

JOHN ADOLPHUS ETZLER, ARTIST OF HOPE



**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY**



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1831



The *August Edward* carried two John A's to adventure in the New World. On this ship were members of a Prussian and German emigration society led by John Augustus Roebling, to set up a farm community, Saxonburg, near Pittsburgh PA, and one of the members of this society on board was [John Adolphus Etzler](#). Roebling would spend his life making small practical improvements; he was a bridge builder. Etzler would spend his life creating dream castles; like Bronson Alcott, he was an advance man.

We have no idea when Etzler had been born:



Biographically speaking, John Adolphus Etzler suddenly emerges from a blankness of years and just as abruptly withdraws behind an opaque obscurity that is both frustrating and puzzling. About the years prior to his appearance on the American shore in 1831 as a member of the Muhlhausen Emigration Society (under the leadership of the man who would later build the Brooklyn Bridge, John Augustus Roebling), we know only that he once previously immigrated to America for about eight years in the 1820s, returned to Germany, and was jailed for inciting emigration. Shortly after its arrival in America, the Mulhausen Emigration Society split into two groups – one loyal to Roebling and one ready to follow Etzler westward on what a recent student of Etzler, Patrick R. Brostowin, has called “his messianic journey in search of the right conditions under which ... to re-establish the Paradise that Adam lost for mankind.” As would happen many times during the next decade and a half, however, Etzler’s visionary schemes ran smack up against practical exigencies. According to a long letter written by Roebling in November 1831, Etzler’s failure to establish a communal society in the West was due to a number of factors – all of which could perhaps be boiled down to hubris: Etzler’s demagogish character; his impatience with those who could not understand, much less accept, his views; his dewy-eyed optimism and impracticality (which, among other things, let him to push past the rich soil of eastern Pennsylvania to lands too distant from profitable markets); and his inability to accept the essential human weaknesses of his followers or of man in general. Most importantly, as Brostowin points out, Etzler’s followers were basically German peasants looking for a piece of land and moderate creature comforts; they were not out to change the world –as was Etzler– only their own lives. Failure to receive further financial backing from Frederick Rapp (who evidently had lent Etzler money previously) forced Etzler to abandon his efforts to establish a community in the area of Cincinnati and to accept the editorship of the newly established German newspaper *Der Pittsburger Beobachter* in Pittsburgh.

FUTURE-WORSHIP



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NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT



November: By this point, the idealistic community that [John Adolphus Etzler](#) had attempted to establish in the vicinity of Cincinnati, Ohio had collapsed. He would attribute its failure to a cold winter, and move on the editorship of *Der Pittsburger Beobachter* in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and to a new round of financing and another such idealistic scheme, this next one in Venezuela (would he be unable to blame his failure in Venezuela on a cold winter? :-).¹

FUTURE-WORSHIP



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1833

→ Timothy Flint, in INDIAN WARS OF THE WEST, found an exceedingly complicated way to say simultaneously two simple things which are simply incompatible with each other, to wit that **we're no better than they are** and that **we should exterminate them**:

It is of little importance to inquire, which party was the aggressor.... Either this great continent, in the order of Providence, should have remained in the occupancy of half a million of savages, engaged in everlasting conflicts of their peculiar warfare with each other, or it must have become, as it has, the domain of civilized millions. It is in vain to charge upon the latter race results, which grew out of the law of nature, and the universal march of human events.



[John Adolphus Etzler](#)'s THE PARADISE WITHIN THE REACH OF ALL MEN, WITHOUT LABOR, BY POWERS OF

1. There is one master myth which drives all our ideology. It is that there is, and that it is necessary for us to discover, the one right way, The Solution, and that if we then hew to this one right way, everything will start to work, and the world will be all set to turn out all right:



It seems, however, that although we are prepared to defend to the death our right to trust in this master myth which drives all our ideology—that there is a right way and all that is necessary is for us to discover and hew to it—this really is not so. This is simply a false description of reality. Our world, actually, is not like this, not like this at all. We're not living on a Rubik's Cube and ultimately, things are not going to turn out to our liking. Meanwhile, we're going to just have to get used to our muddling along, and we're going to just have to continue, as long as it still seems feasible, to put up with each other as we do our muddle-along thingie.



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NATURE AND MACHINERY had been published in Pittsburgh and was in all the American bookstores,



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telling the people who wanted to believe this sort of stuff and who were able to buy and read books –which of course was, mainly, white people, since there were no schools for red people and since black people had long been punished for attempting to learn to write and now were even being punished for attempting to learn to read as well– that they could have utopia if they would merely organize to achieve it. So it really didn't matter in the great scheme of things if some poor populations of people had to be sacrificed, or left behind, in the great march forward into the beautiful future. And August Friedrich Pott, advancing the white Aryan myth of an *Urfolk* which had advanced westward out of Asia to vitalize the West, declared that

Ex oriente lux: the march of culture, in its general lines, has always followed the sun's course.



Clearly, religious leaders who desired to “pull a Bishop [George Berkeley](#)” for the 19th Century, and publicists like [Horace Greeley](#) and authors like [Henry Thoreau](#) who believed that they needed to speak of westering,

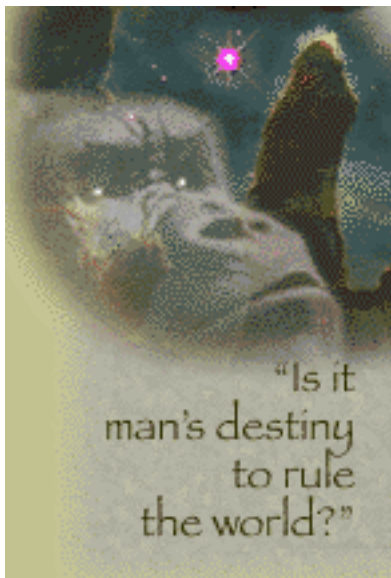


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and popular writers like [William Cullen Bryant](#) whose “The Prairies,” written after his first visit to Illinois in 1832, had just hit the bookstores, were going to need to be exceedingly careful so as not being misunderstood by their audiences to be recommending empire, or civilizationism, or ethnic chauvinism, or the myth of Nordic racial superiority.²



With missionary zeal, Etzler traveled in Pennsylvania and Ohio off and on for the next seven years (the period referred to in *TWO VISIONS OF J.A. ETZLER*) as a kind of itinerant secular evangelist preaching the possibility of a new kind of Millennium



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to be brought about through human reason and effort. Not surprisingly, his views on economic and social reform were rejected; and "the more they were rejected ... the more strident and offensive became his rhetorical appeals."

FUTURE-WORSHIP

**LIFE IS LIVED FORWARD BUT UNDERSTOOD BACKWARD?
— NO, THAT'S GIVING TOO MUCH TO THE HISTORIAN'S STORIES.
LIFE ISN'T TO BE UNDERSTOOD EITHER FORWARD OR BACKWARD.**

2. A factoid of interest to those of us who find this sort of thing interesting is that neither Bishop Berkeley nor Editor Greeley exercised any such caution, never went on record with a disclaimer about westering, never distanced themselves from authors such as Etzler and Pott and Flint. Only [Thoreau](#) did so:



*It is perfectly heathenish -a filibustering **toward** heaven by the great western route. No; they may go their way to their manifest destiny, which I trust is not mine.*

And he is remembered fondly for having had the courage and foresight to do so, say I with tongue in cheek.



Etzler is known today almost solely through the review of his book written by Henry David Thoreau, the influential writer and critic. Thoreau was fascinated by Etzler's ideas ...



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1836



There are two general categories of future worship: secular and religious, this-worldly and other-worldly. For an example of the secular, this-worldly future worship, in this year was republished, for an English audience, [John Adolphus Etzler](#)'s THE PARADISE WITHIN THE REACH OF ALL MEN, WITHOUT LABOR, BY POWERS OF NATURE AND MACHINERY, originally printed in the USA in 1833. (This deed was done by followers of the reformer Robert Dale Owen.)

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For an example of the other kind of future worship, the religious, other-worldly kind, in this year was published the Reverend [William Miller](#)'s EVIDENCE FROM SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY OF THE [SECOND COMING](#) OF CHRIST ABOUT THE YEAR A.D. 1843. By this point, nine prominent Baptist preachers had converted to Miller's "Adventist" theology.

MILLENNIALISM

Here is some of the imagery that the Millerites would find compelling, in the explanation of their endtimes

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preoccupation (please don't ask me to explain it):



(I don't have any examples of the diagrams of the wondrous machines that Etzler was inventing, to offer by way of comparison with the above — but never mind, as we know that none of them worked.)

[Henry David Thoreau](#) was not very specific about what he thought to be so wrong-headed about both the this-worldly, and the other-worldly, varieties of future worship. His comments were pretty much limited to expressing the considerable degree to which this sort of thing failed to interest him:



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"I would not run round a corner
to see the world blow up."
– [Henry Thoreau](#),
"LIFE WITHOUT PRINCIPLE"



THE FUTURE IS MOST READILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT





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1839

[John Adolphus Etzler](#) evidently spent this year in the West Indies — for instance Haiti. He may well have been drafting his volume which would see publication in 1841, THE NEW WORLD OR MECHANICAL SYSTEM. He may have been checking out various locales for a projected tropical paradise.

FUTURE-WORSHIP

[Baron Joseph-Marie de Gérando](#)'s *DE LA BIENFAISANCE PUBLIQUE* (4 volumes, Paris).

The US Army sent Lieutenant [John Charles Frémont](#) with the French explorer Jean-Nicolas Nicollet (July 24, 1786-September 11, 1843, of course not the same person as the Jean Nicollet who had explored in the same area in the 17th Century), to map the rivers of the midwest.

Eugène Michel Chevreul, after 15 years of experimenting with the phenomenological aspects of the perception of colors for the weavers at the Gobelins tapestry factory in Paris, issued a book titled THE PRINCIPLES OF HARMONY AND CONTRAST OF COLORS AND THEIR APPLICATION TO THE ARTS.

In France, Louis Blanc (1811-1882) published L'ORGANISATION DU TRAVAIL.

THE FUTURE CAN BE EASILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT





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1840

Early in the year [John Adolphus Etzler](#) had returned from the West Indies to New-York. Undoubtedly to meet and suitably impress other reformers, he would there attend the Fourier Society of New York's annual celebration of the French philosopher-utopist [Charles Fourier](#)'s birthday. There he would make the acquaintance of a [Fourierist](#) socialist and humanitarian, C.F. Stollmeyer, also a recent German immigrant, who was at that time reading Albert Brisbane's THE SOCIAL DESTINY OF MAN for publication. Stollmeyer was to become not only the publisher of [The New World](#), but also a primary disciple of Etzler. This SOCIAL DESTINY OF MAN, seconded by the writings and lectures of such men as the [Reverend Dana McLean Greeley](#) of Concord, the Reverend [William Henry Channing](#), [Horace Greeley](#), and Parke Godwin would stimulate the rise of several Phalansterian Associations, in the middle and western states, chiefest of which would be the "[North American Phalanx](#)" on the north shore of [New Jersey](#).

- ASSOCIATION OF INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION
- ONEIDA COMMUNITY
- MODERN TIMES
- UNITARY HOME
- BROOK FARM
- HOPEDALE

The Reverend [Adin Ballou](#)'s "Practical Christians" began to publish a gazette, the [Practical Christian](#), for the "promulgation of Primitive Christianity." He would write in HISTORY OF THE [HOPEDALE](#) COMMUNITY, FROM ITS INCEPTION TO ITS VIRTUAL SUBMERGENCE IN THE HOPEDALE PARISH that this year would initiate "a decade of American history pre-eminently distinguished for the general humanitarian spirit which seemed to pervade it, as manifested in numerous and widely extended efforts to put away existing evils and better the condition of the masses of mankind; and especially for the wave of communal thought which swept over the country, awakening a very profound interest in different directions in the question of the re-organization of society; — an interest which assumed various forms as it contemplated or projected practical results." There would be, he pointed out, a considerable number of what were known as [Transcendentalists](#) in and about [Boston](#), who, under the leadership of the [Reverend George Ripley](#), a [Unitarian](#) clergyman of eminence, would plan and put in operation the Roxbury Community, generally known as the "[Brook Farm](#)" Association. A company of radical reformers who had come out from the church on account of its alleged complicity with Slavery and other abominations, and hence called [Come-Outers](#), would institute a sort of family Community near [Providence, Rhode Island](#). Other progressives, with [George W. Benson](#) at their head, would found the Northampton Community at the present village of [Florence](#), a suburb of [Northampton](#).



One of the debates of the 18th Century was what human nature might be, under its crust of civilization, under the varnish of culture and manners. [Jean-Jacques Rousseau](#) had an answer. [Thomas Jefferson](#) had an answer. One of the most intriguing answers was that of [Charles Fourier](#), who was born in Besançon two years before the Shakers arrived in New York. He grew up to write twelve sturdy volumes designing a New Harmony for mankind, an experiment in radical sociology that began to run parallel to that of the Shakers. [Fourierism](#) ([Horace Greeley](#) founded the New-York [Tribune](#) to promote Fourier's ideas) was Shakerism for intellectuals. [Brook Farm](#) was Fourierist, and such place-names as Phalanx, New Jersey, and New Harmony, Indiana, attest to the



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movement's history. Except for one detail, Fourier and Mother Ann Lee were of the same mind; they both saw that humankind must return to the tribe or extended family and that it was to exist on a farm. Everyone lived in one enormous dormitory. Everyone shared all work; everyone agreed, although with constant revisions and refinements, to a disciplined way of life that would be most harmonious for them, and lead to the greatest happiness. But when, of an evening, the Shakers danced or had "a union" (a conversational party), Fourier's Harmonians had an orgy of eating, dancing, and sexual high jinks, all planned by a Philosopher of the Passions. There is a strange sense in which the Shakers' total abstinence from the flesh and Fourier's total indulgence serve the same purpose. Each creates a psychological medium in which frictionless cooperation reaches a maximum possibility. It is also wonderfully telling that the modern world has no place for either.



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According to the dissertation of Maurice A. Crane, “A Textual and Critical Edition of [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#)’s *The Blithedale Romance*” at the University of Illinois in 1953, various scholars have fingered Zenobia as:

- Mrs. Almira Barlow
- [Margaret Fuller](#)
- [Fanny Kemble](#)
- [Mrs. Sophia Willard Dana Ripley](#)
- Caroline Sturgis Tappan

while various other scholars have been fingering Mr. Hollingsworth as:

- Bronson Alcott
- Albert Brisbane
- [Elihu Burritt](#)
- Charles A. Dana
- [Waldo Emerson](#)
- Horace Mann, Sr.
- William Pike
- the Reverend [Orestes Augustus Brownson](#), or maybe
- the Reverend [William Henry Channing](#), or maybe
- the Reverend [Theodore Parker](#)

Hawthorne should really have told us more than Zenobia’s nickname, and should really have awarded Hollingsworth a first name more definitive than “Mr.”? Go figure!

Lest we presume that an association of this [William Henry Channing](#) with Hollingsworth is utterly void of content, let us listen, as Marianne Dwight did, to the reverend stand and deliver on the topic of “devotedness to the cause; the necessity of entire self-surrender”.¹

He compared our work with ... that of the crusaders.... He compared us too with the [Quakers](#), who see God only in the inner light,... with the Methodists, who seek to be in a state of rapture in their sacred meetings, whereas we should maintain in daily life, in every deed, on all occasions, a feeling of religious fervor; with the perfectionists, who are, he says, the only sane religious people, as they believe in perfection, and their aim is one with ours. Why should we, how dare we tolerate ourselves or one another in sin?

1. Reed, Amy L., ed. LETTERS FROM BROOK FARM, 1844-1847, BY MARIANNE DWIGHT Poughkeepsie NY, 1928.

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[John Adolphus Etzler](#), artist of hope and author of 1833's THE PARADISE WITHIN THE REACH OF ALL MEN, WITHOUT LABOR, BY POWERS OF NATURE AND MACHINERY which had received such a devastating "turn of

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a crank" review by Thoreau, had not given up the winning of friends, the influencing of people, and the begging of disposable savings. He began to publish utopian tracts on the power of the machine to transform and redeem the American wilderness. The first of these tracts was THE NEW WORLD, printed in Philadelphia.³



FUTURE-WORSHIP

This gentleman had developed a scheme for a sea craft, "Etzler's Naval Automaton," which could derive its motive power from the waves. A foil was to be rigidly mounted under the hull, beneath all the ocean's surface motion where the water was still, and as the ship rose and fell in the surface waves, this foil would hold steady and provide the fulcrum for a system of levers and ropes and pulleys which could be hooked to the gears of the ship's paddlewheels. The useless and distressing up-and-down motion of the ship would thus be translated into a useful forward force. C.F. Stollmeyer formed a company in Philadelphia to patent Etzler's invention,

3. In this year or the following one, also, C.F. Stollmeyer published a 12-page booklet under the title DESCRIPTION OF THE NAVAL AUTOMATON, INVENTED BY J.A. ETZLER.



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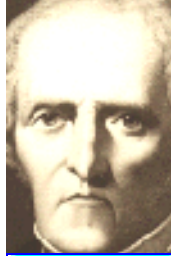
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and went to England, and then to France, Holland, and Belgium, to register patents on the continent as well. Funding would be obtained and a model of the device would be constructed. The vertical force remained vertical and the foil held the craft down while the larger waves washed over its decks. The experimental device sank.

**WHAT I'M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND
YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF**

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C.F. Stollmeyer prepared the way for [John Adolphus Etzler](#)'s arrival in England by publicizing his theories in various labor papers, with the result that a Chartist, James B. O'Brien, published Etzler's DIALOGUE ON ETZLER'S PARADISE: BETWEEN MESSRS. CLEAR, FLAT, DUNCE, AND GRUDGE. At this point THE PARADISE WITHIN THE REACH OF ALL MEN, WITHOUT LABOR, BY POWERS OF NATURE AND MACHINERY, originally published in the USA in 1833 and in England in 1836, was republished for its English audience — owing, [Henry Thoreau](#) speculated, "to the recent spread of Fourier's doctrines."

