

# HISTORY

OF

## MR. BABBAGE'S CALCULATING ENGINES.

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*Statement of the circumstances attending the Invention and Construction of Mr. Babbage's Calculating Engines.*

[From the Philosophical Magazine, Sept. 1843, p. 235.]

**MUCH** misapprehension having arisen as to the circumstances attending the invention and construction of Mr. Babbage's Calculating Engines, it is necessary to state *from authority* the facts relating to them.

In 1823, Mr. Babbage, who had previously invented an Engine for calculating and printing tables by means of *differences*, undertook, at the desire of the Government, to superintend the construction of such an Engine. He bestowed his whole time upon the subject for many years, refusing for that purpose other avocations which would have been attended with considerable pecuniary advantage. During this period about £17,000 had been expended by the Government in the construction of the Difference Engine. A considerable part of this sum had from time to time been advanced by Mr. Babbage for the payment of the workmen, and was of course repaid; but it was never contemplated by either party that any portion of this sum should be appropriated to Mr. Babbage himself, and in truth not one single shilling of the money was in any shape whatever received by Mr. Babbage for his invention, his time, or his services, a fact which Sir Robert Peel admitted in the House of Commons in March 1843.

Early in 1833 the construction of this Engine was suspended on account of some dissatisfaction with the workmen, which it is now unnecessary to detail. It was expected that the interruption, which arose from circumstances over which Mr. Babbage had no control, would be only temporary. About twelve months after the progress of the Difference Engine had been thus suspended, Mr. Babbage discovered a principle of an entirely new order, the power of which over the most complicated arithmetical operations seemed nearly unbounded. The invention of simpler mechanical means for executing the elementary operations of that Engine, now acquired far greater importance than it had hitherto possessed.

In the Engine for calculating by differences, such simplifications affected only about a hundred and twenty similar parts, while in the new, or Analytical Engine, they might affect several thousand. The Difference Engine might be constructed with more or less advantage, by employing various mechanical modes for the operation of addition. The Analytical Engine could not exist without inventing for it a method of mechanical addition possessed of the utmost simplicity. In fact it was not until upwards of twenty different modes for performing the operation of addition had been designed and drawn, that the necessary degree of simplicity required for the Analytical Engine was ultimately attained.

These new views acquired great additional importance from their bearings upon the Difference Engine already partly executed for the Government; for if such simplifications should be discovered, it might happen that the Analytical Engine would execute with greater rapidity the calculations for which the Difference Engine was intended; or that the Difference Engine would itself be superseded by a far simpler mode of construction.

Though these views might, perhaps, at that period, have appeared visionary, they have subsequently been completely realized.

To have allowed the construction of the Difference Engine to be resumed while these new views were withheld from the Government, would have been improper; yet the state of uncertainty in which those views were then necessarily involved, rendered any written communication respecting their probable bearing on that engine a matter of very great difficulty. It therefore appeared to Mr. Babbage that the most straightforward course was to ask for an interview with the head of the Government, and to communicate to him the exact state of the case. Various circumstances occurred to delay, and ultimately to prevent that interview.

From the year 1833 to the close of 1842, Mr. Babbage repeatedly applied to the Government for its decision upon the subject. These applications were unavailing. Years of delay and anxiety followed each other, impairing those energies which were now directed to the invention of the Analytical Engine. This state of uncertainty had many injurious effects. It prevented Mr. Babbage from entering into any engagement with other Governments respecting the Analytical Engine, by which he might have been enabled to employ a greater number of assistants, and thus to have applied his faculties only to the highest departments of the subject, instead of exhausting them on inferior objects, that might have been executed with less fatigue by other heads. It also became necessary, from motives of prudence, that the heavy expense incurred for this purpose should be spread over a period of many years. This consideration naturally caused a new source of anxiety and risk, arising from the uncertain tenure of human life and of human faculties,—a reflection ever present to distract and torment the mind, and itself calculated to cause the fulfilment of its own forebodings.

Amidst such distractions the author of the Analytical Engine has steadily pursued his single purpose. The numberless misrepresentations of the facts connected with both Engines have not induced him to withdraw his attention from the new Invention; and the circumstance of his not having printed a description of either Engine has arisen entirely from his determination never to employ his mind upon the *description* of those Machines so long as a single difficulty remained which might *limit* the *power* of the Analytical Engine. The drawings, however, and the notations have been freely shown; and the great principles on which the Analytical Engine is founded have been explained and discussed with some of the first philosophers of the present day. Copies of the engravings were sent to the libraries of several public institutions, and the effect of the publicity thus given to the subject is fully proved by its having enabled a distinguished Italian Geometer to draw up from these sources an excellent account of that Engine.

