

# **“Ascendency of Machinery over the Power of Sinew and Muscle”**

*Scientific American*, June 20, 1868, pp. 392

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“Our age is characterized by the grandest development of mechanical power ever known in the history of the human race. The machine power of England and Wales is competent to perform the labor of nearly six hundred millions of men; and is probably greater in productive capacity than the labor power of all the world besides. The machine power of the United States, through growing with amazing rapidity, does not more than equal the labor power of two hundred millions of men. It is owned, of course, almost exclusively by the North.

“This mechanical power, wherever developed and wherever possessed, is placing the communities employing it far in advance of others in wealth, population, and political and financial power. This form of industrial energy began to take growth in England about one century ago, when that country was yet almost exclusively agricultural; when it exported largely of grain, and imported largely of manufactures; when its industrial interests were all in a languishing condition; and when, consequently, it was too feeble to suppress a ‘rebellion’ represented by fifteen or twenty thousand soldiers under the command of George Washington. Abundant statistics are available to show that the agricultural communities of England have advanced since that time very slowly and inconsiderably, except so far as they have been stimulated by the presence of manufacturers; and that the wonderful development of the island in the intervening period has occurred exclusively in its mining and manufacturing population. So vast is the present capacity of Great Britain for protect and for the execution of labor, that it can underbid the whole world in the sale of merchandize; and even the enterprising and boastful Northern States of America, notwithstanding the aid derived from the highest tariff ever enforced, are about to experience a financial collapse, in consequent of an excess of imports over exports in their foreign trade; an excess of imports over exports in their for trade, an excess amounting to several hundred millions of dollars per annum. So completely does this tremendous machinery power secure to Great Britain the command of trade and the tribute of the world, that other countries will have to reverse their previously received axioms of political economy, in order to protect their industrial interests from crushing competition of so colossal a power. – *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine.*”