FOURIERISM**FOURIERISM****PARADISE WITHIN REACH**

(A copy of this edition would be in the personal library of [Waldo Emerson](#). It had been sent by Bronson Alcott in England and would be loaned to Thoreau.)



It was the German philosopher Hegel from which Etzler received his impetus toward "the state [which would be] ... freedom organized." Originally, in fact, it was a new Germany which Etzler and his friend John Augustus Roebing had set out to establish. Very quickly, however, it had become not only this narrow ethnic group but Americans and, finally, all men everywhere whom Etzler meant to save. Freedom to Etzler meant more, though, than Hegel's political freedom; it meant freedom from the tyranny of nature and things as they were — or at least seemed to be. Imbued with German romanticism, Etzler saw naturally good men needlessly bound by fetters of ignorance to a life of drudgery. The world, he felt, was not set and immutable; America, especially, was plastic and new. "There," his friend Roebing had declared, "man [is] on his own; his success [is] limited only by his industry and his talents." One thing man's industry might accomplish with the virginal American landscape was the complete transformation of what was largely a "hideous wilderness" into "a continual garden from the atlantic to the pacific ocean [*sic*]," as Etzler puts the matter in Paradise. The theme of the machine intruding — or being eagerly invited — into the garden is, of course, one that has been brilliantly explored by others, most notably Leo Marx. None, however, have significantly included Etzler in their tracing of the development of this theme; there is, in fact, no



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significant American thinker who better illustrates the basically American urge to blend the contradictory impulses of progressivism and pastoralism by manipulating the landscape in order to subdue the darkness and evilness associated with the wilderness in the Puritan mind – and to profit from the resultant abundance. Etzler would not only invite the machine into the garden, he would use the machine to create it. In the end, of course, the garden, the American extension of Eden, would become a garden-city, the American extension of the New Jerusalem – the image which predominates in so much of the American utopian fiction in the decade following the appearance of Edward Bellamy's *LOOKING BACKWARD* (1888).

Armed with his beliefs in America as Eden, in man as a rational creature, and in Hegel's "absolute rationality of history," Etzler came to the New World to found the State of Paradise. With him he carried other intellectual baggage as well, including the utopian theories of Charles Fourier, the self-proclaimed "Messiah of Reason"; these theories gave or reconfirmed a yearning for absolute organization and order, a desire to ensure a snaring of the blessings which life had to offer by freeing men from the false biblical curse of work, and tendencies toward both absolute materialism (which was also present in and bolstered by his Hegelian philosophy) and sensual (as opposed to sexual) pleasures. Fourier also reinforced Etzler's sense of brotherhood and humanitarianism – a communitarianism, in short, which seemed to Etzler to be a prerequisite for mankind enjoying the benefits which the world had to offer. Following Fourier's dictum, Etzler, in *PARADISE*, insists that the first responsibility of an individual aspiring to bring about "a superior life" on earth is to "constitute ... a society in his neighborhood." The second part of his major work is devoted entirely to detailing precisely how a series of Fourieristic communities will enable man to conquer and tame first the American West and then the whole world.

Etzler was a man full of contradictions. He was a visionary and a theorist who considered himself a realist and a practical man. He was a prophet who considered himself a scientist. He was a revolutionary thinker who desperately wished to avoid the violent revolution which might follow the new technology which he was preaching. He was a Jeffersonian agrarian –with little faith in the common man– who would transform America into Utopia by means of science and technology. And he dedicated himself to founding the perfectly free State while unconsciously succumbing to the same benevolent authoritarianism which we find in nearly all American utopian experiments (both real and fictional). Etzler's certitude that only he, Moses-like, had been chosen to lead mankind into the promised land of Utopia –related as it is to the Hegelian idea of the leader-hero as the great man, somehow above the rules and opinions of lesser individuals– made Etzler feel it necessary to lay down rather precisely the manner in which the State of the New Eden was to be organized and run. Etzler's authoritarian turn of mind is revealed not only by his



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attempts, along with Stollmeyer, to control entirely the operations of the Tropical Emigration Society, but also by his psychological need to impose a preconceived order on everything and his inability to leave anything to chance or human impulse. As John L. Thomas has pointed out, "[I]n one way or another almost all the communitarians succumbed to the myth of the mathematically precise arrangement, searching for the perfect number or exact size, plotting the precise disposition of working forces and living space, and combining these estimates in a formula which would ensure perfect concord." The formula concept, of course, had trapped Fourier, too. We can surmise that the positive philosophical thrust, the motivation and hope, which Fourierism gave Etzler also worked to his disadvantage: This Hegelian hero was, when it came right down to it, unable to escape the strictures which the French utopist's philosophy (and the natural tendencies of his own personality) foisted upon him. Etzler was given a false sense of security by the seeming certainty of the mathematically precise arrangement. When some of his followers finally accused him of being eminently impractical, he could not understand their objections and he could not change or bend. Did not his mathematical projections prove the truth of his assertions – no matter what happened when men tried to translate them into historical fact? Mathematical formula, in other words, became equivalent to objective experience. We have only to glance at the "estimations of expenses and profits" in *THE NEW WORLD*, or the computation of usable power in the wind in *PARADISE*, to see that same kind of preposterousness in his mathematical progressions as we see in Fourier's classifications of the passions or his "passionate series."

COMMUNITARIANISM
FUTURE-WORSHIP

CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT



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Early December: The Reverend [Orestes Augustus Brownson](#) had been lecturing in New-York, and [Isaac Hecker](#), in despair and confusion, had appealed to him. Brownson invited Hecker to visit him, his wife, and their six children at his Mt. Bellington home in Chelsea, a suburb of [Boston](#). Brownson then suggested a sojourn at the [Reverend George Ripley](#)'s [Brook Farmers](#). Hecker would be away from his home in New-York for some eight months.

[John Adolphus Etzler](#) and his wife arrived in England, scheduled to demonstrate for the utopian community at Harmony Hall in Hampshire, before Robert Dale Owen's Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists (1839-1845), his promising mechanical system for ridding the world of its most onerous labor — only to discover that no arrangements whatever had been made to provide the money needed to construct the mechanism in question, or even to reimburse travel expenses for the inventor's family.⁴

4. SARCASM ALERT: Gosh, it was like **somehow** they had **overlooked** the fact that the **whole point** of all this “futurism,” in Etzler's life, was that people needed to **show him the money!**



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1843

Extracts from [John Adolphus Etzler](#)'s THE NEW WORLD were published in the Fourierist [London Phalanx](#). The publisher, Hugh Doherty, built a small version of his proposed Naval Automaton, utilizing the force of the waves pitching a vessel to and fro for its forward propulsion. (Since Etzler wasn't about inventing stuff, but instead was about the raising of money by the making of persuasive promises, his proposals could never ever, of course, be made to work.)

[FUTURE-WORSHIP](#)

DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION? GOOD.

Mid-January: [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#) invited [Henry Thoreau](#) to a free lunch at his home in [Concord](#), to meet [John L. O'Sullivan](#) of [The United States Magazine and Democratic Review](#), and O'Sullivan suggested that Thoreau ought to think about submitting something to him.

Over in England, meanwhile, a Tropical Emigration Society based upon [John Adolphus Etzler](#)'s proposals was being founded during this month in West Riding. (The people who would subscribe to this project would be the bright ones who were able to recognize that under the proper circumstances, by the making of the right sort of plans and the exploitation of the proper inventions, colonization could be done on the cheap and without any great amount of unpleasant labor. —This was going to turn out to be, basically, for the faithful, a free lunch.)



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January 24, Tuesday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote from [Concord](#) to [Waldo Emerson](#), who was lecturing in Philadelphia and staying with his friend, the Reverend William Henry Furness, telling about his having met [John L. O'Sullivan](#) at a free lunch at [Nathaniel Hawthorne's](#) house.

Mr. O'Sullivan was here three days. I met him at the Atheneum, and went to Hawthornes to tea with him He expressed a great deal of interest in your poems, and wished me to give him a list of them, which I did; he saying he did not know but he should notice them. He is a rather puny looking man, and did not strike me. We had nothing to say to one another, and therefore we said a great deal. He however made a point of asking me to write for his Review, which I shall be glad to do. He is at any rate one of the not-bad – but does not by any means take you by storm – no – nor by calm – which is the best way. He expects to see you in N.Y. After tea I carried him and H. to the Lyceum.

Concord Jan 24th 1843

Dear Friend,

*The best way to correct
a mistake is to make it right. I
had not spoken of writing to you, but
as you say you are about to write
to me when you get my letter, I make
haste on my part in order to get yours
the sooner. I dont well know what
to say to earn the forthcoming epistle —
unless that Edith takes rapid strides
in the arts and sciences — as music and
natural history — as well as over the carpet
— that she says “papa” less and less
abstractedly every day, looking in my
face — which may sound like a Ranz-
des Vaches to yourself — and Ellen de-
clares every morning that “Papa may
come home to[-]night” — and by and by
it will have changed to such positive street
news as that “Papa came home
larks night.” Elizabeth Hoar still
flits about these clearings, and I
meet her here and there, and in all houses
but her own, but as if I were not the
less of her family for all that, I have
made slight acquaintance also with
{written perpendicular to text in left margin:
failed to render even those slight services of the hand which would*



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*have been for a sign at least, and by the fault of my nature have failed
of many better and higher services. But I will not trouble you with this —
but for once thank you as well as Heaven
Yr friend
H. D. T. }*

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*one Mrs Lidian Emerson, who almost
persuades me to be a Christian, but
I fear I as often relapse into Heathenism.
Mr. O'Sullivan was here three
days. I met him at the Atheneum, and
went to Hawthornes to tea with him
He expressed a great deal of interest in
your poems, and wished me to give him a
list of them, which I did; he saying
he did not know but he should notice
them. He is a rather puny looking man,
and did not strike me. We had nothing
to say to one another, and therefore we
said a great deal. He however made a
point of asking me to write for his Review,
which I shall be glad to do. He is at any
rate one of the not-bad — but does
not by any means take you by storm —
no — nor by calm — which is the best way.
He expects to see you in N.Y. After tea
I carried him and H. to the Lyceum.
Mr Alcott has not altered much
since you left — I think you will find him
much the same sort of person. With Mr Lane
I have had one regular chat — [] la [George] Minot —
which of course was greatly to our mutual
grati- and edi-fication — but as two
or three as regular conversations have taken
place since, I fear there may have been a pre-*

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*cession of the equinoxes. Mr Wright
according to the last accounts is in Lynn
with uncertain aims and prospects — maturing
slowly perhaps. — as indeed are all of us.
I suppose they have told you how
near Mr A- went to the jail — but I*



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can add a good anecdote to the rest. When Staples came to collect Mrs Ward's taxes, My sister Helen asked him what he thought Mr A. meant — what his idea was — and he answered "I vum — I believe it was nothing but principle — for I never heard a man talk honest." — There was a lecture on Peace by a Mr Spear (ought he not to be beaten into a ploughshare) the same evening, and as the (L & A) [gentlemen] dined at our house while the ^ matter was in suspense — that is while the constable was waiting for his receipt from the jailer — we there settled it that we — that is Lane and myself perhaps, should agitate the state while Winkel-ried lay in durance. But when over the audience I saw our hero's head moving in the free air of the Universalist Church, my fire all went out — and the state was safe as far as I was concerned, but Lane it seems, had cogitated and even written on the matter in the afternoon — and so, out

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of courtesy taking his point of departure from the Spear-man's lecture, he drove gracefully in medias res — and gave the affair a very good setting out — but to spoil all, our martyr very characteristically, but as artists would say in bad taste, brought up the rear with a "My Prisons" which made us forget

HORACE

{address and text written perpendicular to text in center of page:

[Postmark:] CONCORD JAN 24 MAS.

[Return address:] H. D. Thoreau

Jan². 1843 — [this written by Sanborn]

[Postage:] 18 3/4 [this not written by HDT]

[Address:] Ralph Waldo Emerson

Philadelphia

PA.



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*I have been your pensioner for nearly
two years and still left free as under
the sky — It has been as free a gift
as the sun or the summer — though
I have sometimes molested you with my
mean acceptance of it — I who have }
Silvio Pellico himself. — The 50 dollars have been
rec^d. Mr Lane wishes me to ask you to see if
there is anything for him in the N.Y. office, and pay the
charges — Will you tell me what to do with
Mr Parker who was to lectureee Feb. 15th? Mrs
E. says that my letter is instead of one from her.
At the end of this strange letter I will not write
what alone I had to say to thank you and Mrs
Emerson for your long kindness to me — It would
be more ungrateful than my constant thought*

[Henry Thoreau](#) also wrote on this day to [Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown](#), although possibly he did not post his letter.

*To Mrs. L.C.B.
Concord Jan 24th 1843*

*Dear Friend,
The other day I wrote you
a letter to go in Mrs Emerson's bundle,
but as it seemed unworthy, I did not
send it, and now to atone for that,
I am ~~a~~going to send this, whether it
be worthy or not — I will not venture
upon news, for, as all the household
are gone to bed, — I cannot learn what
has been told you. Do you read
any noble verses now a days? —
or do not verses still seem noble? —
For my own part, they have been
the only things I remembered, — or
that which occasioned them, —
when all things else were blurred and
defaced. All things have put on
mourning but they; — for the elegy
itself is some victorious melody and
joy escaping from the wreck.
It is a relief to read som[e] true book*



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*wherein all are equally dead — equally
alive. I think the best parts of*

Page 2

*Shakspeare [would] only be enhanced by
the most thrilling and affecting events.
I have found it so. And ~~they~~ so
[much] the more, as they are not
intended for consolation.*

*Do you think of coming to Concord
again? — I shall be glad to see you —
I should be glad to know that I
could see you when I would.*

*We always seem to be living just on the
brink of a pure and lofty intercourse,
which would make the ills and trivialness
of life ridiculous. After each little
interval, though it be but for the
night, we are prepared to meet each
other as gods and goddesses. —
I seemed to have lodged all my
days with one or two persons, and lived
upon expectation, — as if the bud
would surely blossom; — and so I am
content to live.*

*What means the fact — which is
so common — so universal — that
some soul that has lost all hope
for itself can inspire in another*

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*listening soul an infinite confidence
in ~~that~~ it, even while it is expressing
its despair —?*

*I am very happy in my present
environment — though actually mean
enough myself, and so, of course,
all around me; — yet, I am sure,
we for the most part, are transfigured
to one another[— and] are that
to the other which we aspire to
be ourselves. The longest course
of mean and trivial intercourse
[may] not prevent my practising*



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*this divine courtesy to my companion.
Notwithstanding all I hear about
brooms and scouring and taxes and
house keeping, — I am constrained to
live a strangely mixed life — as if
even Valhalla might have its kitchen.
We are all of us Apollo's serving
some Admetus.
I think I must have some
muses in my pay that I know
not of — for certain musical wishes of*

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*mine are answered as soon as ~~as a~~ en-
tertained — Last summer I went to
Hawthorne's suddenly for the expre[ss]
purpose of borrowing his music box, [and]
almost immediately Mrs. H proposed
to lend it to me. The other day I
said I must go to Mrs Barrett's
{address written perpendicular to text in center of page:
Mrs. Lucy C. Brown
Plymouth
Mass.}
to hear hers — and lo straightway Richard
Fuller sent me one for a present from
Cambridge. It is a very good one. I should
like to have you hear it. I shall
not have to employ you to borrow for
me now. Good night.
from [y]our [a]ffectionate friend H.D.T.*



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February 12, Sunday: In [Concord](#), [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to [Waldo Emerson](#) in New-York:

Dear Friend,—

As the packet still tarries, I will send you some thoughts, which I have lately relearned, as the latest public and private news. How mean are our relations to one another! Let us pause till they are nobler. A little silence, a little rest, is good. It would be sufficient employment only to cultivate true ones. The richest gifts we can bestow are the least marketable. We hate the kindness which we understand. A noble person confers no such gift as his whole confidence: none so exalts the giver and the receiver; it produces the truest gratitude. Perhaps it is only essential to friendship that some vital trust should have been reposed by the one in the other. I feel addressed and probed even to the remote parts of my being when one nobly shows, even in trivial things, an implicit faith in me. When such divine commodities are so near and cheap, how strange that it should have to be each day's discovery! A threat or a curse may be forgotten, but this mild trust translates me. I am no more of this earth; it acts dynamically; it changes my very substance. I cannot do what before I did. I cannot be what before I was. Other chains may be broken, but in the darkest night, in the remotest place, I trail this thread. Then things cannot happen. What if God were to confide in us for a moment! Should we not then be gods? How subtle a thing is this confidence! Nothing sensible passes between; never any consequences are to be apprehended should it be misplaced. Yet something has transpired. A new behavior springs; the ship carries new ballast in her hold. A sufficiently great and generous trust could never be abused. It should be cause to lay down one's life,—which would not be to lose it. Can there be any mistake up there? Don't the gods know where to invest their wealth? Such confidence, too, would be reciprocal. When one confides greatly in you, he will feel the roots of an equal trust fastening themselves in him. When such trust has been received or reposed, we dare not speak, hardly to see each other; our voices sound harsh and untrustworthy. We are as instruments which the Powers have dealt with. Through what straits would we not carry this little burden of a magnanimous trust! Yet no harm could possibly come, but simply faithlessness. Not a feather, not a straw, is entrusted; that packet is empty. It is only committed to us, and, as it were, all things are committed to us. The kindness I have longest remembered has been of this sort,—the sort unsaid; so far behind the speaker's lips that almost it already lay in my heart. It did not have far to go to be communicated.



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The gods cannot misunderstand, man cannot explain. We communicate like the burrows of foxes, in silence and darkness, under ground. We are undermined by faith and love. How much more full is Nature where we think the empty space is than where we place the solids!—full of fluid influences. Should we ever communicate but by these? The spirit abhors a vacuum more than Nature. There is a tide which pierces the pores of the air. These aerial rivers, let us not pollute their currents. What meadows do they course through? How many fine mails there are which traverse their routes! He is privileged who gets his letter franked by them. I believe these things.

