we who have first wondered. Pliny counted the loadstone as the most wonderful thing in nature. "Quid enim mirabilius?" he asks. "Iron is the strongest thing in nature, and yet before the magnet it bows its neck, and obeys." He refers to "Cedit, et patitur mores." All ages, then, have shared in the intelligent wonder excited by the powers of magnetism. It is only the riper inspections of this age that have carried us to the letter the anticipations of former ages. The telegraph of the present time tends to assume exclusively the form most nearly analogous to the conceptions of Porta. The earliest attempts at electric telegraph, as Mr. Dodd well relates, were made with frictional electricity, which is not applicable to the purpose. Then galvanism was studied, and the conducting powers of metallic wire became understood. Now, the most improved telegraphs consist essentially of a magnet moved in front of one end of a wire, and a magnetic needle which is thereby made to move in front of the other end of the wire. And though a wire is quite indispensable to conduct magnetic influence in one direction, it is a fact that the return current passes back without a wire, through the land and sea, neither by wall nor mountain, as Porta imagined to himself.

The time is rapidly approaching when Ariel's girdle will be completed, and signals be transmitted round the world in a moment. It is idle, perhaps, to suggest that Shakespeare may have had some thought of magnetic communication when he conceived that fanciful idea. Certain it is, however, that the concept of a space-destroying telegraph was "whispered throv the world with some attention" in his age, and we have thought this to be a fact worthy of being a little better known.

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PROPOSALS. NEW PIERS AT MARCUS HOOK, PENNA.

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE, No. 209 S. SIXTH STREET, PHILA., Pa., May 22, 1867. Sealed Proposals, in duplicate, with a copy of this advertisement attached to each, will be received at this office, until 12 o'clock M., on THURSDAY, June 13, 1867, for furnishing materials and labor for the construction of four new piers at Marcus Hook, Delaware River, Penna. The superstructure of each pier to be of hard and durable stone.

The facing in six courses, of headers and stretchers dovetailed; the rise of each course 2 to 48 feet; the faces, axo or pean hammer and dove holes to be drilled if required; backing to be of rubble stone. The top to be paved with stones from one to two feet in thickness, with good natural face, and jointed to lengths of 3 feet and random widths.

The stone to be delivered at such points, at or near Marcus Hook, and to such persons may be designated by the proper officer or agent of the United States; and any other material to be delivered under like conditions. The cribs upon which the piers are to rest are to be sunk in depths varying from 30 to 24 feet, of these, about 7 feet to be of ordinary low-water. Length of each abutment about 77 feet, by about 10 feet, at top 74 by 32. To be of hemlock wharf timber, to work 10 inches less dimension.

The stone to be laid dry, in the best manner, and in accordance with instructions to be given. The rates to cover every expenditure necessary in receiving, caring for, and putting in the stone in position. Proposals for putting the stone of superstructure of each pier in place must state the rate of labor per cubic yard of facing and paving stone, and per percent of 50 cubic feet for backing with rubble.

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FIRE AND BURGLAR PROOF SAFES. MORE ABOUT LILLIE'S CHILLED-IRON SAFES.

IMPORTANT FACTS WHICH THE PEOPLE SHOULD MAKE A NOTE OF. FACT I.—LILLIE'S CHILLED-IRON SAFES have been largely introduced for the last two years, and sold to those who are desirous of securing the best and most thoroughly burglar-proof safe, and to those who are desirous of securing the best and most thoroughly burglar-proof safe, and to those who are desirous of securing the best and most thoroughly burglar-proof safe.

FACT II.—It is notorious that the profession of the burglar has advanced at a rapid pace within the last eight years, and that was thoroughly burglar-proof safe, and to those who are desirous of securing the best and most thoroughly burglar-proof safe, and to those who are desirous of securing the best and most thoroughly burglar-proof safe.

FACT III.—There are two, and only two, general methods of burglar-proofing safes, and these are, the one, the pouring of molten iron between and around the walls of the safe, and the other, the use of chilled iron.

