NEW YORK, DECEMBER 9, 1848.

To the Postmasters of the United States.

Gentlemen, there can be no doubt but you are all " honorable men," but you are not all perfect men. It doth happen somehow or other, that a great number of our subscribers complain with no unfeigned sorrow, that they do not receive their numbers regular and some numbers they never receive at all. Now we know that there is no paper whatever, more carefully mailed than the Scientific American Our subscribers' written wrappers are each week carefully examined by the copy on our books, before the papers are sent away. We know that the majority of our subscribers keep their numbers for binding at the end of the volume, and we know the disappointed feeling —of having *missing numbers*—making all allowance for the expression. We therefore respectfully solicit the particular attention of our Postmasters to this matter, for there is not a week passes over our heads but what some letter comes to us with *regrets* for not having received such and such numbers of the Scientific American. Where the fault lies we cannot tell, but we can tell this much, that we sents even several numbers to the Post Office, Perrysburg, Ohio, for D. Wright, and he did not receive one of them. We might mention a great number of names, but we forbear at present, hoping that some attention will be paid to our request and that the Postmasters will see to it that the *right* persons get the *right* papers.

The Works of the Past and Lectures on the Middle Ages.

Mr. Buckingham, son of the great traveller, has been delivering lectures in this city during the past week, on the Middle Ages. We were wofully disappointed with his *facts*, but not with his enthusiasm. There are some men who are totally devoid of that strength of mind which grasps and classifies the various phenomenon that meet their gaze—men who are incapable of looking around them and making a just comparison of the works of the present with the works of the past. Of this class there are many who have distinguished themselves, not so much for the profundity of their judgment, as for the absence of it coupled with zeal and varnished with a knowledge, like a *cocoon*, which although it has a certain lustre, yet it is not the *silk* lustre. This class of beings are generally great lovers of the antique—antiquarian lore so distinguishes a man, sir. The fine classic taste you know, and all that. In their eyes, the works of the moderns are barbarous and pigmy in comparison with the works of " the ancients, so grand and sublime." If you talk to these men about the works of the present day, they will point you to the pyramids. and with a wise shake of the head, strut out their toes like the Laird of Lang Kail and carry their heads as overwhelmingly dignified as an Indian Brahmin. If you talk to one of them of the learning of the present age, there you are grounded again sir, for ten chances to one, if he dont haul out one hundred and ninety nine old illuminated manuscripts *fresh* from the cobwebs of dusty immortality and bid you gaze upon the industry and learning of the monk, to dwarf the writings of a Shakspeare or a Scott, nay, by my troth, but there is one fellow in London just now, named Dickson, who is for making *Will Shakspeare* himself, an old musty fellow of the cloister and middle ages. We do not know but what young Silk Buckingham may prove it to be a fact too, before he leaves this city. It is very difficult to tell what astonishing results may be produced by a few touches of oratorical fandango, especially upon *sensible* ignoramuses. It is very likely that about one hundred years after this, some fellow will prove, that Trinity Church was built by Dr. Wainwright or some other clergyman. It is certainly unfortunate that the monument of Christopher Wren was preserved in St. Paul's, or our lecturer on the *middle ages* might bring strong proof about its being built by Thomas a' Becket.

Law's Stave Dresser and Stave Jointer.

We published an illustrated description in our last volume of Mr. Harvey Law's Stave Dressing and Stave Jointing Machines. The descriptions that we then published were merely the mechanical construction and arrangement of the machines. Since that period, Mr. Law has received a patent for his improvements and he has brought on his machines from Wilmington, N. C. and set them in operation in Mr. Burdon's Foundry, No. 100 Front st. Brooklyn. We visited the establishment last week and had occular demonstration of their performance, and we cannot but speak highly of their merits. For working sawed staves we have seen in operation the stave dressing machine of Mr. Smith of Lockport, and three years ago we saw the one belonging to Mr. Randal in Albany, and we have likewise seen the ingenious machine of Judson & Pardee, of New Haven, Conn. for split staves ; but Mr. Law's is entirely different in its construction and operation from these, and it does its work handsomely, finishing about 8 or 9 staves per minute. The stave dresser and jointer are placed at the end of one another—as the staves leave the dresser they pass down an inclined board to the person who tends the dresser and from the commencement to the finishing of the stave the work is continuous.