Henry D. Thoreau.

Meanwhile it seems, in New-York, [Waldo](#) was writing to [Henry](#) in Concord, about the [John Adolphus Etzler](#) review intended for April's issue of [The Dial](#):

The Dial for April[] —What elements shall compose it? What have you for me? What has Mr Lane? Have you any Greek translations in your mind? Have you given shape to the comment on Etzler? (It was about some sentences on this matter that I made some day a most rude & snappish speech, I remember, but you will not, [&] must give the sentences as you first wrote them.) You must go to Mr Lane with my affectionate respects & tell him that I depend on his important aid for the new number, and wish him to give us the most recent & stirring matter that he has.

DEMOCRATIC REVIEW



JOHN ADOLPHUS ETZLER

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February 15, Wednesday: In [Concord](#), [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to [Waldo Emerson](#) in New-York, about the [John Adolphus Etzler](#) review intended for April's issue of [The Dial](#), mentioning how they had heard thunder in the distance the previous summer during a walk and had presumed incorrectly that it was either falling rocks or the drumming of a [Ruffed Grouse](#) *Bonasa umbellus* (~~Partridge~~):



As for Etzler - I dont remember any rude and snappish speech that you made - and if you did it must have been longer than anything I had written - However here is the book still and I will try. Perhaps I have some few scraps in my Journal which you may choose to print. The translation of AEschylus I should like very well to continue anon - if it should be worth the while. - As for poetry I have not remembered to write any for sometime - it has quite slipped my mind - but sometimes I think I hear the muttering of the thunder. Dont you remember that last summer we heard a low tremulous sound in the woods and over the hills - and thought it was partridges or rocks - and it proved to be thunder gone down the river - But sometimes it was over Wayland way and at last burst over our heads - So we'll not despair by reason of the drought.

[DEMOCRATIC REVIEW](#)

[Lydia Maria Child](#) stated that nonresistance to evil was “**the** idea which distinguishes the gospel of Christ from all other wise and philosophic utterance.”



(I agree with her.)



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May: A tabernacle which would seat 10,000 was dedicated on Howard Street in Boston, built by the Reverend Joshua Himes on behalf of the devotees of the Reverend [William Miller](#)'s end-of-the-world calculations, on ground that –after the world failed to end– would be graced by the Howard Burlesque Theater.

C.F. Stollmeyer, no doubt acting as [John Adolphus Etzler](#)'s ambassador as well as professing his own intense interest in millennialism, attended a great celebration put on at Harmony Hall by Robert Dale Owen's Rationalists to announce the actual beginning of the great period of peace and prosperity.

[FUTURE-WORSHIP](#)

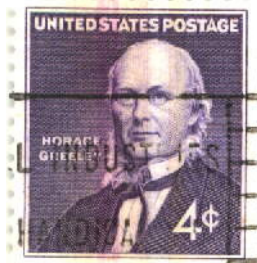
Summer: At "Peace Union," a German community in western Pennsylvania founded by the German immigrant Andrew Smolnikor, [John Adolphus Etzler](#) was supervising the construction of his "Satellite," a mechanical monster intended to clear and cultivate up to 20,000 acres. Smolnikor was an itinerant preacher who considered that he was, in John-the-Baptist mode, "making ready the way for the Lord in the impending millennium by establishing a new society based on brotherhood, love, and Christian communism." (Some critical parts of Etzler's device had to be fabricated out of wood rather than metal. When eventually it would be tested, the mechanism would break.)

[FUTURE-WORSHIP](#)

Meanwhile, in New-York, [Henry Thoreau](#) visited [John L. O'Sullivan](#) in his [The United States Magazine and Democratic Review](#) office, where they were putting out their July issue,

[US MAG & DEM. REV.](#)

to submit his review of [Etzler](#)'s THE PARADISE WITHIN THE REACH OF ALL MEN, WITHOUT LABOR, BY POWERS OF NATURE AND MACHINERY. (While in town he also called upon the Fourierist [Horace Greeley](#).)



"Paradise (to be) Regained"

Professor Scott A. Sandage's BORN LOSERS: A HISTORY OF FAILURE IN AMERICA informs us that while Henry Thoreau was hanging around Wall Street during Summer 1843, he witnessed the beginnings of our now very elaborate credit-checking industry:

Hanging around Wall Street in the summer of 1843, Henry Thoreau witnessed the birth of the information industry. To explore literary Manhattan, he took a job tutoring Emerson's nephew on Staten Island. Emerson had asked two protégées to welcome him. "Waldo and Tappan carried me to their English Alehouse the first Saturday," Thoreau wrote Emerson. Giles Waldo seemed shallow to Thoreau, but not William Tappan. "I like his looks and the sound



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of his silence." The pair clerked near the stock exchange, where Thoreau visited and "spent some pleasant hours with Waldo and Tappan at their counting-room, or rather intelligence office." Tappan's father, Lewis, owned the enterprise, a city marvel that Thoreau noted to impress the folks back home. "Tell Father that Mr. Tappan, whose son I know ... has invented and established a new and very important business," he wrote his sister. "It is a kind of intelligence office for the whole country, with branches in the principal cities, giving information with regard to the credit and affairs of every man of business in the country." Thoreau quit New York by summer's end, having discovered little else besides the first modern credit bureau, Lewis Tappan's Mercantile Agency. A direct ancestor of Dun & Bradstreet, the Mercantile Agency sold "information with regard to the credit and affairs of every man of business" and rapidly established itself as a national bureau of standards for judging winners and losers.

The Mercantile Agency managed risk by managing identity: a matrix of past achievement, present assets, and future promise. Neither rating consumers nor granting credit, it graded commercial buyers for wary sellers. Lewis Tappan -an ardent social reformer- did in the marketplace what others did in asylums and prisons. He imposed discipline through surveillance: techniques and systems to monitor and classify people. Local informants quietly watched their neighbors and reported to the central office. "it is an extensive business and will employ a great many clerks," wrote Thoreau, whose grotesque penmanship disqualified him for such employment. "Mr. Tappan" kept a stock as legible as it was categorical. "We have no confidence in his success or bus[iness] ability," a typically blunt report said of "an honorable man" who later "Bursted up." Another case noted approvingly, "Bus[iness] on the increase & parties here who sell [to] him largely have confidence that he will finally succeed & become well off." That good word -"confidence"- meant access to major markets for rural buyers. "No confidence" warned urban sellers of fools. Then there were the swindlers: "He is a perfect confidence man" with "a happy facility of deluding the people around him, many of whom believe him an honest & respect[able] man." Annual subscriptions to Tappan's service began at only \$50 - the cost of a good horse.

People often said that credit rested on "confidence between man and man," a cliché as early as 1803. Adopting this motto, the agency cited an 1834 speech by Daniel Webster, who had actually said "intercourse between man and man." A harmless revision perhaps, but it mimicked the problem at hand: neither men nor money nor even words were trustworthy anymore. Telegraphy, improved postal service, and fast freight by rail and steamboat encouraged citizens to strike bargains over vast distances. Transportation and communication linked regions into a national market, yet technology outpaced economic, legal, and social infrastructures. Trading beyond the horizon precluded looking another man in the eye. Confidence men now moved faster than



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their reputations, and even if the man was good his money might not be. Financial systems went from bad to worse in Andrew Jackson's "bank war" of the 1830s. States, cities, and private banks still printed local currency. Buying in Boston with Ohio banknotes meant fussing over exchange rates and checking BICKNELL'S COUNTERFEIT DETECTOR AND BANK NOTE LIST or another guide to genuine bills and known fakes. Falsity of any kind -from outright confidence games to just idle gossip- might cause panic in the marketplace. The agency system revolutionized a vital business tool, facilitating stability and growth in an era with few other national economic institutions.

When Tappan began in 1841, no comparable system of surveillance had ever existed. Within five years, he enlisted 679 local informants; after ten, his network had reached 2,000. Their first decade of dispatches filled "more than 100 books, of the size of the largest ledger, extending to 600 and 700 pages each." one 11-by-17-inch page held up to 1,500 words of tiny calligraphy, the handiwork of "a great many clerks." By 1851, the inflow kept thirty scribes busy. Indexing within and among volumes sped retrieval of any given entry among thousands and later millions. Cross-referencing aided continuous tracking, even when subjects changes pursuits or locales. In 1871 alone, clerks added 70,000 new names and closed 40,000 files because of failure, death, or retirement. On an average day, the firm received 600 new or updated field reports and answered 400 inquiries. It all flowed in and out of "the largest ledger" - the master volumes in their impressive red sheepskin bindings. The agency upgraded the most adaptable and dependable technology in human history -the book- by building networks and systems around it.

THOREAU'S 1843 ESSAY

"PARADISE (TO BE) REGAINED"

We learn that Mr. Etzler is a native of Germany, and originally published his book in Pennsylvania, ten or twelve years ago; and now a second English edition, from the original American one, is demanded by his readers across the water, owing, we suppose, to the recent spread of Fourier's doctrines. It is one of the signs of the times. We confess that we have risen from reading this book with enlarged ideas, and grander conceptions of our duties in this world. It did expand us a little. It is worth attending to, if only that it entertains large questions. Consider what Mr. Etzler proposes:



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"Fellow Men! I promise to show the means of creating a paradise within ten years, where everything desirable for human life may be had by every man in superabundance, without labor, and without pay; where the whole face of nature shall be changed into the most beautiful forms, and man may live in the most magnificent palaces, in all imaginable refinements of luxury, and in the most delightful gardens; where he may accomplish, without labor, in one year, more than hitherto could be done in thousands of years; may level mountains, sink valleys, create lakes, drain lakes and swamps, and intersect the land everywhere with beautiful canals, and roads for transporting heavy loads of many thousand tons, and for travelling one thousand miles in twenty-four hours; may cover the ocean with floating islands movable in any desired direction with immense power and celerity, in per feet security, and with all comforts and luxuries, bearing gardens and palaces, with thousands of families, and provided with rivulets of sweet water; may explore the interior of the globe, and travel from pole to pole in a fortnight; provide himself with means, unheard of yet, for increasing his knowledge of the world, and so his intelligence; lead a life of continual happiness, of enjoyments yet unknown; free himself from almost all the evils that afflict mankind, except death, and even put death far beyond the common period of human life, and finally render it less afflicting. Mankind may thus live in and enjoy a new world, far superior to the present, and raise themselves far higher in the scale of being."

It would seem from this and various indications beside, that there is a transcendentalism in mechanics as well as in ethics. While the whole field of the one reformer lies beyond the boundaries of space, the other is pushing his schemes for the elevation of the race to its utmost limits. While one scours the heavens, the other sweeps the earth. One says he will reform himself, and then nature and circumstances will be right. Let us not obstruct ourselves, for that is the greatest friction. It is of little importance though a cloud obstruct the view of the astronomer compared with his own blindness. The other will reform nature and circumstances, and then man will be right. Talk no more vaguely, says he, of reforming the world – I will reform the globe itself. What matters it whether I remove this humor out of my flesh, or the pestilent humor from the fleshy part of the globe? Nay, is not the latter the more generous course? At present the globe goes with a shattered constitution in its orbit. Has it not asthma, and ague, and fever, and dropsy, and flatulence, and pleurisy, and is it not afflicted with vermin? Has it not its healthful laws counteracted, and its vital energy which will yet redeem it? No doubt the simple powers of nature properly directed by man would make it healthy and paradise; as the laws of man's own constitution but wait to be obeyed, to restore him to health and happiness. Our panaceas cure but few ails, our general hospitals are private and exclusive. We must set up another Hygeian than is now worshipped. Do not the quacks even direct small doses for children, larger for adults, and larger still for oxen and horses? Let us remember that we are to prescribe for the globe itself.

This fair homestead has fallen to us, and how little have we done to improve it, how little have we cleared and hedged and ditched We are too inclined to go hence to a "better land,"



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without lifting a finger, as our farmers are moving to the Ohio soil; but would it not be more heroic and faithful to till and redeem this New England soil of the world? The still youthful energies of the globe have only to be directed in their proper channel. Every gazette brings accounts of the untutored freaks of the wind— shipwrecks and hurricanes which the mariner and planter accept as special or general providences; but they touch our consciences, they remind us of our sins. Another deluge would disgrace mankind. We confess we never had much respect for that antediluvian race. A thorough-bred business man cannot enter heartily upon the business of life without first looking into his accounts. How many things are now at loose ends. Who knows which way the wind will blow to-morrow? Let us not succumb to nature. We will marshal the clouds and restrain the tempests; we will bottle up pestilent exhalations, we will probe for earthquakes, grub them up; and give vent to the dangerous gases; we will disembowel the volcano, and extract its poison, take its seed out. We will wash water, and warm fire, and cool ice, and underprop the earth. We will teach birds to fly, and fishes to swim, and ruminants to chew the cud. It is time we had looked into these things.

And it becomes the moralist, too, to inquire what man might do to improve and beautify the system; what to make the stars shine more brightly, the sun more cheery and joyous, the moon more placid and content. Could he not heighten the tints of flowers and the melody of birds? Does he perform his duty to the inferior races? Should he not be a god to them? What is the part of magnanimity to the whale and the beaver? Should we not fear to exchange places with them for a day, lest by their behavior they should shame us? Might we not treat with magnanimity the shark and the tiger, not descend to meet them on their own level, with spears of sharks' teeth and bucklers of tiger's skin? We slander the hyena; man is the fiercest and cruelest animal. Ah! he is of little faith; even the erring comets and meteors would thank him, and return his kindness in their kind.

How meanly and grossly do we deal with nature! Could we not have a less gross labor? What else do these fine inventions suggest, — magnetism, the daguerreotype, electricity? Can we not do more than cut and trim the forest, — can we not assist in its interior economy, in the circulation of the sap? Now we work superficially and violently. We do not suspect how much might be done to improve our relation with animated nature; what kindness and refined courtesy there might be.

There are certain pursuits which, if not wholly poetic and true, do at least suggest a nobler and finer relation to nature than we know. The keeping of bees, for instance, is a very slight interference. It is like directing the sunbeams. All nations, from the remotest antiquity, have thus fingered nature. There are Hymettus and Hybla, and how many bee-renowned spots beside? There is nothing gross in the idea of these little herds, — their hum like the faintest low of kine in the meads. A pleasant reviewer has lately reminded us that in some places they are led



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out to pasture where the flowers are most abundant. "Columella tells us," says he, "that the inhabitants of Arabia sent their hives into Attica to benefit by the later-blowing flowers." Annually are the hives, in immense pyramids, carried up the Nile in boats, and suffered to float slowly down the stream by night, resting by day, as the flowers put forth along the banks; and they determine the richness of any locality, and so the profitableness of delay, by the sinking Of the boat in the water. We are told, by the same reviewer, of a man in Germany, whose bees yielded more honey than those of his neighbors, with no apparent advantage; but at length he informed them that he had turned his hives one degree more to the east, and so his bees, having two hours the start in the morning, got the first sip of honey. True, there is treachery and selfishness behind all this; but these things suggest to the poetic mind what might be done. Many examples there are of a grosser interference, yet not without their apology. We saw last summer, on the side of a mountain, a dog employed to churn for a farmer's family, travelling upon a horizontal wheel, and though he had sore eyes, an alarming cough, and withal a demure aspect, yet their bread did get buttered for all that. Undoubtedly, in the most brilliant successes, the first rank is always sacrificed. Much useless travelling of horses, in extenso, has of late years been improved for man's behoof, only two forces being taken advantage of, - the gravity of the horse, which is the centripetal, and his centrifugal inclination to go a-head. Only these two elements in the calculation. And is not the creature's whole economy better economized thus? Are not all finite beings better pleased with motions relative than absolute? And what is the great globe itself but such a wheel, - a larger tread-mill, - so that our horse's freest steps over prairies are oftentimes balked and rendered of no avail by the earth's motion on its axis? But here he is the central agent and motive power; and, for variety of scenery, being provided with a window in front, do not the ever-varying activity and fluctuating energy of the creature himself work the effect of the most varied scenery on a country road? It must be confessed that horses at present work too exclusively for men, rarely men for horses; and the brute degenerates in man's society.

It will be seen that we contemplate a time when man's will shall be law to the physical world, and he shall no longer be deterred by such abstractions as time and space, height and depth, weight and hardness, but shall indeed be the lord of creation. "Well," says the faithless reader, "life is short, but art is long; where is the power that will effect all these changes?" This it is the very object of Mr. Etzler's volume to show. At present, he would merely remind us that there are innumerable and immeasurable powers already existing in nature, unimproved on a large scale, or for generous and universal ends, amply sufficient for these purposes. He would only indicate their existence, as a surveyor makes known the existence of a water-power⁵ on any stream; but for their application he refers us to



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a sequel to this book, called the "Mechanical System." A few of the most obvious and familiar of these powers are, the Wind, the Tide, the Waves, the Sunshine. Let us consider their value.

First, there is the power of the Wind, constantly exerted over the globe. It appears from observation of a sailing-vessel, and from scientific tables, that the average power of the wind is equal to that of one horse for every one hundred square feet. "We know," says our author—

"that ships of the first class carry sails two hundred feet high; we may, therefore, equally, on land, oppose to the wind surfaces of the same height. Imagine a line of such surfaces one mile, or about 5,000 feet, long; they would then contain 1,000,000 square feet. Let these surfaces intersect the direction of the wind at right angles, by some contrivance, and receive, consequently, its full power at all times. Its average power being equal to one horse for every 100 square feet, the total power would be equal to 1,000,000 divided by 100, or 10,000 horses' power. Allowing the power of one horse to equal that of ten men, the power of 10,000 horses is equal to 100,000 men. But as men cannot work uninterruptedly, but want about half the time for sleep and repose, the same power would be equal to 200,000 men.... We are not limited to the height of 200 feet; we might extend, if required, the application of this power to the height of the clouds, by means of kites."