Throughout the whole of these labours connected with the Analytical Engine, neither the Science, nor the Institutions, nor the Government of his Country have ever afforded him the slightest encouragement. When the Invention was noticed in the House of Commons, one single voice\* alone was raised in its favour.

\* That of Mr. Hawes, Member for Lambeth.

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During nearly the whole of a period of upwards of twenty years, Mr. Babbage had maintained, in his own house, and at his own expense, an establishment for aiding him in carrying out his views, and in making experiments, which most materially assisted in improving the Difference Engine. When that work was suspended he still continued his own inquiries, and having discovered principles of far wider extent, he ultimately embodied them in the Analytical Engine.

The establishment necessary in the former part of this period for the actual construction of the Difference Engine, and of the extensive drawings which it demanded, as well as for the formation of those tools which were contrived to overcome the novel difficulties of the case, and in the latter part of the same period by the drawings and notations of the Analytical Engine, and the experiments relating to its construction, gave occupation to a considerable number of workmen of the greatest skill. During the many years in which this work proceeded, the workmen were continually changing, who carried into the various workshops in which they were afterwards employed the practical knowledge acquired in the construction of these machines.

To render the drawings of the Difference Engine intelligible, Mr. Babbage had invented a compact and comprehensive language (the Mechanical Notation), by which every contemporaneous or successive movement of this Machine became known. Another addition to mechanical science was subsequently made in establishing principles for the *lettering* of drawings; one consequence of which is, that although many parts of a machine may be projected upon any plan, it will be easily seen, by the nature of the letter attached to each working point, to which of those parts it really belongs.

By the means of this system, combined with the Mechanical Notations, it is now possible to express the forms and actions of the most complicated machine in language which is at once condensed, precise and universal.

At length, in November 1842, Mr. Babbage received a letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, stating that Sir Robert Peel and himself had jointly and reluctantly come to the conclusion that it was the duty of the Government, on the ground of expense, to abandon the further construction of the Difference Engine. The same letter contained a proposal to Mr. Babbage, on the part of Government, that he should accept the whole of the drawings, together with the part of the Engine already completed, as well as the materials in a state of preparation. This proposition he declined.

The object of the ANALYTICAL ENGINE (the drawings and the experiments for which have been wholly carried on at Mr. Babbage's expense, by his own draftsmen, workmen and assistants) is to convert into numbers all the formulæ of analysis, and to work out the algebraical development of all formulæ whose laws are known.

The present state of the Analytical Engine is as follows:—

All the great principles on which the discovery rests have been explained, and drawings of mechanical structures have been made, by which each may be carried into operation.

Simpler mechanisms, as well as more extensive principles than were required for the Difference Engine, have been discovered for all the elementary portions of the Analytical Engine, and numerous drawings of these successive simplifications exist.

The mode of combining the various sections of which the Engine is formed has been examined with unceasing anxiety, for the purpose of reducing the whole combination to the greatest possible simplicity. Drawings of almost all the plans thus discussed have been made, and the latest of the drawings (bearing the number 28) shows how many have been superseded, and also, from its extreme comparative simplicity, that little further advance can be expected in that direction.

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Mechanical Notations have been made both of the actions of detached parts and of the general action of the whole, which cover about four or five hundred large folio sheets of paper.

The original rough sketches are contained in about five volumes.

There are upwards of one hundred large drawings.

No part of the construction of the Analytical Engine has yet been commenced. A long series of experiments have, however, been made upon the art of shaping metals; and the tools to be employed for that purpose have been discussed, and many drawings of them prepared. The great object of these inquiries and experiments is, on the one hand, by simplifying as much as possible the construction, and on the other, by contriving new and cheaper means of execution, at length to reduce the expense within those limits which a private individual may command.

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#### ARTICLE XXIX.

[From the Scientific Memoirs, vol. iii. p. 666.]

[BEFORE submitting to our readers the translation of M. Menabrea's memoir 'On the Mathematical Principles of the ANALYTICAL ENGINE' invented by Mr. Babbage, we shall present to them a list of the printed papers connected with the subject, and also of those relating to the Difference Engine by which it was preceded.