In the dresser, the stave is put in under the jaws of a pressure lever, and a follower catches it (the stave) behind and pushes it through to the revolving cutters, which cut on the face and back of the stave, above and below. The cutters revolve like those in Woodworth's planing machine, but there are two set upon two axis—the one revolving above and the other below the stave. The top set are convex planes and the under set concave knives, which form the reverse surfaces on the staves. The follower which pushes the rough stave under the pressure levers to go between the knives, is carried forward by a rack and pinion and is made to operate with self-reversing geering for the forward and backward motions. The pressure levers can be set to accommodate staves of any required thickness, but the beauty of the dressing lies in planing the staves so as to suit all the most warped inequalities of the split kind. The motion of the cutters is good and the machines are not liable to get out of repair. The jointer finishes staves of all degrees of width, so that it makes no matter whether a five inch stave is first put through the dresser and then a four inch one afterwards, or not. The jointer takes them all as they come and joints the one after the other without stopping a moment. This is a very beautiful arrangement, and the *modas operandi* consists in having the finishing saw on a sliding frame, to be moved by a long lever to cut the last joint of the stave of any width desired. The followers that carry forward the staves to be jointed are dog hooks with bottom flanges fixed upon a straight travelling endless chain, but the dogs straddle on side rails and are guided by switches to carry the stave from one side to the other, from the stationary to the moveable saw to be sawed on both sides. Therefore no change of gearing is required to joint the staves of various widths. —The operator can go to the yard and take whatever staves comes to hand.

There are some improvements made on the machines since we published the engravings, and we may at some other time exhibit them by engravings—at present we speak merely of the operation as seen with our eyes, and those who are acquainted with stave dressing machines will get a good idea of both its construction and operation likewise. We hear of great complaints from Canada about bad times. If our Canadian friends want to go into a good paying business here is a machine that can whisk out their staves for London beer barrels, at no small rate, and a vessel will carry about twice the quantity of dressed that it can of undressed staves. We hope this advice will not be lost. The chips will raise steam for an engine and the expense is only in the machinery.

For Inventors to Read.

MESSRS. MUNN & Co.

Gentlemen.—I take the liberty to send you a few lines, partly to express my gratitude for having so valuable a paper as the *Scientific American* to read, and also to let you know that I am the assignee of a valuable invention now in the Patent Office, to run a perpendicular saw without a sash, and run a horizontal pitman. I regret exceeeingly that I did not know of you before the Patent business was put into other hands, as we have had considerable trouble already, and we are not through yet I can satisfy any reasonable person that it would have been forty dollars in my pocket if I had taken your paper from the commencement of its publication, for I spent that amount to obtain a right on a Spoke Hewer, that interfered with the planing machine, though I think yet that the application of it to getting out spokes ought to have been patented, for we have no account of its ever having been known or used as a spoke machine previous to our applying it to that purpose, and one of my neighbors is using one and he testifies it is worth $25 a year and cost $15. We have two or three more inventions in embryo, and I think we shall know where to get them patented. Every inventor ought to get you to do the business. My best wish to the man who attempts to revise the Patent Laws. They are a disgrace to any Republic, and I think that our government does not do its duty towards encouraging mechanical genius. If a poor man like myself invents any thing that does not suit the whims of the officers of the Patent Office or that may interfere with something that their friends *may* afterwards fetch in, they can, with impunity, reject it, and if the poor man knows that he is wronged and has spunk enough to appeal, he has the *cost to pay* whether it goes against him or not, as stated in sec. 63 of the Patent Laws, where they pretend to have a remedy in equity for patentees.

Your obd't. servant, G. P.

Sugar Planting in Alabama.