But we will have one such fence for every square mile of the globe's surface, for, as the wind usually strikes the earth at an angle of more than two degrees, which is evident from observing its effect on the high sea, it admits of even a closer approach. As the surface of the globe contains about 200,000,000 square miles, the whole power of the wind on these surfaces would equal 40,000,000,000,000 men's power, and "would perform 80,000 times as much work as all the men on earth could effect with their nerves."

5. There are any number of mentions of "a water-power," in literature of the period. This was an idiom which was then well understood, although in our era of available energy, the idiom has fallen out of use and out of our understanding.

I have myself done some surveying along the Gulf coast in Texas — and I have visited the sites of any number of water mills here in New England. My pointer would be, that Thoreau is not speaking here of any legal question, of **who** might possess the right to the **use** of whatever is a stream's water-power, since that would be a question involving research in the courthouse into land titles and the usage rights as they are stated upon those documents. His is a question as to the **existence** of the water-power, its amount, its proper non-wasteful use, rather than its ownership.

From a history that considers the Warner River as it flows through Warner, New Hampshire: "This river affords abundant water-power in its passage through the town, and during two or three miles of its course the water can be used over every thirty rods." The way a surveyor might have calculated a water-power would be, he would go about determining the total amount of "drop" in altitude over the entire length of available stream, from the point within the limits of the surveyed property at which the proprietor might construct the entry from a stream to a mill pond, to the point on the surveyed property at which the proprietor might construct the exit of the millrace back into the stream. The mill would, of course, be positioned at some low point close to this discharge. The millpond would, of course, be positioned at the highest possible point on the property, lower than the entry to the millrace. The surveyor's job would be to locate the best path and positioning for such a millpond, such a millrace, and such a millsite, and then measure the drop in altitude which would be what would generate the water-power. However, to determine a water-power, it is necessary to know not only this total number of feet of gravity drop, but also the water volume to be expected on this stream. This would be the annual normal flow of the stream sufficient to keep a certain size of millpond full of water and thus generate the head that would turn the waterwheel at the mill in order to do useful work.

Back in those days, before the advent of fossil fuel, before the advent of electric power, when the only available power was muscle power supplemented by whatever wood-burning steam engine might be devised — a water-power and an entitlement to the use of that water-power was a really big deal. For instance, here in Rhode Island there was a major water-power on the Blackstone River, at the big falls there — and our local people started up the first industrial complex, at Pawtucket (which happens to be a native word meaning "big falls"), that began the American industrial revolution. Pawtucket grew to the point at which for a period it was the most densely settled area on the North American continent. Because of the water-power. (Now in the age of electricity it's nothing but a bunch of abandoned big brick buildings alongside still canals.)



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If it should be objected that this computation includes the surface of the Ocean and uninhabitable regions of the earth, where this power could not be applied for our purposes, Mr. Etzler is quick with his reply— "But, you will recollect," says he, "that I have promised to show the means for rendering the ocean as inhabitable as the most fruitful dry land; and I do not exclude even the polar regions."

The reader will observe that our author uses the fence only as a convenient formula for expressing the power of the wind, and does not consider it a necessary method of its application. We do not attach much value to this statement of the comparative power of the wind and horse, for no common ground is mentioned on which they can be compared. Undoubtedly, each is incomparably excellent in its way, and every general comparison made for such practical purposes as are contemplated, which gives a preference to the one, must be made with some unfairness to the other. The scientific tables are, for the most part, true only in a tabular sense. We suspect that a loaded wagon, with a light sail, ten feet square, would not have been blown so far by the end of the year, under equal circumstances, as a common racer or dray horse would have drawn it. And how many crazy structures on our globe's surface, of the same dimensions, would wait for dry-rot if the traces of one horse were hitched to them, even to their windward side? Plainly, this is not the principle of comparison. But even the steady and constant force of the horse may be rated as equal to his weight at least. Yet we should prefer to let the zephyrs and gales bear, with all their weight, upon our fences, than that Dobbin, with feet braced, should lean ominously against them for a season.

Nevertheless, here is an almost incalculable power at our disposal, yet how trifling the use we make of it. It only serves to turn a few mills, blow a few vessels across the ocean, and a few trivial ends besides. What a poor compliment do we pay to our indefatigable and energetic servant!

"If you ask, perhaps, why this power is not used, if the statement be true, I have to ask in return, why is the power of steam so lately come to application? So many millions of men boiled water every day for many thousand years; they must have frequently seen that boiling water, in tightly closed pots or kettles, would lift the cover or burst the vessel with great violence. The power of steam was, therefore, as commonly known down to the least kitchen or wash-woman, as the power of wind; but close observation and reflection were bestowed neither on the one nor the other."

Men having discovered the power of falling water, which after all is comparatively slight, how eagerly do they seek out and improve these privileges? Let a difference of but a few feet in level be discovered on some stream near a populous town, some slight occasion for gravity to act, and the whole economy of the neighborhood is changed at once. Men do indeed speculate about and with this power as if it were the only privilege. But meanwhile this aerial stream is falling from far greater heights with more constant flow, never shrunk by drought, offering mill-sites wherever the wind blows; a Niagara in the air, with no



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Canada side; – only the application is hard.

There are the powers too of the Tide and Waves, constantly ebbing and flowing, lapsing and relapsing, but they serve man in but few ways. They turn a few tide mills, and perform a few other insignificant and accidental services only. We all perceive the effect of the tide; how imperceptibly it creeps up into our harbors and rivers, and raises the heaviest navies as easily as the lightest ship. Everything that floats must yield to it. But man, slow to take nature's constant hint of assistance, makes slight and irregular use of this power, in careening ships and getting them afloat when aground.

The following is Mr. Etzler's calculation on this head: To form a conception of the power which the tide affords, let us imagine a surface of 100 miles square, or 10,000 square miles, where the tide rises and sinks, on an average, 10 feet; how many men would it require to empty a basin of 10,000 square miles area, and 10 feet deep, filled with sea-water, in 6 1/4 hours and fill it again in the same time? As one man can raise 8 cubic feet of sea-water per minute, and in 6 1/4 hours 3,000, it would take 1,200,000,000 men, or as they could work only half the time, 2,400,000,000, to raise 3,000,000,000 cubic feet, or the whole quantity required in the given time. This power may be applied in various ways. A large body, of the heaviest materials that will float, may first be raised by it, and being attached to the end of a balance reaching from the land, or from a stationary support, fastened to the bottom, when the tide falls, the whole Weight will be brought to bear upon the end of the balance. Also when the tide rises it may be made to exert a nearly equal force in the opposite direction. It can be employed whenever point d'appui can be obtained.

"However, the application of the tide being by establishments fixed on the ground, it is natural to begin with them near the Shores in shallow water, and upon sands, which may be extended gradually further into the sea. The shores of the continent, islands, and sands, being generally surrounded by shallow water, not exceeding from 50 to 100 fathoms in depth, for to, 50, or 100 miles and upward. The coasts of North America, with their extensive sand-banks, islands, and rocks, may easily afford, for this purpose, a ground about 3,000 miles long, and, on an average, 100 miles broad, or 300,000 square miles, which, with a power of 240,000 men per square mile, as stated, at 10 feet tide, will be equal to 72,000 millions of men, or for every mile of coast, a power of 24,000,000

"Rafts, of any extent, fastened on the ground of the sea, along the shore, and stretching far into the sea, may be covered with fertile soil, bearing vegetables and trees, of every description, the finest gardens, equal to those the firm land may admit of, and buildings and machineries, which may operate, not only on the sea, where they are, but which also, by means of mechanical connections, may extend their operations for many miles into the continent. (Etzler's Mechanical System, page 24.) Thus this power may cultivate the artificial soil for many miles upon the surface of the sea, near the shores, and, for several miles, the dry land, along the shore, in the most superior manner imaginable; it may build cities along the shore, consisting of the most magnificent palaces, every one surrounded by gardens and the most delightful sceneries; it may level the hills and unevennesses, or raise eminences for enjoying open prospect into the country and upon the sea; it may cover the barren shore with fertile soil, and beautify



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the same in various ways; it may clear the sea of shallows, and make easy the approach to the land, not merely of vessels, but of large floating islands, which may come from, and go to distant parts of the world, islands that have every commodity and security for their inhabitants which the firm land affords."

"Thus may a power, derived from the gravity of the moon and the ocean, hitherto but the objects of idle curiosity to the studious man, be made eminently subservient for creating the most delightful abodes along the coasts, where men may enjoy at the same time all the advantages of sea and dry land; the coasts may hereafter be continuous paradisiacal skirts between land and sea, everywhere crowded with the densest population. The shores and the sea along them will be no more as raw nature presents them now, but everywhere of easy and charming access, not even molested by the roar of waves, shaped as it may suit the purposes of their inhabitants; the sea will be cleared of every obstruction to free passage everywhere, and its productions in fishes, etc., will be gathered in large, appropriate receptacles, to present them to the inhabitants of the shores and of the sea."

Verily, the land would wear a busy aspect at the Spring and neap tide, and these island ships – these *terræ infirmæ* – which realise the fables of antiquity, affect our imagination. We have often thought that the fittest locality for a human dwelling was on the edge of the land, that there the constant lesson and impression of the sea might sink deep into the life and character of the landsman, and perhaps impart a marine tint to his imagination. It is a noble word, that *mariner* – one who is conversant with the sea. There should be more of what it signifies in each of us. It is a worthy country to belong to – we look to see him not disgrace it. Perhaps we should be equally mariners and terreners, and even our Green Mountains need some of that sea-green to be mixed with them.

The computation of the power of the waves is less satisfactory. While only the average power of the wind, and the average height of the tide, were taken before now, the extreme height of the waves is used, for they are made to rise ten feet above the level of the sea, to which, adding ten more for depression, we have twenty feet, or the extreme height of a wave. Indeed, the power of the waves, which is produced by the wind blowing obliquely and at disadvantage upon the water, is made to be, not only three thousand times greater than that of the tide, but one hundred times greater than that of the wind itself, meeting its object at right angles. Moreover, this power is measured by the area of the vessel, and not by its length mainly, and it seems to be forgotten that the motion of the waves is chiefly undulatory, and exerts a power only within the limits of a vibration, else the very continents, with their extensive coasts, would soon be set adrift.

Finally, there is the power to be derived from sunshine, by the principle on which Archimedes contrived his burning mirrors, a multiplication of mirrors reflecting the rays of the sun upon the same spot, till the requisite degree of heat is obtained. The principal application of this power will be to the boiling of water and production of steam.

"How to create rivulets of sweet and wholesome water, on floating islands, in the midst of the ocean, will be no riddle now. Sea-water



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changed into steam, will distil into sweet water, leaving the salt on the bottom. Thus the steam engines on floating islands, for their propulsion and other mechanical purposes, will serve, at the same time, for the distillery of sweet water, which, collected in basins, may be led through channels over the island, while, where required, it may be refrigerated by artificial means, and changed into cool water, surpassing, in salubrity, the best spring water, because nature hardly ever distils water so purely, and without admixture of less wholesome matter."

So much for these few and more obvious powers, already used to a trifling extent. But there are innumerable others in nature, not described nor discovered. These, however, will do for the present. This would be to make the sun and the moon equally our satellites. For, as the moon is the cause of the tides, and the sun the cause of the wind, which, in turn, is the cause of the waves, all the work of this planet would be performed by these far influences.

"But as these powers are very irregular and subject to interruptions; the next object is to show how they may be converted into powers that operate continually and uniformly for ever, until the machinery be worn out, or, in other words, into perpetual motions." ... "Hitherto the power of the wind has been applied immediately upon the machinery for use, and we have had to wait the chances of the wind's blowing; while the operation was stopped as soon as the wind ceased to blow. But the manner, which I shall state hereafter, of applying this power, is to make it operate only for collecting or storing up power, and then to take out of this store, at any time, as much as may be wanted for final operation upon the machines. The power stored up is to react as required, and may do so long after the original power of the wind has ceased. And though the wind should cease for intervals of many months, we may have by the same power a uniform perpetual motion in a very simple way."

"The weight of a clock being wound up gives us an image of reaction. The sinking of this weight is the reaction of winding it up. It is not necessary to wait till it has run down before we wind up the weight, but it may be wound up at any time, partly or totally; and if done always before the weight reaches the bottom, the clock will be going perpetually. In a similar, though not in the same way, we may cause a reaction on a larger scale. We may raise, for instance, water by the immediate application of wind or steam to a pond upon some eminence, out of which, through an outlet, it may fall upon some wheel or other contrivance for setting machinery a going. Thus we may store up water in some eminent pond, and take out of this store, at any time, as much water through the outlet as we want to employ, by which means the original power may react for many days after it has ceased." ... "Such reservoirs of moderate elevation or size need not be made artificially, but will be found made by nature very frequently, requiring but little aid for their completion. They require no regularity of form. Any valley with lower grounds in its vicinity, would answer the purpose. Small crevices may be filled up. Such places may be eligible for the beginning of enterprises of this kind."

The greater the height, of course the less water required. But suppose a level and dry country; then hill and valley, and "eminent pond," are to be constructed by main force; or if the springs are unusually low, then dirt and stones may be used, and the disadvantage arising from friction will be counterbalanced by their greater gravity. Nor shall a single rood of dry land be sunk in such artificial ponds as may be wasted, but their



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surfaces "may be covered with rafts decked with fertile earth, and all kinds of vegetables which may grow there as well as anywhere else."

And finally, by the use of thick envelopes retaining the heat, and other contrivances, "the power of steam caused by sunshine may react at will, and thus be rendered perpetual, no matter how often or how long the sunshine may be interrupted. (Etzler's Mechanical System)."

Here is power enough, one would think, to accomplish somewhat. These are the powers below. Oh ye mill-wrights, ye engineers, ye operatives and speculators of every class, never again complain of a want of power; it is the grossest form of infidelity. The question is not how we shall execute, but what. Let us not use in a niggardly manner what is thus generously offered.

Consider what revolutions are to be effected in agriculture. First, in the new country, a machine is to move along taking out trees and stones to any required depth, and piling them up in convenient heaps; then the same machine, "with a little alteration," is to plane the ground perfectly, till there shall be no hills nor valleys, making the requisite canals, ditches and roads, as it goes along. The same machine, "with some other little alterations," is then to sift the ground thoroughly, supply fertile soil from other places if wanted, and plant it; and finally, the same machine "with a little addition," is to reap and gather in the crop, thresh and grind it, or press it to oil, or prepare it any way for final use. For the description of these machines we are referred to "Etzler's Mechanical System, pages 11 to 27." We should be pleased to see that "Mechanical System," though we have not been able to ascertain whether it has been published, or only exists as yet in the design of the author. We have great faith in it. But we cannot stop for applications now.

"Any wilderness, even the most hideous and sterile, may be converted into the most fertile and delightful gardens. The most dismal swamps may be cleared of all their spontaneous growth, filled up and levelled, and intersected by canals, ditches and aqueducts, for draining them entirely. The soil, if required, may be meliorated, by covering or mixing it with rich soil taken from distant places, and the same be mouldered to fine dust, levelled, sifted from all roots, weeds and stones, and sowed and planted in the most beautiful order and symmetry, with fruit trees and vegetables of every kind that may stand the climate."

New facilities for transportation and locomotion are to be adopted:

"Large and commodious vehicles, for carrying many thousand tons, running over peculiarly adapted level roads, at the rate of forty miles per hour, or one thousand miles per day, may transport men and things, small houses, and whatever may serve for comfort and ease, by land. Floating islands, constructed of logs, or of wooden-stuff prepared in a similar manner, as is to be done with stone, and of live trees, which may be reared so as to interlace one another, and strengthen the whole, may be covered with gardens and palaces, and propelled by powerful engines, so as to run at an equal rate through seas and oceans. Thus,



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man may move, with the celerity of a bird's flight, in terrestrial paradises, from one climate to another, and see the world in all its variety, exchanging, with distant nations, the surplus of productions. The journey from one pole to another may be performed in a fortnight; the visit to a transmarine country in a week or two; or a journey round the world in one or two months by land and water. And why pass a dreary winter every year while there is yet room enough on the globe where nature is blessed with a perpetual summer, and with a far greater variety and luxuriance of vegetation? More than one-half the surface of the globe has no winter. Men will have it in their power to remove and prevent all bad influences of climate, and to enjoy, perpetually, only that temperature which suits their constitution and feeling best."

Who knows but by accumulating the power until the end of the present century, using meanwhile only the smallest allowance, reserving all that blows, all that shines, all that ebbs and flows, all that dashes, we may have got such a reserved accumulated power as to run the earth off its track into a new orbit, some summer, and so change the tedious vicissitude of the seasons? Or, perchance, coming generations will not abide the dissolution of the globe, but, availing themselves of future inventions in aerial locomotion, and the navigation of space, the entire race may migrate from the earth, to settle some vacant and more western planet, it may be still healthy, perchance unearthy, not composed of dirt and stones, whose primary strata only are strewn, and where no weeds are sown. It took but little art, a simple application of natural laws, a canoe, a paddle, and a sail of matting, to people the isles of the Pacific, and a little more will people the shining isles of space. Do we not see in the firmament the lights carried along the shore by night, as Columbus did? Let us not despair nor mutiny.

"The dwellings also ought to be very different from what is known, if the full benefit of our means is to be no name yet. They are to be neither palaces, nor temples, enjoyed. They are to be of a structure for which we have nor cities, but a combination of all, superior to whatever is known. Earth may be baked into bricks, or even vitrified stone by heat, — we may bake large masses of any size and form into stone and vitrified substance of the greatest durability, lasting even thousands of years, out of clayey earth, or of stones ground to dust, by the application of burning mirrors. This is to be done in the open air, without other preparation than gathering the substance, grinding and mixing it with water and cement, moulding or casting it, and bringing the focus of the burning mirrors of proper size upon the same. The character of the architecture is to be quite different from what it ever has been hitherto; large solid masses are to be baked or cast in one piece, ready shaped in any form that may be desired. The building may, therefore, consist of columns two hundred feet high and upwards, of proportionate thickness, and of one entire piece of vitrified substance; huge pieces are to be moulded so as to join and hook on to each other firmly, by proper joints and folds, and not to yield in any way without breaking."

