

THE AEROPHONE.

557

Mr. Edison, the inventor of the phonograph, has committed a further outrage upon public privacy—if the term be permissible—by inventing an instrument which he is pleased to call the aeropphone. The phonograph is, we scarcely need to inform our readers, a machine which—to use the feeling language of an alarmed scientist—catches the lightest whisper of conversation and stores it up, so that at any future time it can be brought out, to the confusion of the original speaker. And it is just original speakers that have most cause to distrust and to detest the phonograph. The wayfaring man who happens to be a fool into the bargain, and is wont to talk nonsense when he thinks himself alone, need not fear the phonograph—the publication of his insane self-confidences will neither compromise him nor interest his fellow-fools. But the high-pressure poet who, with full metrical steam up, retires to some sylvan glade, and proceeds, as he imagines, to hold secret communion with Nature, will have good reason to execrate the phonograph, when he finds the poem he breathed into Nature's ear published in the *Blackball Review*, as the alleged composition of a rival rhymester.

There is really no placing any limits to the mischievous enterprise of the phonograph. As the before-mentioned scientist well remarks, the very walls will soon have ears in a horribly literal sense. No lady, calling on a female friend, will, while waiting for that female friend to make her appearance, dare to express her opinion of the bad taste conspicuous around her. No young man will venture to talk private sweetness at a young lady, lest he should be furnishing a concealed phonograph with evidence that would make a breach of promise suit against him an assured success. And even childhood's capacity for artless and unfettered invective will receive a severe check, when it becomes known in small-boydom that what is uttered in the playground may be reproduced in the schoolroom, with additional accompaniments in the key of cane.

The phonograph being thus detestable, as tending to destroy the confidence which properly exists between man and man, it is simply appalling to be told, on good authority, that the aeropphone is a far more infamous and devastating instrument than the phonograph. It is, indeed, an intensely aggravated modification of the phonograph. The phonograph is discreet enough to communicate its disingenuous information only in whispers. The aeropphone positively roars out what it has deceitfully overheard. It is said, for example, that if you mention ever so quietly in the hearing of the aeropphone something disparaging to your mother-in-law, say, the instrument will promptly bawl out your whispered strictures in a tone that can be heard at a distance of four miles in every direction, and is, therefore, well adapted to reach your mother-in-law's ears, if she be living as near to you as a mother-in-law usually lives.

It would, perhaps, be difficult to present the aeropphone in a light more repulsive than that in which we have just presented it, but the effect thereby produced on our readers will probably be strengthened by the further statement that, were an aeropphone attached to the House of Commons, when that House is in full debate, the whole district within a four miles' radius of St. Stephen's would ring with raucous oratory and devastating eloquence, and no one within that district would be able to get a wink of sleep until the House had adjourned. Similarly, if while Dr. Parker was pounding the pulpit of his City Temple, and shaking his excessive locks over the ungodliness of the folks who came to hear him, but omitted to put anything into the plate, an aeropphone were placed within a safe distance of the denunciatory divine, the whole city would reverberate with disconcerting Parkerisms, and we should have the *Daily Telegraph*, next day, recording a severe thunderstorm, aggravated by symptoms of earthquake. So, once again, if an aeropphone were to venture into the vicinity of the *FIGARO's* sub-editor, when that sub-editor happened to be opening his letters and commenting on their contents, the E.C. district would be made painfully conscious that swearing is not an extinct and fossil vice. So, for the last time, if the writer of this article were, while in the bosom of his family, to be stalked by a stealthy and dissembling aeropphone, his neighbors, and the folks more distantly round about him, would be compelled to admit that he was an even better, more amiable, and more sweet-spoken man than they had previously considered him to be. For he is always genial and silver-tongued when in the bosom of his family—at least, he means to be so, now these plaguy aeropphones are about.

HAVING thus indicated, very feebly and imperfectly, our own ill-feelings with regard to the aeropphone, it will be convenient to show how the aeropphone strikes the Americans—one of whom Mr. Edison, the inventor of the aeropphone, is. The United States have—says an antaerophonist American writer—"long suffered from excessive talk. Had nine-tenths of our citizens who have been born during the last fifty years been absolutely dumb, the Republic would doubtless have preserved its pristine purity. It is the interminable talk of Congressmen and other leading citizens that is the source of all our public woes. Talk is likewise the bane of private life. With dumb wives there would be no need of divorce courts, and with dumb husbands home might become a blessed reality instead of a poetic dream.

And yet, knowing full well that talk is a monster of such hideous meaning that to be hated needs only to be constantly heard, Mr. Edison has devised an instrument by which the range of conversation is extended from a few feet to four miles."

THAT is hot for Mr. Edison ; but hotter remains to be quoted. The result of aerophoneticism—continues the impassioned Transatlantic journalist—will be the complete disorganisation of society. Men and women will flee from civilisation and seek in the silence of the forest relief from the roar of countless aerophones. Business, marriage, and all social amusements will be thrown aside, except by totally deaf men, and America will retrograde to the Stone Age with frightful rapidity. Better is a dinner of raw turnips in a damp cave than a banquet within the hearing of ten thousand aerophones. Far better is it to starve in solitude than to possess all the luxuries of civilisation at the price of hearing every remark that is made within a radius of four miles. It may be too late to suppress the aerophone now, but at least there is time to visit upon the head of its inventor the just indignation of his fellow-countrymen.

WE may add that the justly incensed writer concludes with a motion, to the effect that something ought to be done to Mr. Edison, and that it had better be done with a rope.

The English Mechanic

AND

WORLD OF SCIENCE AND ART.

FRIDAY, MAY 3, 1878.

559

[12800.]—Grating Noise in Telephone.—Can any reader tell me how to get rid of the grating noise which, to a great extent, spoils the working of my telephone? The noise, which is like that caused by the making and breaking of a galvanic circuit, is intermittent, frequently interrupting the conversation, but during its absence the voice of the speaker is most distinctly heard. The wire stretches over a field and five or six houses, a distance of 200 yards.—ERSTLON.

[12829.]—Edison's Sewing Machine Motor.—I saw in the *Telegraphic Journal* (for March 15, I think), that Mr. Edison had invented a sewing machine motor, consisting of a vibrating tuning fork, actuated by a pair of electro-magnets and a battery, the circuit being interrupted "timely" by the arms of the fork. Between the arms is a ratchet-wheel, and each arm carries a pawl working into the wheel, one at the top, the other at the bottom. By this means the wheel is rotated and imparts its motion to a sewing machine! Does any one know the particulars of this new motor, or has the *Telegraphic Journal* been led astray by the application of the tuning fork to a model sewing machine?—NUN. DON.