The Mobile Register says that the planters in the interior of that State are beginning to perceive the evils of the present system of raising cotton to the exclusion of everything else, and are directing their attention to other objects of agriculture. One of these, the sugar cane has been tested in various parts of the State, with encouraging success. The Greensborough Beacon, says that it has recently been shown several stalks of sugar cane, raised by Col. John Erwin, near his residence, which would compare favorably with any raised in Louisiana. One of the stalks had 20 well matured joints, the largest of which measured nearly 5 inches in circumference. Two other stalks had each 18 well matured joints, one of which measured 5 1-8 ins. in circumference. Two of these stalks measured seven of mature joints, and in the field from which they were gathered, were many others quite as large.—Several instances were noticed in which 10 or 12 fine, healthy stalks had grown from one eye. This crop of cane was grown in sandy bottom. If its cultivation is thus successful in the upper counties, why should it not meet with greater success in the lower? Experiments were made some fifteen years ago which proved unsuccessful in consequence of early frost preventing the necessary maturity of the plant, and the absorbing passion of cotton culture which reached its highest point soon after, put an end to the enterprise. Now that the winters are milder, and cotton does not yield a living recompense, the experiment will be tested more extensively.

Honey from the Prairie State.

We have received a box of honey from Mr. D. Lathrop's Apiary at La Salle, Ill. It was made this year in his American Bee Palace, and if ever bees made crystal nectar, it were the bees of Mr. Lathrop. Talk of ambrosial sweets, we must either go to Illinois for them or they must be sent from thence. Dutchess county may be the land for milk, but assuredly La Salle is the land for honey.

" On books deep poring ye pale sons of toil,
Who spend in studious trance the midnight oil,
Say now, can ye half equal with your rules,
Acquired in English, Greek or Latin schools,
This honey comb. Instinct her only guide,
A heaven taught insect baffles all your pride."

Baltimore Mechanics Institute.

We have received from Mr. Thomas I. Clare, Secretary of the Merchants Shot Works Baltimore, a copy of the Constitution and Bye Laws of the Maryland Institute for the Promotion of the Mechanic Arts, together with a Catalogue of the articles exhibited at the Fair held in Baltimore on the 31st of October last. We have been informed that the exhibition at the Fair, was highly creditable to the Institute both in respect to the number and originality of the articles exhibited. Mr. Benson exhibited his excellent combination rotary engine and Mr. Page his Wind Mill, both of which we have noticed before in the Scientific American. Two oscilating steam engines were exhibited, something of which we cannot boast in respect to the Fair held in our city. One was by Messrs. Murray and Hazlehurst and Messrs. Bently & Co. Baltimore. We hope to see these simple engines come into more general use. The first premium at the Fair for the best rotary ship pump was awarded to Mr. A. W. and J. H. Von Schmidt, of this city. We should like to have noticed more of the articles exhibited and the prizes that were awarded, but we have not room and we can only state that a general satisfaction was felt by those who exhibited their articles both in respect to the management of the Fair and the impartiality of the awards. Mr. Benson who had charge of the engine room was untiring in his exertions to make all things *go well*, and Mr. Amos Gore the general superintendent conducted all things in the most admirable manner, and so satisfied were the exhibitors that they published a card expressing their respect and thanks for the attention paid to them. The card was signed by persons from all parts of the Union—thus showing that it was no local feeling which induced them to publish the same.

The American Institute.

It is expected that the election for a Secretary of the American Institute, in place of Mr. Wakeman, deceased, will be held on the second Thursday in this month, but this is not certain, since the election may be postponed until the annual election on the second Tuesday of May. Mr. Chambers, the gentlemanly Clerk of the Institute, is spoken of as being the person best qualified and most likely to fill the vacancy by the death of the late Corresponding Secretary.

A Group for the Capitol.

Greenough the sculptor is at work on a composition designed for the Capitol at Washington: " He has chosen an early settler, whose home is attacked by an Indian. The hardy borderer has seized the savage with the calm dignity of confidence ; holds his right hand, which was uplifted with the fearful tomahawk clinched firmly, in his own, while his other holds the body in its secure position. Beside is the mother, who gazes upon her infant, which she has snatched from danger, with feelings of pleasure and gratitude beaming in her countenance. The whole is attired in a manner peculiarly national, and the result of which will illustrate an important point in the history of our country, and in the progress of humanity from barbarism to civilization."

Perseverance of the Blind.

Miss C. S. Smiley late pupil of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Blind, has made a quilt of the ordinary size, but the pieces count the extraordinary number of fifty five thousand five hundred and fifty two.