"Foundries, of any description, are to be heated by burning mirrors, and will require no labor, except the making of the first moulds and the superintendence for gathering the metal and taking the finished articles away."

Alas, in the present state of science, we must take the finished articles away; but think not that man will always be a victim of circumstances.



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The countryman who visited the city and found the streets cluttered with bricks and lumber, reported that it was not yet finished, and one who considers the endless repairs and reforming of our houses, might well wonder when they will be done. But why may not the dwellings of men on this earth be built once for all of some durable material, some Roman or Etruscan masonry which will stand, so that time shall only adorn and beautify them? Why may we not finish the outward world for posterity, and leave them leisure to attend to the inner? Surely, all the gross necessities and economies might be cared for in a few years. All might be built and baked and stored up, during this, the term-time of the world, against the vacant eternity, and the globe go provisioned and furnished like our public vessels, for its voyage through space, as through some Pacific ocean, while we would "tie up the rudder and sleep before the wind," as those who sail from Lima to Manilla.

But, to go back a few years in imagination, think not that life in these crystal palaces is to bear any analogy to life in our present humble cottages. Far from it. Clothed, once for all, in some "flexible stuff," more durable than George Fox's suit of leather, composed of "fibres of vegetables," "glutinated" together by some "cohesive substances," and made into sheets, like paper, of any size or form, man will put far from him corroding care and the whole host of ills.

"The twenty-five halls in the inside of the square are to be each two hundred feet square and high; the forty corridors, each one hundred feet long and twenty wide; the eighty galleries, each from 1,000 to 1,250 feet long; about 7,000 private rooms, the whole surrounded and intersected by the grandest and most splendid colonnades imaginable; floors, ceilings, columns with their various beautiful and fanciful intervals, all shining, and reflecting to infinity all objects and persons, with splendid lustre of all beautiful colors, and fanciful shapes and pictures. All galleries, outside and within the halls, are to be provided with many thousand commodious and most elegant vehicles, in which persons may move up and down, like birds, in perfect security, and without exertion.... Any member may procure himself all the common articles of his daily wants, by a short turn of some crank, without leaving his apartment. He may, at any time, bathe himself in cold or warm water, or in steam, or in some artificially prepared liquor for invigorating health. He may, at any time, give to the air in his apartment that temperature that suits his feeling best. He may cause, at any time, an agreeable scent of various kinds. He may, at any time, meliorate his breathing air, -that main vehicle of vital power. Thus, by a proper application of the physical knowledge of our days, man may be kept in a perpetual serenity of mind, and if there is no incurable disease or defect in his organism, in constant vigor of health, and his life be prolonged beyond any parallel which present times afford."

"One or two persons are sufficient to direct the kitchen business. They have nothing else to do but to superintend the cookery, and to watch the time of the victuals being done, and then to remove them, with the table and vessels, into the dining-hall, or to the respective private apartments, by a slight motion of the hand at some crank. Any extraordinary desire of any person may be satisfied by going to the place where the thing is to be had; and anything that requires a particular preparation in cooking or baking, may be done by the person who desires it."

This is one of those instances in which the individual genius



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is found to consent, as indeed it always does, at last, with the universal. These last sentences have a certain sad and sober truth, which reminds us of the scripture of all nations. All expression of truth does at length take the deep ethical form. Here is hint of a place the most eligible of any in space, and of a servitor, in comparison with whom, all other helps dwindle into insignificance. We hope to hear more of him anon, for even crystal palace would be deficient without his invaluable services.

And as for the environs of the establishment,

"There will be afforded the most enrapturing views to be fancied, cut of the private apartments, from the galleries, from the roof, from its turrets and cupolas, -gardens as far as the eye can see, full of fruits and flowers, arranged in the most beautiful order, with walks, colonnades, aqueducts, canals, ponds, plains, amphitheatres, terraces, fountains, sculptural works, pavilions, gondolas, places for public amusement, etc., to delight the eye and fancy, the taste and smell." ... "The walks and roads are to be paved with hard vitrified, large plates, so as to be always clean from all dirt in any weather or season.... The channels being of vitrified substance, and the water perfectly clear, and filtrated or distilled if required, may afford the most beautiful scenes imaginable, while a variety of fishes is seen clear down to the bottom playing about, and the canals may afford at the same time, the means of gliding smoothly along between various sceneries of art and nature, in beautiful gondolas, while their surface and borders may be covered with fine land and aquatic birds. The walks may be covered with porticos adorned with magnificent columns, statues and sculptural works; all of vitrified substance, and lasting for ever, while the beauties of nature around heighten the magnificence and deliciousness."

"The night affords no less delight to fancy and feelings. An infinite variety of grand, beautiful and fanciful objects and sceneries, radiating with crystalline brilliancy, by the illumination of gas-light; the human figures them selves, arrayed in the most beautiful pomp fancy may) suggest, or the eye desire, shining even with brilliancy of stuffs and diamonds, like stones of various colors, elegantly shaped and arranged around the body; all reflected a thousand-fold in huge mirrors and reflectors of various forms; theatrical scenes of a grandeur and magnificence, and enrapturing illusions, unknown yet, in which any person may be either a spectator or actor; the speech and the songs reverberating with increased sound, rendered more sonorous and harmonious than by nature, by vaultings that are moveable into any shape at any time; the sweetest and most impressive harmony of music, produced by song and instruments partly not known yet, may thrill through the nerves and vary with other amusements and delights."

"At night the roof, and the inside and outside of the whole square, are illuminated by gas-light, which in the mazes of many-colored crystal-like colonnades and vaultings, is reflected with a brilliancy that gives to the whole a lustre of precious stones, as far as the eye can see, -such are the future abodes of men." ... "Such is the life reserved to true intelligence, but withheld from ignorance, prejudice, and stupid adherence to custom." ... "Such is the domestic life to be enjoyed by every human individual that will partake of it. Love and affection may there be fostered and enjoyed without any of the obstructions that oppose, diminish, and destroy them in the present state of men." ... "It would be as ridiculous, then, to dispute and quarrel about the means of life, as it would be now about water to drink along mighty rivers, or about the permission to breathe air in the atmosphere, or about sticks in our extensive woods."



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Thus is Paradise to be Regained, and that old and stern decree at length reversed. Man shall no more earn his living by the sweat of his brow. All labor shall be reduced to "a short turn of some crank," and "taking the finished article away." But there is a crank, - oh, how hard to be turned! Could there not be a crank upon a crank, - an infinitely small crank? - we would fain inquire. No, - alas! not. But there is a certain divine energy in every man, but sparingly employed as yet, which may be called the crank within, - the crank after all, - the prime mover in all machinery, - quite indispensable to all work. Would that we might get our hands on its handle! In fact no work can be shirked. It may be postponed indefinitely, but not infinitely. Nor can any really important work be made easier by co-operation or machinery. Not one particle of labor now threatening any man can be routed without being performed. It cannot be hunted out of the vicinity like jackals and hyenas. It will not run. You may begin by sawing the little sticks, or you may saw the great sticks first, but sooner or later you must saw them both.

We will not be imposed upon by this vast application of forces. We believe that most things will have to be accomplished still by the application called Industry. We are rather pleased after all to consider the small private, but both constant and accumulated force, which stands behind every spade in the field. This it is that makes the valleys shine, and the deserts really bloom. Sometimes, we confess, we are so degenerate as to reflect with pleasure on the days when men were yoked like cattle, and drew a crooked stick for a plough. After all, the great interests and methods were the same.

It is a rather serious objection to Mr. Etzler's schemes, that they require time, men, and money, three very superfluous and inconvenient things for an honest and well-disposed man to deal with. "The whole world," he tells us, "might therefore be really changed into a paradise, within less than ten years, commencing from the first year of an association for the purpose of constructing and applying the machinery." We are sensible of a startling incongruity when time and money are mentioned in this connection. The ten years which are proposed would be a tedious while to wait, if every man were at his post and did his duty, but quite too short a period, if we are to take time for it. But this fault is by no means peculiar to Mr. Etzler's schemes. There is far too much hurry and bustle, and too little patience and privacy, in all our methods, as if something were to be accomplished in centuries. The true reformer does not want time, nor money, nor cooperation, nor advice. What is time but the stuff delay is made of? And depend upon it, our virtue will not live on the interest of our money. He expects no income but our outgoes; so soon as we begin to count the cost the cost begins. And as for advice, the information floating in the atmosphere of society is as evanescent and unserviceable to him as gossamer for clubs of Hercules. There is absolutely no common sense; it is common nonsense. If we are to risk a cent or a drop of our



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blood, who then shall advise us? For ourselves, we are too young for experience. Who is old enough? We are older by faith than by experience. In the unbending of the arm to do the deed there is experience warmth all the maxims in the world.

"It will now be plainly seen that the execution of the proposals is not proper for individuals. Whether it be proper for government at this time, before the subject has become popular, is a question to be decided; all that is to be done, is to step forth, after mature reflection, to confess loudly one's conviction, and to constitute societies. Man is powerful but is union with many. Nothing great, for the improvement of his own condition, or that of his fellow men, can ever be effected by individual enterprise."

Alas! this is the crying sin of the age, this want of faith in the prevalence of a man. Nothing can be effected but by one man. He who wants help wants everything. True, this is the condition of our weakness, but it can never be the means of our recovery. We must first succeed alone, that we may enjoy our success together. We trust that the social movements which we witness indicate an aspiration not to be thus cheaply satisfied. In this matter of reforming the world, we have little faith in corporations; not thus was it first formed.

But our author is wise enough to say, that the raw materials for the accomplishment of his purposes, are iron, copper, wood, earth chiefly, and a union of men whose eyes and understanding are not shut up by preconceptions." Aye, this last may be what we want mainly,-a company of "odd fellows" indeed.

"Small shares of twenty dollars will be sufficient," - in all, from "200,000 to 300,000," - "to create the first establishment for a whole community of from 3000 to 4000 individuals" - at the end of five years we shall have a principal of 200 millions of dollars, and so paradise will be wholly regained at the end of the tenth year. But, alas, the ten years have already elapsed, and there are no signs of Eden yet, for want of the requisite funds to begin the enterprise in a hopeful manner. Yet it seems a safe investment. Perchance they could be hired at a low rate, the property being mortgaged for security, and, if necessary, it could be given up in any stage of the enterprise, without loss, with the fixtures.

Mr. Etzler considers this "Address as a touchstone, to try whether our nation is in any way accessible to these great truths, for raising the human creature to a superior state of existence, in accordance with the knowledge and the spirit of the most cultivated minds of the present time. "He has prepared a constitution, short and concise, consisting of twenty-one articles, so that wherever an association may spring up, it may go into operation without delay; and the editor informs us that "Communications on the subject of this book may be addressed to C.F. Stollmeyer, No. 6, Upper Charles street, Northampton square, London."

But we see two main difficulties in the way. First, the successful application of the powers by machinery, (we have not yet seen the "Mechanical system,") and, secondly, which is



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infinitely harder, the application of man to the work by faith. This it is, we fear, which will prolong the ten years to ten thousand at least. It will take a power more than "80,000 times greater than all the men on earth could effect with their nerves," to Persuade men to use that which is already offered them. Even a greater than this physical power must be brought to bear upon that moral power. Faith, indeed, is all the reform that is needed; it is itself a reform. Doubtless, we are as slow to conceive of Paradise as of Heaven, of a perfect natural as of a perfect spiritual world. We see how past ages have loitered and erred; "Is perhaps our generation free from irrationality and error? Have we perhaps reached now the summit of human wisdom, and need no more to look out for mental or physical improvement?" Undoubtedly, we are never so visionary as to be prepared for what the next hour may bring forth.

Μέλλει τὸ θεῖον δ' ἔστι τοιούτον Φύσει.

The Divine is about to be, and such is its nature. In our wisest moments we are secreting a matter, which, like the lime of the shell fish, incrusts us quite over, and well for us, if, like it, we cast our shells from time to time, though they be pearl and of fairest tint. Let us consider under what disadvantages science has hitherto labored before we pronounce thus confidently on her progress.

"There was never any system in the productions of human labor; but they came into existence and fashion as chance directed men." "Only a few professional men of learning occupy themselves with teaching natural philosophy, chemistry, and the other branches of the sciences of nature, to a very limited extent, for very limited purposes, with very limited means." "The science of mechanics is but in a state of infancy. It is true, improvements are made upon improvements, instigated by patents of government; but they are made accidentally or at haphazard. There is no general system of this science, mathematical as it is, which develops its principles in their full extent, and the outlines of the application to which they lead. There is no idea of comparison between what is explored and what is yet to be explored in this science. The ancient Greeks placed mathematics at the head of their education. But we are glad to have filled our memory with notions, without troubling ourselves much with reasoning about them."

Mr. Etzler is not one of the enlightened practical men, the pioneers of the actual, who move with the slow deliberate tread of science, conserving the world; who execute the dreams of the last century, though they have no dreams of their own; yet he deals in the very raw but still solid material of all inventions. He has more of the practical than usually belongs to so bold a schemer, so resolute a dreamer. Yet his success is in theory, and not in practice, and he feeds our faith rather than contents our understanding. His book wants order, serenity, dignity, everything, - but it does not fail to impart what only man can impart to man of much importance, his own faith. It is true his dreams are not thrilling nor bright enough, and he leaves off to dream where he who dreams just before the dawn begins. His castles in the air fall to the ground, because they are not built lofty enough; they should be secured to heaven's roof. After



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all, the theories and speculations of men concern us more than their puny execution. It is with a certain coldness and languor that we loiter about the actual and so called practical. How little do the most wonderful inventions of modern times detain us. They insult nature. Every machine, or particular application, seems a slight outrage against universal laws. How many fine inventions are there which do not clutter the ground? We think that those only succeed which minister to our sensible and animal wants, which bake or brew, wash or warm, or the like. But are those of no account which are patented by fancy and imagination, and succeed so admirably in our dreams that they give the tone still to our waking thoughts? Already nature is serving all those uses which science slowly derives on a much higher and grander scale to him that will be served by her. When the sunshine falls on the path of the poet, he enjoys all those pure benefits and pleasures which the arts slowly and partially realize from age to age. The winds which fan his cheek waft him the sum of that profit and happiness which their lagging inventions supply.

The chief fault of this book is, that it aims to secure the greatest degree of gross comfort and pleasure merely. It paints a Mahometan's heaven, and stops short with singular abruptness when we think it is drawing near to the precincts of the Christian's, and we trust we have not made here a distinction without a difference. Undoubtedly if we were to reform this outward life truly and thoroughly, we should find no duty of the inner omitted. It would be employment for our whole nature; and what we should do there-after would be as vain a question as to ask the bird what it will do when its nest is built and its brood reared. But a moral reform must take place first, and then the necessity of the other will be superseded, and we shall sail and plough by its force alone. There is a speedier way than the Mechanical System can show to fill up marshes, to drown the roar of the waves, to tame hyenas, secure agreeable environs, diversify the land, and refresh it with "rivulets of sweet water," and that is by the power of rectitude and true behavior. It is only for a little while, only occasionally, methinks, that we want a garden. Surely a good man need not be at the labor to level a hill for the sake of a prospect, or raise fruits and flowers, and construct floating islands, for the sake of a paradise. He enjoys better prospects than lie behind any hill. Where an angel travels it will be paradise all the way, but where Satan travels it will be burning marl and cinders. What says Veeshnoo Sarma? "He whose mind is at ease is possessed of all riches. Is it not the same to one whose foot is enclosed in a shoe, as if the whole surface of the earth were covered with leather?"

He who is conversant with the supernal powers will not worship these inferior deities of the wind, the waves, tide, and sunshine. But we would not disparage the importance of such calculations as we have described. They are truths in physics, because they are true in ethics. The moral powers no one would



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presume to calculate. Suppose we could compare the moral with the physical, and say how many horse-power the force of love, for instance, blowing on every square foot of a man's soul, would equal. No doubt we are well aware of this force; figures would not increase our respect for it; the sunshine is equal to but one ray of its heat. The light of the sun is but the shadow of love. "The souls of men loving and fearing God," says Raleigh, "receive influence from that divine light itself, whereof the sun's clarity, and that of the stars, is by Plato called but a shadow. *Lumen est umbra Dei, Deus est Lumen Luminis*. Light is the shadow of God's brightness, who is the light of light," and, we may add, the heat of heat. Love is the wind, the tide, the waves, the sunshine. Its power is incalculable; it is many horse power. It never ceases, it never slacks; it can move the globe without a resting-place; it can warm without fire; it can feed without meat; it can clothe without garments; it can shelter without roof; it can make a paradise within which will dispense with a Paradise without. But though the wisest men in all ages have labored to Publish this force, and every human heart is, sooner or later, more or less, made to feel it, yet how little is actually applied to social ends. True, it is the motive power of all successful social machinery; but, as in physics, we have made the elements do only a little drudgery for us, steam to take the place of a few horses, wind of a few oars, water of a few cranks and hand-mills; as the mechanical forces have not yet been generously and largely applied to make the physical world answer to the ideal, so the power of love has been but meanly and sparingly applied, as yet. It has patented only such machines as the almshouses, the hospital, and the Bible Society, while its infinite wind is still blowing, and blowing down these very structures, too, from time to time. Still less are we accumulating its power, and preparing to act with greater energy at a future time. Shall we not contribute our shares to this enterprise, then?



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July 28, Friday: The first of the year's sweet corn was ready to eat, although still a trifle green. [Henry Thoreau](#) was written to by [John L. O'Sullivan](#) of [The United States Magazine and Democratic Review](#) in New-York:

New York. July 28. 1843.