FACT IV.—Mr. Lillie, the Patentee, so soon as he learned that it was possible with the modern improved tools for burglars to grind through chilled iron, he immediately adopted the following method, and the following is a description of the same.

FACT V.—We have subjected the sample of chilled iron you furnished us to the most severe tests (as regards drilling through it) that we could bring to bear upon it, and without success.

FACT VI.—I would now say to any of the owners of Lillie's Safes, that, in view of the preceding facts, if they are desirous of securing the best and most thoroughly burglar-proof safe, they should purchase Lillie's Safes.

FACT VII.—It is true that the Steel-Ton or common iron safe, when not crushed by the fall of walls or timbers, will stand for a long time, and that the fire is sovereign in its power, and that the fire is sovereign in its power, and that the fire is sovereign in its power.

FACT VIII.—In answer to the story circulated by interested parties, that Lillie's Safe had gone up, and had ruined Lillie, etc., I would say that no time is lost in the purchase of Lillie's Safes, and that the fire is sovereign in its power, and that the fire is sovereign in its power.

FACT IX.—In answer to the story circulated by interested parties, that Lillie's Safe had gone up, and had ruined Lillie, etc., I would say that no time is lost in the purchase of Lillie's Safes, and that the fire is sovereign in its power, and that the fire is sovereign in its power.

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AUCTION SALES. M. COLLEMAN & CO. AUCTIONEERS.

SALE OF 180 CASES BOOTS, SHOES, BROGANS, BALMOULDS, ETC. On Thursday morning, June 10, commencing at 10 o'clock, we will sell by catalogue, for cash, 180 cases Boots, Shoes, Brogans, Balmoolds, etc. Also a superior assortment of women's, misses', and children's wear, from city and Eastern manufacturers, embracing a desirable sale, to which we would call the early attention of the trade.

SALE OF 140 CASES BOOTS, SHOES, BROGANS, BALMOULDS, ETC. On Thursday morning, June 10, commencing at 10 o'clock, we will sell by catalogue, for cash, 140 cases men's boys', and youths' boots, shoes, brogans, balmoolds, etc. Also a superior assortment of women's, misses', and children's wear, all prime and desirable goods, from city and Eastern manufacturers.

LARGE PEREMPTORY SALE OF FRENCH AND OTHER EUROPEAN DRY GOODS, ETC. On Thursday morning, June 10, at 10 o'clock, we will sell by catalogue, on four months' credit, about 500 lots of French, India, and other goods, including a large assortment of fancy and staple articles in silks, wools, muslins, linens, and cottons.

LARGE PEREMPTORY SALE OF BOOTS, SHOES, BROGANS, TRAVELLING BAGS, ETC. On Thursday morning, June 10, at 10 o'clock, we will sell by catalogue, on four months' credit, about 100 packages boots, shoes, brogans, travelling bags, etc., from city and Eastern manufacturers.

LARGE POSITIVE SALE OF CARPETING, MATTINGS, ETC. On Friday morning, June 11, at 11 o'clock, we will sell by catalogue, on four months' credit, about 200 pieces rich Brussels, three-ply superline, and fine Ingrain, Venetian, list, and other carpets, matting, and other articles, embracing a choice assortment of superior goods, which may be examined early on the morning of sale.

SALE OF STOCKS AND REAL ESTATE. On Tuesday, June 11, at 12 o'clock noon, we will include— 20 shares of the Erie and Ohio R.R. Co. 10 shares of the Erie and Ohio R.R. Co. 10 shares of the Erie and Ohio R.R. Co.

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SALE OF REAL ESTATE. On Monday, June 17, 1867, we will include THE ELEGANT BROWN STONE RESIDENCE, S.W. corner of Broad and Thompson streets, 25 feet front, with 10 rooms, deep, built and finished throughout in a superior manner, with extra conveniences, and with bay windows, verandas, three parlors, laundry, closets, and a large garden, with walks, etc.

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