My dear Sir,

I am very sorry that with so much in it that I like very much there are others in the paper you have favored me with which have decided me against its insertion. I trust, however, soon to hear from you again, - especially should I like some of those extracts from your Journal, reporting some of your private interviews with nature, with which I have before been so much pleased. That book of Etzler's I had for some time had my mind upon to review. If you have got it[,] I should be very much obliged to you for a sight of it, and if you would not object I think it very likely that some addition & modification made with your concurrence would put your review of it into the shape to suit my peculiar notion on the subject.

Articles of this nature are not in general published in the [D.R.] on the responsibility of the individual name of the author[;] but under the general impersonality of the collective "we" - (the name of the author being usually indicated in pencil on the Index in the copies sent to the editors of newspapers). This system renders a certain pervading homogeneity necessary, inviting often the necessity of this process of editorial revision, or rather communication.

Very Respectfully Yours,
J. L. O'Sullivan

I am at present staying out of town. When I return to the city, if you are still in these latitudes, I shall hope to be afforded the pleasure of renewing the acquaintance begun under the auspices of our common friend Hawthorne.

Postmark: CITY DESPATCH
JUL 29
4 o'CLOCK
Address: Mr. Thoreau[.]
care of W^m. Emerson Esq.
64 Wall St.
New York.

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August 1, Tuesday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to [John L. O'Sullivan](#) from [Staten Island](#) as the August issue of his magazine was making its rounds:

US MAG & DEM. REV.

Staten Island Aug. 1st

Dear Sir,

I have not got Mr. Etzlers book nor can I tell where it is to be found — the copy which I used in the spring was sent from England to Mr R W Emerson by Mr Alcott But you must not think too seriously of it— I believe my extracts are rather too favorable, beside being improved by the liberties I have taken. I dont wonder that you find much to object to in the remarks I sent you If I remember them they content me perhaps as little as they do yourself yet for the general tenor of them I suppose I should not alter it.

If I should find any notes on nature in my Journal which I think will suit you I will send them.—

I am at present Reading Greek Poetry— Would a translation—(in the manner of Prometheus Bound in the Dial which you may have seen of some old drama— be suited to your Review—?

Please send the Mss. to Wall st as soon as convenient. I expect to remain in this vicinity for some time and shall be glad to meet you in New York—

BRONSON ALCOTT

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A large assembly in [Northampton](#) welcomed the 10th anniversary of the [emancipation](#) of the slaves of the British West Indies. Would it have been this occasion that spurred a correspondent of Lewis Tappan's [Journal of Commerce](#) to write criticizing the sort of "Wild, insane, **brutal**" white men who could see their way clear to escort white "refined ladies" to "meet and associate with the vulgar unionists **of all colors** that make up these Associations." This correspondent noted that he himself had observed, at a community dining hall, "one of the accomplished and lovely daughters" of a member of the [Association of Industry and Education](#), seated directly across the table from "a large **male negro!**"

In [New Bedford, Massachusetts](#), the first large-scale gala featuring a picnic and a parade seems to have taken place in this year, under the auspices of the Friends of Liberty.

[Frederick Douglass](#) completed his lecturing in Syracuse, New York and moved on toward Rochester.



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Abraham Lincoln's 1st child, Robert Todd Lincoln, was born.





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August 7, Monday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to [Waldo Emerson](#) indicating that editor [John L. O'Sullivan](#) had rejected his article on [John Adolphus Etzler](#) for publication in [The United States Magazine and Democratic Review](#):

I sent a long article on Etzler's book to the Dem. Rev. six weeks ago, which at length they have determined not to accept as they could not subscribe to all the opinions, but asked for other matter—purely literary I suppose. O'Sullivan wrote me that articles of this kind have to be referred to the circle, who, it seems are represented by this journal,— and said something about "collective we" and "homogeneity"—

He commented about his narcolepsy:

Methinks I could paint the sleepy God more truly than the poets have done, from more intimate experience.

He commented about his reading in [Pindar](#), presumably in *PINDARI OLYMPIA, PYTHIA, MENEAE, ISTHMIA, CAETERORUM OCTO LYRICCORUM CARMINA, ALCAEI SAPPBUS, STESICHORI, IBYCI, ANACREONTIS, BACCHYLIDAS, SIMONIDAS, ALCAMANUS, NONNULLA ETIAM ALIORUM...* (GENEVAE: APUD HENRICUM STEPHANUM, 1586).

1843.

Staten-Island Aug 7th

My Dear Friend,

I fear I have nothing to send you worthy of so good an opportunity. Of New-York I still know but little, though out of so many thousands there are no doubt many units whom it would be worth my while to know. James talks of going to Germany soon with his wife — to learn the language. He says he must know it—can never learn it here — there he may absorb it — and is very anxious to learn beforehand where he had best locate himself, to enjoy the advantage of the highest culture, learn the language in its purity, and not exceed his limited means. I referred him to Longfellow— Perhaps you can help him.

I have had a pleasant talk with Channing — and Greeley too it was refreshing to meet. They were both much pleased with your criticism on Carlyle, but thought that you had overlooked what chiefly concerned them in the book — its practical aim and merits.

I have also spent some pleasant hours with W & T at their counting room — or rather intelligence Office.

I must still reckon myself with the innumerable army of invalids — indoubtedly in a fair field they would rout the well — though I am tougher than formerly. Methinks I could paint the Sleepy God more truly than the poets have done, from more intimate experience—

Indeed I have not kept my eyes very steadily open to the things of this world of late, and hence have little to report concerning them. However I trust the awakening will come before the last trump — and



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*then perhaps I may remember some of my dreams.
I study the aspects of commerce at its narrows here, where it passes
in review before me, and this seems to be beginning at the right end
to understand this Babylon.— I have made a very rude translation
of the – Seven Against Thebes – and Pindar too I have looked at, and
wish he was better worth translating. I believe even the best things
are not equal to their fame. Perhaps it would be better to translate
fame itself—or is not that what the poets themselves do? However I
have not done with Pindar yet I sent a long article on Etzler’s book
to the Dem. Rev. six weeks ago, which at length they have deter-
mined not to accept as they could not subscribe to all the opinions,
but asked for other matter – purely literary I suppose. O’Sullivan
wrote me that articles of this kind have to be referred to the circle,
who, it seems are represented by this journal, – and said something
about “collective we” and “homogeneity”–
Pray dont think of Bradbury and Soden any more–
“For good deed done through praierie
Is sold and bought too dear I wis–
To herte that of great valor is”
I see that they have given up their shop here
Say to Mrs. Emerson that I am glad to remember how she too dwells
there in Concord, and shall send her anon some of the thoughts that
belong to her. As for Edith—I seem to see a star in the east over
where the young child is.— Remember me to Mrs. Brown
yr friend
Henry D. Thoreau*

PINDAR

THE NARROWS, FROM STATEN ISLAND





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[Frederick Douglass](#) and George Bradburn lectured in Buffalo NY. Through the 9th, Douglass would be conducting anti-slavery meetings there by himself, then through the 14th he would be conducting anti-slavery meetings there in conjunction with Charles Lenox Remond, then through the 19th he and Remond would be attending the National Convention of Colored Citizens of the United States there, and then until September 1st he and Remond would be conducting anti-slavery meetings both in Buffalo and in Rochester NY.

October: [Henry Thoreau](#)'s essay "The Landlord" appeared in the United States Magazine, and Democratic Review.



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November: [John Adolphus Etzler](#)'s THE PARADISE WITHIN THE REACH OF ALL MEN, WITHOUT LABOR, BY POWERS OF NATURE AND MACHINERY. AN ADDRESS TO ALL INTELLIGENT MEN. IN TWO PARTS. BY J.A. ETZLER. PART FIRST, originally

PARADISE WITHIN REACH

published in the USA in 1833, had been reissued by a London publisher for the English audience in 1842, owing, [Henry Thoreau](#) supposed, "to the recent spread of Fourier's doctrines." (To capitalize on his current popularity there, Etzler left the USA for Britain late in this year.)

FUTURE-WORSHIP

Thoreau's review of this effort appeared in [The United States Magazine and Democratic Review](#) under the title "[PARADISE \(TO BE\) REGAINED](#)":

The chief fault of this book is that it aims to secure the greatest degree of gross comfort and pleasure merely.

Many examples there are of a grosser interference, yet not without their apology. We saw last summer, on the side of a mountain, a dog employed to churn for a farmer's family, travelling upon a horizontal wheel, and though he had sore eyes, an alarming cough, and withal a demure aspect, yet their bread did get buttered for all that. Undoubtedly, in the most brilliant successes, the first rank is always sacrificed. Much useless travelling of horses, in extenso, has of late years been improved for man's behoof, only two forces being taken advantage of,—the gravity of the horse, which is the centripetal, and his centrifugal inclination to go a-head. Only these two elements in the calculation. And is not the creature's whole economy better economized thus? Are not all finite beings better pleased with motions relative than absolute? And what is the great globe itself but such a wheel,—a larger tread-mill, —so that our horse's freest steps over prairies are oftentimes balked and rendered of no avail by the earth's motion on its axis? But here he is the central agent and motive power; and, for variety of scenery, being provided with a window in front, do not the ever-varying activity and fluctuating energy of the creature himself work the effect of the most varied scenery on a country road? It must be confessed that horses at present work too exclusively for men, rarely men for horses; and the brute degenerates in man's society.

DOG

(A review of Thoreau's review appears on the following page.)

DEMOCRATIC REVIEW





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The ideas about working time from Brownson and Thoreau appear relatively modest when compared with J.A. Etzler's idea of an entirely workless world. Thoreau wrestles with that idea and finally rejects it in an 1843 review of Etzler's *THE PARADISE WITHIN THE REACH OF ALL MEN, WITHOUT LABOR BY POWERS OF NATURE AND MACHINERY*. A German-American utopian, Etzler in his book set out "to show the means of creating a paradise within ten years, where everything desirable for human life may be had by every man in superabundance, without labor, without pay; where the whole face of nature shall be changed into the most beautiful forms and man may live in the most magnificent palaces, and in all imaginable refinements of luxury, and in the most delightful gardens; where he may accomplish without labor, in one year, more than could hitherto be done in a thousand years" (ME, 57-58). Thoreau's review of Etzler's book is largely sympathetic. Devoted as he was to a program of self-culture, Thoreau nevertheless grants that the efforts of the individual and the social reformer may be complementary. "While one scours the heavens, the other sweeps the earth. One says he will reform himself, and then nature and circumstances will be right.... The other will reform nature and circumstances, and then man will be right" (ME, 58). Then Thoreau momentarily goes beyond the thought that the two ways of change are complementary and approaches the view that man makes himself as he changes the world, the view Karl Marx expresses in "Theses on Feuerbach." As Thoreau phrases the thought, "Undoubtedly if we were to reform this outward life truly and thoroughly, we should find no duty of the inner omitted. It would be the employment of our whole nature; and what we should do thereafter would be as vain a question as to ask a bird what it will do when its nest is built and its brood reared." These two sentences imply no priority for internal change over external change, or vice versa. They say that if we change the world, we shall not find ourselves unchanged and that a thorough transformation of human nature and its environment will leave us with nothing to do in the world. Yet if Thoreau could be entirely happy with this reading, he would not be the philosophical idealist he usually is. So he adds, "But a moral reform must take place first, and then the necessity for the other will be superseded, and we shall sail and plow by its force alone" (ME, 74). The effect of **But** is to cancel the sympathetic concession Thoreau has made to Etzler, and, by extension to all who suppose that the expansion by technology of the productive forces is necessary if human needs are to be met. Thoreau goes on to cite Hindu scripture in support of the priority of moral reform: "'It is not the same to one whose foot is enclosed in a shoe as if the whole surface of the earth were covered with leather?'" (ME, 74). Intended by Thoreau to clinch the argument for the priority of individual moral reform over the transformation of the objective world, this rhetorical question can as well illustrate the limitations of a subjective view of reality. If the well-shod observer is aware that most of his fellow human beings are barefoot, the observer will possibly recognize that the surface of the earth is strewn with many objects potentially painful to the unprotected feet of other mortals.*

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UNITED STATES MAGAZINE,

AND

DEMOCRATIC REVIEW.

Vol. XIII.

NOVEMBER, 1843.

No. LXV.

PARADISE (TO BE) REGAINED.*

WE learn that Mr. Etzler is a native of Germany, and originally published his book in Pennsylvania, ten or twelve years ago; and now a second English edition, from the original American one, is demanded by his readers across the water, owing, we suppose, to the recent spread of Fourier's doctrines. It is one of the signs of the times. We confess that we have risen from reading this book with enlarged ideas, and grander conceptions of our duties in this world. It did expand us a little. It is worth attending to, if only that it entertains large questions. Consider what Mr. Etzler proposes:

"Fellow Men! I promise to show the means of creating a paradise within ten years, where everything desirable for human life may be had by every man in superabundance, without labor, and without pay; where the whole face of nature shall be changed into the most beautiful forms, and man may live in the most magnificent palaces, in all imaginable refinements of luxury, and in the most delightful gardens; where he may accomplish, without labor, in one year, more than hitherto could be done in thousands of years; may level mountains, sink valleys, create lakes, drain lakes and swamps, and intersect the land everywhere with beautiful canals, and roads for transporting heavy loads of many thousand tons, and for travelling one thousand miles in twenty-four hours; may cover the ocean with floating islands

movable in any desired direction with immense power and celerity, in perfect security, and with all comforts and luxuries, bearing gardens and palaces, with thousands of families, and provided with rivulets of sweet water; may explore the interior of the globe, and travel from pole to pole in a fortnight; provide himself with means, unheard of yet, for increasing his knowledge of the world, and so his intelligence; lead a life of continual happiness, of enjoyments yet unknown; free himself from almost all the evils that afflict mankind, except death, and even put death far beyond the common period of human life, and finally render it less afflicting. Mankind may thus live in and enjoy a new world, far superior to the present, and raise themselves far higher in the scale of being."

It would seem from this and various indications beside, that there is a transcendentalism in mechanics as well as in ethics. While the whole field of the one reformer lies beyond the boundaries of space, the other is pushing his schemes for the elevation of the race to its utmost limits. While one scours the heavens, the other sweeps the earth. One says he will reform himself, and then nature and circumstances will be right. Let us not obstruct ourselves, for that is the greatest friction. It is of little importance though a cloud obstruct the view of the astronomer compared with his own



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1844

As electric signals were beginning to travel along the 1st telegraph line from Washington to Baltimore, Samuel F.B. Morse pioneered a “Morse Code” of short pulses, “dots,” and long pulses, “dashes” (we would not formally abandon this sort of coding until 1995).

In this year Friedrich Gottlob Keller (1816-1895) made some paper out of a cheap pulp of wood fibers rather than out of an expensive pulp from pulverized [cotton](#) rags.

John Mercer invented a treatment for [cotton](#) that involves stretching the fibers under pressure in a cold bath of caustic soda. Mercerization gives cotton increased sheen and durability, as well as promoting the uptake of dyes.

In Roxbury, Charles Goodyear put some rubber on the kitchen stove and something strange happened to it — it “vulcanized,” to coin a term.⁶

In this year Thomas Pratt, an engineer, and his father Caleb Pratt, an architect, were developing a new kind of bridge truss that was the inverse of the Howe truss, not in that it used iron for compression and wood for tension (little joke there, fellas), but in that it consisted of the Howe truss turned upside down (later, when constructed entirely of iron, this new patent would until well into the 20th Century create the standard American truss bridge used for moderate spans).

Meanwhile, while residing with a small group of Concordists at Ham Common in Surrey, [John Adolphus Etzler](#) had begun building “working” models of his magnificent labor-saving machines (“working,” here, rather than being merely a synonym for “functional,” is a term of art with the overtones of “immensely impressive to those entrapped in the coils of hope”), and published not only EMIGRATION TO THE TROPICAL WORLD, FOR THE MELIORATION OF ALL CLASSES OF PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS, but also TWO VISIONS OF J.A. ETZLER.

FUTURE-WORSHIP

June: [John Adolphus Etzler](#) while with the Concordists at Ham Common in Surrey had published EMIGRATION TO THE TROPICAL WORLD, FOR THE MELIORATION OF ALL CLASSES OF PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS. At this point he relocated London to be at to the heart of the reform movement, formed a Tropical Emigration Society, and selected, as the venue of his earthly paradise, Venezuela. This community, like his community in Ohio, would of course fail.

FUTURE-WORSHIP

⁶.By the time the Goodyear patent was issued, the family would have removed to Woburn.








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Fall: [John Adolphus Etzler](#) delivered a series of public lectures designed to elicit support for his Satellite and to enlist members in the Tropical Emigration Society, which was, in fact, thriving nicely, its 1,000 shares being almost completely taken up by the end of the year. There was even talk of establishing branches of the society in Germany, France, and the United States.

According to page 80 of Larry J. Reynolds's influence study *EUROPEAN REVOLUTIONS AND THE AMERICAN LITERARY RENAISSANCE* (New Haven CT: Yale UP, 1988), [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#)'s sick ambivalences and manly defenses are readily to be discerned:

In the summer of 1844, while the Hawthornes were still at the Old Manse, Margaret Fuller, who was friends with them both, came to visit, and it was then that [Nathaniel](#) became most intimate with her. Throughout the month of July,  they went boating at dusk on the Concord, took moonlit walks through the woods, and conversed at length on a variety of subjects. ([Sophia Peabody Hawthorne](#) was occupied with the new baby, [Una Hawthorne](#).) And, surprisingly, given his reserve and shyness, it was Hawthorne who initiated many of their hours alone together. After Fuller moved to New York City that fall  and thence to Europe and Rome, she and Hawthorne never saw one another again; however, ten years after her death, Hawthorne in a long and famous passage in his Italian notebook ridiculed her husband and called her "a great humbug" with a "defective and evil nature."  This outburst seems inexplicable, given Hawthorne's previous friendliness, but it does make sense if one sees it as motivated by guilt and anger about his attraction to her. As Paula Blanshard has pointed out, "There is no possible way that anyone can accuse Margaret of being evil – if he is thinking of Margaret herself. But Hawthorne was not; he was thinking of what she represented to him." During the summer of 1849, when Fuller and her fellow republicans fought their losing battle against the invading French,  capturing the attention and admiration of the American public, Hawthorne certainly noticed, and when he wrote *THE SCARLET LETTER* several months later,  he then too had in mind what Fuller represented: a female revolutionary trying to overthrow the world's most prominent politico-religious leader, a freethinking temptress who had almost subverted his right-minded thoughts and feelings.

December: [John Adolphus Etzler](#)'s ideas in general and his emigration plan in particular were given a further boost with the appearance of James Duncan's paper [The Morning Star, or Herald of Progression](#), which was to become an official organ for his theories.

[Brook Farm](#) added the following new recruits:

Name	Birthplace	Birthdate	Occupation
John Hoxie	Boston MA	?	?
Jeanne Palisse	Switzerland	1802	manufacturer



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Name	Birthplace	Birthdate	Occupation
Eunice Macdaniel	Washington DC	1824	sister of a journalist who was not a member
Francis Macdaniel	Washington DC	?	?
Eliza Palisse Weymout	?	?	?
John Sawyer	?	?	?
Lydia Smith Lancaster	?	?	?
Henry Trask	?	?	?
Clinton, A	Cambridgeport MA	?	?



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1845

February: [John Adolphus Etzler](#) had been promised, by the Venezuelan Ambassador, religious and political liberty, freedom from taxes for fifteen years, and citizenship for Tropical Emigration Society colonists upon their arrival. He traveled to Trinidad as an official agent of his society, with two other agents, Mr. Carr and Captain Taylor (he brought along his wife and other members of his family). The three co-agents soon came to appreciate that there was no chance they would ever receive the thousands of free acres that had been promised and began to search for acreage they could afford near the Gulf of Paria or in the vicinity of Caracas.

May: By this point, in Venezuela, [John Adolphus Etzler](#) was acting independently of his co-agents in the Tropical Emigration Society, Mr. Carr and Captain Taylor. This would of course cause problems, as how could it not?

September: [John Adolphus Etzler](#)'s Satellite was subjected to a trial in Oxfordshire, and managed to push around a few yards of dirt. Supporters would allege that although admittedly there had been some minor mechanical difficulties, the test had been a success, whereas others would confess that the mechanism hadn't operated according to the principle that had been posited.

October: [John Adolphus Etzler](#), finding a fertile, cheap, and healthful area west of Caracas at Valencia, purchased a tract upon which he expected that the Tropical Emigration Society colonists would settle. Carr and Taylor, however, operating independently, had purchased some hilly acreage along the Gulf of Paria in Guinimita.

December: There was discord among the Tropical Emigration Society colonists over whether to purchase a ship for their ocean voyage, or rely on [John Adolphus Etzler](#)'s unproved Naval Automaton to get them to Venezuela in time for spring planting. Some of the emigration society's members objected to the idea that of the 1,000 shares, "Etzler and Company" was to receive 100 shares in compensation for the use of his Satellite to clear and work the land — he should receive such special compensation, if at all, only if his mechanism did indeed function as promised. Etzler the capitalist had attempted too promising a bargain. Only 73 out of an expected 100 colonists, therefore, applied to be aboard the first ship. However, a group of 31 brave souls had left England months early, and arrived at their destination along the Gulf of Paria in Guinimita during this month. They were so early that only 2/3ds of the land had been cleared of jungle, and so they would need to quarter temporarily in Trinidad at their own expense. (When the first official ship of immigrants would arrive, they would find that 15 of these 31 initial colonists had already died.)



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1846

[John Adolphus Etzler](#) patented, in the US and in England, a sail designed to open and close like a fan. The advantage claimed for this device was a reduction in crew. The idea that the single helmsman who was at the rear steering the ship could also pull on the ropes that would open, close, and rotate such a sail. What an intriguing idea! No working model has been constructed either by this inventor or in any succeeding generation.

(In this year Nancy Johnson developed the design for those wonderful hand-cranked salt-in-ice ice-cream freezers of our childhoods.)



Sometime early in this year the Reverend [Theodore Parker](#) moved to Boston to preach.

[John Adolphus Etzler](#) had designed some floating islands on which people could live, and C.F. Stollmeyer, along with other members of the Tropical Emigration Society in Trinidad, had built a working model of bamboo and balsa. Unfortunately, the design for these islands relied upon a unique sail system that could not be fabricated in the tropics and would need to be shipped from England, and unfortunately, Etzler asked the emigration society's sister organization, the Venezuelan Transit Company for some £3,000 to cover this expense. (The money would not be forthcoming and the inventor, who always had been fundamentally motivated by profit, would depart. The settlement in Trinidad would disappear into the background population of the place—a shipload of escapees would be lost at sea—and the settlement in Guinimita would be destroyed by fever and flooding.)

March: The Tropical Emigration Society chartered a ship, the *Condor*, over [John Adolphus Etzler](#)'s objection, to bring the 2d group of 193 colonists from England.

April: A separate new Tropical Emigration Society was formed in England, to cope with the fact that a number of the previously pledged participants has lost faith in the many trust-me promises of [John Adolphus Etzler](#) and C.F. Stollmeyer. The news had come back that of the first group of 31 to arrive in Venezuela, 15 had almost immediately died. (Now, bear in mind, these colonists had been offered not a whole lot of hard work and tribulation, but a vision of a tropical paradise which they would immediately be able to exploit, by their use of specially designed new machines, almost without any sweat equity.)



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May: When the new group of the Tropical Emigration Society sailed from England, their intended destination, rather than Venezuela, was New Orleans.

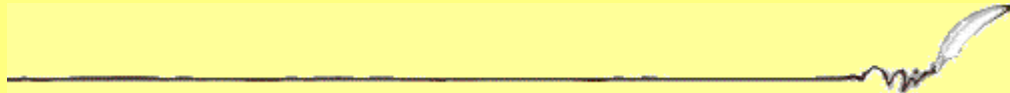
[Henry Thoreau](#) would ascribe, in [WALDEN](#), that early in this month in this year of 1846:

[WALDEN](#): Early in May, the oaks, hickories, maples, and other trees, just putting out amidst the pine woods around the pond, imparted a brightness like sunshine to the landscape, especially in cloudy days, as if the sun were breaking through mists and shining faintly on the hill-sides here and there. On the third or fourth of May I saw a loon in the pond, and during the first week of the month I heard the whippoorwill, the brown-thrasher, the veery, the wood-pewee, the chewink, and other birds. I had heard the wood-thrush long before. The phoebe had already come once more and looked in at my door and window, to see if my house was cavern-like enough for her, sustaining herself on humming wings with clinched talons, as if she held by the air, while she surveyed the premises.

WHIPPOORWILL
WOOD THRUSH
CHEWINK

[Waldo Emerson](#) was having his Daguerreotype made, in order to send it off to his white supremacist buddy [Thomas Carlyle](#) in England.

The Indians and the old monks chose their dwellingplace for beauty of scenery. The Indians have a right to exist in this world: they are (like Monadnoc & the Ocean) a part of it, & fit the other parts, as Monadnoc & the sea, which they understand and live with so well, as a rider his horse. The teamster, the farmer, are jocund and hearty, & stand on their legs: but the women are demure and subdued, as Shaker Women, & if you see them out of doors, look, as H.T. said, "as if they were going for the Doctor." Has our Christianity saddled & bridled us?





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July: [John Adolphus Etzler](#) wrote to the Morning Star defending his inability to obtain free land from the Venezuelan government. This had been entirely the fault of his two co-agents. The following two issues of the newspaper would contain “The Manifesto of J.A. Etzler” declaring his undying faith that once we had persuaded ourselves to turn away from capitalism, we would be able to create “a universal paradise of peace, abundance, happiness and intelligence, whence tyranny of all kinds [would be] banished.” He confessed, however, that he had been overly optimistic in predicting that this would require only about a decade. His new estimate was that it would take us something like a century to arrive at Paradise, because first we would need to discover what was the best food for us, and how to increase the production of this. On the up side, we would be able to use “air balloons” to explore unexplored terrains. We would be able to live in “self-moving houses” that would travel along a network of vitrified roads. We would rely upon floating islands in the sea. Through purifying our environment and tempering our passions, we would be able to prolong our lives to 108-192 years. The entire planet would become one community.

In the last known document written by him –a letter to a friend– Etzler directed that all future correspondence be sent to him at a Philadelphia address. He may have remained there or he may have gone back to Germany — we have no trace.

FUTURE-WORSHIP



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1847

January: The Tropical Emigration Society in England urged its colonists to leave Venezuela and settle in the western portion of the United States. Although a number of the settlers in Trinidad would merely disappear into the local population, 48 of them would board the *Condor* and sail from Trinidad for New Orleans. (Apparently, this vessel would meet with a disaster at sea, from which there would be no survivors.)

May: At the final meeting of the Tropical Emigration Society, some of the members attempted to organize a colony in Texas. Nothing would come of it.



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1866

Posthumous publication by Ticknor & Fields of Boston of [Henry Thoreau](#)'s "A YANKEE IN CANADA" in A YANKEE IN CANADA, WITH ANTI-SLAVERY AND REFORM PAPERS, presumably edited by [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) (and [Ellery Channing?](#)) because the "THOMAS CARLYLE" essay had been shortened by some 4,000 words:

And still older, in Thomas Morton's "New English Canaan," published in 1637, it is said, on page 97, "From this Lake [Erocoise] Northwards is derived the famous River Canada, so named, of Monsier de Cane, a French Lord, who first planted a Colony of French in America."

– [Thoreau](#), at start of "A YANKEE IN CANADA"



[TIMELINE OF CANADA](#)
[TIMELINE OF ESSAYS](#)

- [A PLEA FOR CAPTAIN...](#)
- [CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE](#)
- [LAST DAYS OF CAPT....](#)
- [LIFE WITHOUT PRINC...](#)
- [PARADISE \(TO BE\) R...](#)
- [PRAYERS](#)
- [SLAVERY IN MASSAC...](#)
- [THOMAS CARLISLE](#)
- [WENDELL PHILLIPS](#)
- [A YANKEE IN CANADA](#)



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1977

Nydahl, Joel, ed. THE COLLECTED WORKS OF [JOHN ADOLPHUS ETZLER](#), 1833-1844. (Delmar NY: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints). From Nydahl's "Introduction":



Biographically speaking, John Adolphus Etzler suddenly emerges from a blankness of years and just as abruptly withdraws behind an opaque obscurity that is both frustrating and puzzling. About the years prior to his appearance on the American shore in 1831 as a member of the Muhlhausem Emigration Society (under the leadership of the man who would later build the Brooklyn Bridge, John Augustus Roebling), we know only that he once previously immigrated to America for about eight years in the 1820s, returned to Germany, and was jailed for inciting emigration.

Shortly after its arrival in America, the Mulhausen Emigration Society split into two groups – one loyal to Roebling and one ready to follow Etzler westward on what a recent student of Etzler, Patrick R. Brostowin, has called "his messianic journey in search of the right conditions under which ... to re-establish the Paradise that Adam lost for mankind." As would happen many times during the next decade and a half, however, Etzler's visionary schemes ran smack up against practical exigencies. According to a long letter written by Roebling in November 1831, Etzler's failure to establish a communal society in the West was due to a number of factors – all of which could perhaps be boiled down to hubris: Etzler's demagogish character; his impatience with those who could not understand, much less accept, his views; his dewy-eyed optimism and impracticality (which, among other things, let him to push past the rich soil of eastern Pennsylvania to lands too distant from profitable markets); and his inability to accept the essential human weaknesses of his followers or of man in general. Most importantly, as Brostowin points out, Etzler's followers were basically German peasants looking for a piece of land and moderate creature comforts; they were not out to change the world –as was Etzler– only their own lives.

Failure to receive further financial backing from Frederick Rapp (who evidently had lent Etzler money previously) forced Etzler to abandon his efforts to establish a community in the area of Cincinnati and to accept the editorship of the newly established German newspaper *Der Pittsburger Beobachter* in Pittsburgh. Here, in 1833, he published his first and most important work, THE PARADISE WITHIN THE REACH OF ALL MEN, WITHOUT LABOR, BY POWERS OF NATURE AND MACHINERY, half-manual on the proposed application of technological speculation, half-philosophical treatise on the remaking of both man and society.

With missionary zeal, Etzler traveled in Pennsylvania and Ohio off and on for the next seven years (the period referred to in TWO VISIONS OF J.A. ETZLER) as a kind of itinerant secular evangelist preaching the possibility of a new kind of Millennium



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to be brought about through human reason and effort. Not surprisingly, his views on economic and social reform were rejected; and "the more they were rejected ... the more strident and offensive became his rhetorical appeals." In 1839 Etzler repaired to the West Indies –Haiti in particular– evidently to recuperate from this absolute rejection by those he had been trying to save. We know almost nothing about his activities during this year. Brostowin speculates that he prepared the manuscript for his second work, *THE NEW WORLD OR MECHANICAL SYSTEM* (1841), and that he may have traveled to various islands (or even to South America) to investigate the possibility of establishing his paradise in the tropics.

Upon returning to New York early in 1840, Etzler, undoubtedly in order to meet other reformers, attended the Fourier Society of New York's annual celebration of the French philosopher-utopist's birthday. There he first met C.F. Stollmeyer – Fourierist socialist and humanitarian– who was at that time reading Albert Brisbane's *THE SOCIAL DESTINY OF MAN* for publication. Stollmeyer, himself a recent German immigrant, was to become not only the publisher of *The New World*, but also the dedicated disciple of this scientific-utopian Messiah. Stollmeyer, for example, formed a company in Philadelphia in 1841 to patent Etzler's inventions and, in that same year, traveled first to England and then to France, Holland, and Belgium in order to procure patents on Etzler's Naval Automaton, a ship to be steered and driven by the powers of the wind and the waves.

Recognizing by this time that any hope he might have of founding a new society lay with utopian reformers outside America, Etzler instructed Stollmeyer to make contact with Robert Owen and his followers (some of whom had already published the first British edition of *PARADISE* in 1836) and to introduce them to his inventions. Although Etzler himself, busy trying to popularize his theories and win followers, remained in America until late 1843, his ideas and influence were spread in England in various ways. Stollmeyer arranged to have Etzler's third work printed, the twelve-page booklet *DESCRIPTION OF THE NAVAL AUTOMATON, INVENTED BY J.A. ETZLER* (1841 or 1842). A second British edition of *PARADISE* appeared in the summer of 1842; extracts from Etzler's *THE NEW WORLD* were published in the Fourierist *London Phalanx* in the same year; and Hugh Doherty, publisher of the *Phalanx*, built (and tried to operate, though unsuccessfully) a small version of the naval automaton.

Etzler evidently was ready early in 1843 to immigrate to England, where he expected a more receptive audience than had greeted his ideas in the United States. The failure of the Naval Automaton, however, had not dimmed the faith of Etzler's followers in England; in fact, an emigration society, based upon Etzler's ideas, was founded in West Riding in January of 1843. Etzler, though, was persuaded by Andred Smolnikov, another German-born social reformer and would-be Messiah, to try out his Satellite –a machine designed to clear and cultivate up to



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20,000 acres— in Peace Union, a German communal society in Western Pennsylvania. Again failure met an attempt to translate theory into practice; the machine broke down during the trial because Etzler—the grand abstract thinker with little apparent concern with, or talent for, seeing to small concrete details—had allowed the use of wood for iron in some vital parts.

In the meantime, progress continued in England in the spreading of Etzler's ideas. Stollmeyer, for example, prepared the way for Etzler's arrival by publicizing his theories in various labor papers, with the result that a Chartist, James B. O'Brien, published Etzler's fourth work, *DIALOGUE ON ETZLER'S PARADISE: BETWEEN MESSRS. CLEAR, FLAT, DUNCE, AND GRUDGE* (1842).

In early December, Etzler finally acted upon his decision that the time was ripe for emigration. When he and his wife arrived in England, however, he was in for a disappointment. Although he had been invited to Harmony Hall by Robert Owen's Rationalist Society to demonstrate his mechanical system, upon his arrival he discovered that Stollmeyer had failed to obtain more than admiration for his ideas; not only was no money available to construct the mechanism, but also there were none of the promised funds to pay his travel expenses. Never one to be prematurely daunted by adversity, Etzler managed to make 1844 a fruitful year. While residing with a small group of Concordists at Ham Common in Surrey, for example, he began making working models of his machines and, in addition, published his fifth and sixth works, *EMIGRATION TO THE TROPICAL WORLD, FOR THE MELIORATION OF ALL CLASSES OF PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS* and *TWO VISIONS OF J.A. ETZLER*, the last published works he would produce.

In June, after moving to London in order to be closer to the heart of the reform movement, he began to make serious plans for establishing his paradise in Venezuela; toward this end he founded the Tropical Emigration Society, based upon the principles laid down in *EMIGRATION TO THE TROPICAL WORLD*. By autumn, he was giving a series of public lectures designed to elicit support for his Satellite and to enlist members in the society, which was, in fact, thriving nicely, its one thousand shares being almost completely taken up by the end of the year. There was even talk of establishing branches in Germany, France, and the United States. Etzler's ideas in general and his emigration plan in particular were given a further boost in December with the appearance of James Duncan's paper *The Morning Star, or Herald of Progression*, which was to become an official organ of Etzler's theories.

Promises by the Venezuelan Ambassador of religious and political liberty, of freedom from taxes for fifteen years, and of citizenship for colonists upon arrival led Etzler, armed with an appointment as an official agent of the society, to leave for Trinidad in February 1845. He was accompanied by his wife and other members of his family and by two other agents of the society, a Mr. Carr and a Captain Taylor.

From this point until Etzler himself withdraws from recorded history in 1846 and the society officially disbands the



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following year, their intertwined stories become too involved and complicated in their minor details to be presented here except in terms of a fairly broad overview.

The first of many disappointments for Etzler and his two co-agents was learning that they would not receive thousands of acres free from the Venezuelan government as they had been led to believe. For six weeks, the three bickered among themselves over price and location as they searched fruitlessly for affordable land near the Gulf of Paria. Once again, Etzler tried to obtain free land, this time to the west, in the vicinity of Caracas, and once again he met with no success. By this time (early May 1845) to co-agents undoubtedly realized that the society would have to purchase suitable land wherever they could find it. By this time also, however, Etzler was operating independently from Carr and Taylor, a situation which led to almost inevitable dissension over the best location for the settlement. In October, Etzler, finding a fertile, cheap, and healthful area, bought land for himself west of Caracas at Valencia; it was here he believed that the colonists would settle. Carr and Taylor, in the meantime, needing land on which the colonists could found the initial community, bought 120 poor, hilly acres in Guinimita, along the Gulf of Paria.

Meanwhile, matters were not going well with the society in England. New memberships began to decline; dissension arose over the lack of news about the acquisition of a land site in Venezuela, especially when it became clear that free acreage was not forthcoming and Etzler's Satellite, which for some reason had not been connected properly, failed to perform up to expectations in a trial in Oxfordshire in September 1845—though Etzler's general theories seemed to have been upheld to the satisfaction of his firm supporters, who attributed the Satellite's failure to do more than push around a few yards of dirt to minor mechanical difficulties. The general dissension within the society—discord between branches in London and those in outlying areas; disagreement over whether to purchase a ship for the journey to Venezuela or rely on Etzler's unproved Naval Automaton; and conflict over the proposed democratization of the society's constitution (Etzler and Stollmeyer eventually being reduced to the same level as other members)—was no doubt at least the partial cause of only seventy-three out of an expected one hundred colonists applying for immediate emigration.

In an attempt to stir up what was now a dying interest in a tropical site for the proposed Utopia, a group of thirty-one pilgrims left England months earlier than planned, arriving in Guinimita in December 1845, instead of in the following spring. Not surprisingly, the site was not ready to receive them, only two-thirds of the land having been cleared, and they had to be quartered in Trinidad at their own expense.

Conflict between Etzler and certain members of the society now became even more pronounced. Basically, these members objected to "Etzler and Company" receiving one hundred shares in the society solely for the use of Etzler's Satellite to clear and



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work the land; there was, after all, no proof that it would work. Etzler, they objected, would profit not only immediately from his possession of shares, but also in the long run from his private ownership of the Satellite. Etzler and Stollmeyer earlier had successfully attempted to amend the constitution of the society to give them this financial advantage; now the society had neither the ownership of the Satellite, the rights to other inventions by Etzler, nor even his advice on scientific matters in general. In spite of Etzler's protestations to the contrary, it seemed to many that he was just as (if not more) interested in capitalism and self-aggrandizement as in communal experiments and secular millennial dreams of a new social and economic order.

Neither was there proof that Etzler's floating islands would work. True to his faith in his friend's genius, Stollmeyer, along with other members of the society in Trinidad, in late 1845 and early 1846 built a working model out of bamboo and balsa wood. Unfortunately, Etzler's unique sail system could be built only in England and then shipped to the tropics; for this venture, Etzler said he needed about 3,000 pounds from the society's sister organization, the Venezuelan Transit Company. The money was not forthcoming; instead, the society decided, over Etzler's strong objections, to charter a ship, the *Condor*, to transport a second group of 193 pilgrims to the tropics in March 1846. Even though a second Tropical Emigration Society was formed in April, this apparent expansion did not really indicate full confidence in Etzler and Stollmeyer. Many feared that the faith originally placed in Etzler's inventions had not been well founded; one member, in an open letter, regretted not making Etzler stick "to the original proposal when the prospectus was published." It is not too late, he argued, to force a new bargain on Etzler and Stollmeyer; and he warned the society to "stick to your bargain and depend upon it we shall have a float, or Etzler and his inventions will become a byword and a laughing stock to the world."

Although the fact may have been hidden from some, in actuality the society was in its death throes. As news of the sickness and death of many of the colonists reached England (the second group of pilgrims had found fifteen dead at Guinimita and the colony nearly abandoned), the society began to lose members. Even more telling, the colonists in Venezuela could not adjust to the hardships demanded of them; as one of them reported, they began to wish for "comforts above our means at this time," particularly European food and drinks ... [and] the tavern parlour with its fun and frolic." Not having given up their dream of Utopia, but having given up on the harsh tropics, some colonists wanted to relocate in a more temperate climate. In May a disillusioned group sailed for New Orleans.

Etzler, in his pride, was angered by the apparent failure of his envisioned tropical paradise. In a letter to the Morning Star in July 1846, he lashed out at those who had unfairly criticized him for failing to obtain free land from the Venezuelan



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government; after all, he argued, his power had been drastically reduced by the initial presence of the two co-agents. Worst of all, however, his altruism had been questioned.

The next two issues of the Morning Star carried "The Manifesto of J. A. Etzler" – an open letter detailing his undying expectations of "a new order of things." His secular Millennium was still a bright and shining star to be followed; he still had faith that once men learned to turn away from the barbarism of capitalism, there would be "a universal paradise of peace, abundance, happiness and intelligence, whence tyranny of all kinds [would be] banished." He naturally saw his own inventions as clearing the path and easing the way to the New Eden. The journey, however, would now take about one hundred years instead of the optimistic ten he had predicted in Paradise.

Impatient as always with minds unable to see Truth with the same absolute clarity he could, but now recognizing that the masses would have to be brought along slowly, Etzler proposed to establish a "practical school," a "union of clear and unbiased minds," where only "material facts evident to our senses" would be studied and "a Pythagorean silence of years for the disciples" would be enforced to suppress error of thought. This union would determine, for example, the best food for man and the best ways to increase the production of it. By purifying the environment and tempering the passions, Etzler hoped to eradicate disease and prolong life to 108-192 years.

His first work, PARADISE, was conjured up again and again as Etzler portrayed a world of canals carrying away stagnant water, of reclaimed swampland, and of ubiquitous floating islands. Interesting additions to the world of PARADISE were "self-moving houses" on a network of vitrified roads and "air balloons to explore countries" – an image which naturally suggests Edward's "contrivances" which were to unify "the whole earth ... [into] one community.

If it had not been clear before, however, it becomes so in this document – that Etzler was much more than a mechanic and an inventor. If this were not so, he would hardly be worth resurrecting from historical oblivion. He is, as Patrick Browtowin so aptly points out, "a synecdoche of America in the 1830s and 1840s"; his output of "poetic dreams visions, propaganda tracts, and engineering descriptions" hint, in our merely listing them, at the complex urge which drove Americans then and which drives them to some extent today – the compulsion to search for a divinely ordained and planned perfect order in which American idealism and ingenuity produce a paradisiacal life of ease and abundance for all men. Etzler sincerely believed that he could bring about such a "new order" – essentially "the new heaven and the new earth" of Columbus and Edwards. The rationale behind his confident striving for this "new order" was that he saw its ultimate arrival as an absolute certainty. In spite of the truth of Brostowin's observation that Etzler "was always outside denomination or institutional religions" –even "outside Christianity"– he yet had faith in a



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divine drama which would inevitably result in a New Eden being established.

He was, in other words, a conscious secular millennialist who "sought the end of History in the accomplishment of his Paradise on earth." Not believing in a spiritual heaven—considering, in fact, the promise of rewards in an after-life to be a hindrance to man's improving his lot on earth—he believed in the divinity of man, the dependability and essential simplicity of empirical phenomena, and the inevitability of history, all of which would produce a paradise over the whole world.

We do not know to what extent, or by what means, Etzler was exposed directly to Christian millennialism. We do know, however, that in both Europe and America profound contemporary concern over the advent and content of the golden age preceding the Second Coming is easily documented in hundreds of essays and sermons, many of which contain detailed speculations on—in the words of Samuel Hopkins—the "worldly prosperity, by which all will be in easy, comfortable circumstances, as to outward conveniences, and temporal enjoyment."

We know also that belief in the imminence of the Millennium was shared not only by clergymen of different religious persuasions, but also by many of the communal utopists of the time, with many of whom Etzler had either direct or indirect contact. He was, for example, as we have seen, in close contact with Robert Owen, who, in his own way, set about to usher in the Millennium. In May, 1843, in fact, Stollmeyer, no doubt acting as Etzler's ambassador as well as professing his own intense interest in millennialism, attended a great celebration put on at Harmony Hall by Owen's Rationalists to announce the actual beginning of the great period of peace and prosperity. And during the summer of 1843, Etzler supervised the construction of his Satellite—for a test that ultimately failed—at Peace Union, a German community in western Pennsylvania founded by the German immigrant Andrew Smolnikor, an itinerant preacher, who, like John the Baptist, was busy making "ready the way for the Lord in the impending millennium by establishing a new society based on brotherhood, love, and Christian communism." In nearly everything he wrote, Etzler expressed his belief that "We are on the eve of the most eventful period of mankind"; sometimes, especially in his early, more optimistic, years, he could speak of the "light of knowledge [bringing] forth all this change within this generation."

In spite of depressing setbacks, Etzler evidently never lost faith in the certainty of the fulfillment of his dream. From Hegel's belief in the absolute rationality of history, he distilled a deterministic philosophy which brought him hope and peace of mind. All happenings, he believed, were linked; both past and future were unalterable. The rational man knew that rage, fear and grief were pointless, for the divine drama of secular salvation would work itself out. Paradise would happen here and, if not now, sometime soon. Rational men, however, could hasten the advent of Paradise; indeed, rationality was a



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prerequisite for Paradise, because one had to understand the truth in order to act on it. Etzler went on in his "manifesto" to show how one hundred rational men—essentially his disciples—could increase to 100,000 within three generations. In order to train these initial disciples, Etzler proposed to found a school or union. By means of a mathematical progression, Etzler "proved" that an initial one hundred members could, by educating two hundred new members each, increase to 800,000,000 members within three generations. By educating others, therefore, a few rational men could bring about Paradise even sooner.

Whereas in PARADISE Etzler had evidently believed that arguments (and even insults) and demonstrations of remarkable inventions could, by themselves, convince men of the truth of his vision, he seemed here to recognize that few were truly rational; the rest had to be raised slowly, patiently. Etzler, near the close of his recorded life, was not the vituperative ranter and raver against the inertia of the stupid masses that he had been over a decade before. He closed his "Manifesto" with a hopeful appeal to all people to join his union.

The constant attacks on his character and motives, however, finally crushed him. Although some branches of the society still had faith in him, he became bitter; his pride had been wounded too severely. In the last known document written by him—a letter to a friend—he directed that all future correspondence be sent to him at a Philadelphia address. He probably returned there, although he may have gone back to Germany. At any rate, his life is completely unknown after 1846.

The Tropical Emigration Society in Trinidad broke up when Etzler left. Some members tried to farm the land but failed; most found steady employment on the local economy. Fever and flooding destroyed the settlement in Guinimita. In January 1847, the society in England urged the colonists to leave Venezuela and settle in the western portion of the United States. While some members in England and Trinidad fought to the end to save the society, most lost interest in the experiment in the tropics. Forty-eight finally sailed from Trinidad for New Orleans aboard the *Condor*. They were apparently lost at sea. The end of the Tropical Emigration Society officially came in May 1847, when its final meeting was held. An attempt at that time by some members to organize an American Emigration Society in order to found a colony in Texas failed. This particular vision of Utopia had faded.

No matter how important we finally consider the influence of secularized millennial speculations and myths of the American Eden, we must recognize that other thought and feeling went into the make-up of Etzler's metaphysics. The concept of energy-to-be-harnessed, for example, was in the intellectual atmosphere during Etzler's formative years. He must have inhaled much of it. Born around the close of the eighteenth century, Etzler no doubt grew up acutely aware of such advances in steam technology as Oliver Evans's improvement on James Watt's engine and Robert Fulton's successful voyage up the Hudson. Patrick Brostowin has



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hinted at the symbolic significance of Michael Faraday discovering the principle of electromagnetic induction and Joseph Henry building the first electric motor in 1831, the year Etzler came to the United States for the second time.

Etzler, however, both fits and does not fit the pattern set by such scientist-inventors. He was fascinated with –we could even say he worshipped– energy and power in a much more elemental form. As Bernard DeVoto has noted,

some protective coloration hid from the prophetic eye gasoline, the dynamo, electromagnetic waves, the vacuum tube, the high-frequency transmission line, the portable motor, the propeller, and the machine-press.

Etzler was in one very ironic sense a primitive, the modern equivalent of the pagan high priest trembling before fire or lightning. He always maintained –albeit with more pride than modesty– that his inventions were relatively insignificant; anyone, he claimed, could contrive a simple mechanism to translate potential into performance once the principle was known. If the Puritans were in awe of the power of saving grace, Etzler was in awe of the powers of nature. The God he sensed in nature was, in fact, power – one which had almost always remained hidden or at least obscure; he, Etzler, was the Moses who would reveal the secrets of this power, not on tablets of stone, but on the face of the pliable, manipulatable earth which man inhabited.

It was the German philosopher Hegel from which Etzler received his impetus toward “the state [which would be] ... freedom organized.” Originally, in fact, it was a new Germany which Etzler and his friend John Augustus Roebling had set out to establish. Very quickly, however, it had become not only this narrow ethnic group but Americans and, finally, all men everywhere whom Etzler meant to save. Freedom to Etzler meant more, though, than Hegel’s political freedom; it meant freedom from the tyranny of nature and things as they were – or at least seemed to be. Imbued with German romanticism, Etzler saw naturally good men needlessly bound by fetters of ignorance to a life of drudgery. The world, he felt, was not set and immutable; America, especially, was plastic and new. “There,” his friend Roebling had declared, “man [is] on his own; his success [is] limited only by his industry and his talents.”

One thing man’s industry might accomplish with the virginal American landscape was the complete transformation of what was largely a “hideous wilderness” into “a continual garden from the atlantic to the pacific ocean [sic],” as Etzler puts the matter in Paradise. The theme of the machine intruding –or being eagerly invited– into the garden is, of course, one that has been brilliantly explored by others, most notably Leo Marx. None, however, have significantly included Etzler in their tracing of the development of this theme; there is, in fact, no significant American thinker who better illustrates the basically American urge to blend the contradictory impulses of



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progressivism and pastoralism by manipulating the landscape in order to subdue the darkness and evilness associated with the wilderness in the Puritan mind – and to profit from the resultant abundance. Etzler would not only invite the machine into the garden, he would use the machine to create it. In the end, of course, the garden, the American extension of Eden, would become a garden-city, the American extension of the New Jerusalem – the image which predominates in so much of the American utopian fiction in the decade following the appearance of Edward Bellamy's *LOOKING BACKWARD* (1888).

Armed with his beliefs in America as Eden, in man as a rational creature, and in Hegel's "absolute rationality of history," Etzler came to the New World to found the State of Paradise. With him he carried other intellectual baggage as well, including the utopian theories of Charles Fourier, the self-proclaimed "Messiah of Reason"; these theories gave or reconfirmed a yearning for absolute organization and order, a desire to ensure a snaring of the blessings which life had to offer by freeing men from the false biblical curse of work, and tendencies toward both absolute materialism (which was also present in and bolstered by his Hegelian philosophy) and sensual (as opposed to sexual) pleasures. Fourier also reinforced Etzler's sense of brotherhood and humanitarianism – a communitarianism, in short, which seemed to Etzler to be a prerequisite for mankind enjoying the benefits which the world had to offer. Following Fourier's dictum, Etzler, in *PARADISE*, insists that the first responsibility of an individual aspiring to bring about "a superior life" on earth is to "constitute ... a society in his neighborhood." The second part of his major work is devoted entirely to detailing precisely how a series of Fourieristic communities will enable man to conquer and tame first the American West and then the whole world.

Etzler was a man full of contradictions. He was a visionary and a theorist who considered himself a realist and a practical man. He was a prophet who considered himself a scientist. He was a revolutionary thinker who desperately wished to avoid the violent revolution which might follow the new technology which he was preaching. He was a Jeffersonian agrarian –with little faith in the common man– who would transform America into Utopia by means of science and technology. And he dedicated himself to founding the perfectly free State while unconsciously succumbing to the same benevolent authoritarianism which we find in nearly all American utopian experiments (both real and fictional). Etzler's certitude that only he, Moses-like, had been chosen to lead mankind into the promised land of Utopia –related as it is to the Hegelian idea of the leader-hero as the great man, somehow above the rules and opinions of lesser individuals– made Etzler feel it necessary to lay down rather precisely the manner in which the State of the New Eden was to be organized and run. Etzler's authoritarian turn of mind is revealed not only by his attempts, along with Stollmeyer, to control entirely the operations of the Tropical Emigration Society, but also by his



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psychological need to impose a preconceived order on everything and his inability to leave anything to chance or human impulse. As John L. Thomas has pointed out, "[I]n one way or another almost all the communitarians succumbed to the myth of the mathematically precise arrangement, searching for the perfect number or exact size, plotting the precise disposition of working forces and living space, and combining these estimates in a formula which would ensure perfect concord." The formula concept, of course, had trapped Fourier, too. We can surmise that the positive philosophical thrust, the motivation and hope, which Fourierism gave Etzler also worked to his disadvantage: This Hegelian hero was, when it came right down to it, unable to escape the strictures which the French utopist's philosophy (and the natural tendencies of his own personality) foisted upon him. Etzler was given a false sense of security by the seeming certainty of the mathematically precise arrangement. When some of his followers finally accused him of being eminently impractical, he could not understand their objections and he could not change or bend. Did not his mathematical projections prove the truth of his assertions – no matter what happened when men tried to translate them into historical fact? Mathematical formula, in other words, became equivalent to objective experience. We have only to glance at the "estimations of expenses and profits" in THE NEW WORLD, or the computation of usable power in the wind in PARADISE, to see that same kind of preposterousness in his mathematical progressions as we see in Fourier's classifications of the passions or his "passionate series."

FUTURE-WORSHIP

"MAGISTERIAL HISTORY" IS FANTASIZING: HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



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JOHN ADOLPHUS ETZLER

JOHN ADOLPHUS ETZLER

ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.



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