For information on Mr. Babbage's "*Difference Engine*," which is but slightly alluded to by M. Menabrea, we refer the reader to the following sources:—

1. Letter to Sir Humphry Davy, Bart., P.R.S., on the Application of Machinery to Calculate and Print Mathematical Tables. By Charles Babbage, Esq., F.R.S. London, July 1822. Reprinted, with a Report of the Council of the Royal Society, by order of the House of Commons, May 1823.
2. On the Application of Machinery to the Calculation of Astronomical and Mathematical Tables. By Charles Babbage, Esq.—Memoirs of the Astronomical Society, vol. i. part 2. London, 1822.
3. Address to the Astronomical Society by Henry Thomas Colebrooke, Esq., F.R.S., President, on presenting the first Gold Medal of the Society to Charles Babbage, Esq., for the invention of the Calculating Engine.—Memoirs of the Astronomical Society. London, 1822.
4. On the Determination of the General Term of a New Class of Infinite Series. By Charles Babbage, Esq.—Transactions of the Cambridge Philosophical Society.
5. On Mr. Babbage's New Machine for Calculating and Printing Mathematical Tables.—Letter from Francis Baily, Esq., F.R.S., to M. Schumacher. No. 46, *Astronomische Nachrichten*. Reprinted in the *Philosophical Magazine*, May 1824.
6. On a Method of expressing by Signs the Action of Machinery. By Charles Babbage, Esq.—*Philosophical Transactions*. London, 1826.
7. On Errors common to many Tables of Logarithms. By Charles Babbage, Esq.—Memoirs of the Astronomical Society. London, 1827.
8. Report of the Committee appointed by the Council of the Royal Society to consider the subject referred to in a communication received by them from the Treasury respecting Mr. Babbage's Calculating Engine, and to report thereon. London, 1829.

9. *Economy of Manufactures*, chap. xx. 8vo. London, 1832.

10. Article on Babbage's Calculating Engine.—*Edinburgh Review*, July 1834. No. 120. vol. lix.

The present state of the Difference Engine, which has always been the property of Government, is as follows:—The drawings are nearly finished, and the mechanical notation of the whole, recording every motion of which it is susceptible, is completed. A part of that Engine, comprising sixteen figures, arranged in three orders of differences, has been put together, and has frequently been used during the last eight years. It performs its work with absolute precision. This portion of the Difference Engine, together with all the drawings, are at present deposited in the Museum of King's College, London.

Of the ANALYTICAL ENGINE, which forms the principal object of the present memoir, we are not aware that any notice has hitherto appeared, except a Letter from the Inventor to M. Quetelet, Secretary to the Royal Academy of Sciences at Brussels, by whom it was communicated to that body. We subjoin a translation of this Letter, which was itself a translation of the original, and was not intended for publication by its author.

*Royal Academy of Sciences at Brussels. General Meeting of the 7th and 8th of May, 1835.*

“A Letter from Mr. Babbage announces that he has for six months been engaged in making the drawings of a new calculating machine of far greater power than the first.

“‘I am myself astonished,’ says Mr. Babbage, ‘at the power I have been enabled to give to this machine; a year ago I should not have believed this result possible. This machine is intended to contain a hundred variables (or numbers susceptible of changing); each of these numbers may consist of twenty-five figures,  $v_1, v_2, \dots, v_n$  being any numbers whatever,  $n$  being less than a hundred; if  $f(v_1, v_2, v_3, \dots, v_n)$  be any given function which can be formed by addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, extraction of roots, or elevation to powers, the machine will calculate its numerical value; it will afterwards substitute this value in the place of  $v$ , or of any other variable, and will calculate this second function with respect to  $v$ . It will reduce to tables almost all equations of finite differences. Let us suppose that we have observed a thousand values of  $a, b, c, d$ , and that we wish to calculate them by the formula  $p = \sqrt{\frac{a+b}{c d}}$ , the machine must be set to calculate the formula; the first series of the values of  $a, b, c, d$  must be adjusted to it; it will then calculate them, print them, and reduce them to zero; lastly, it will ring a bell to give notice that a new set of constants must be inserted. When there exists a relation between any number of successive coefficients of a series, provided it can be expressed as has already been said, the machine will calculate them and make their terms known in succession; and it may afterwards be disposed so as to find the value of the series for all the values of the variable.’

“Mr. Babbage announces, in conclusion, ‘that the greatest difficulties of the invention have already been surmounted, and that the plans will be finished in a few months.’”

In the Ninth Bridgewater Treatise, Mr. Babbage has employed several arguments deduced from the Analytical Engine, which afford some idea of its powers. See Ninth Bridgewater Treatise, 8vo, second edition. London, 1834.

Some of the numerous drawings of the Analytical Engine have been engraved on wooden

blocks, and from these (by a mode contrived by Mr. Babbage) various stereotype plates have been taken. They comprise—

1. Plan of the figure wheels for one method of adding numbers.
  2. Elevation of the wheels and axis of ditto.
  3. Elevation of framing only of ditto.
  4. Section of adding wheels and framing together.
  5. Section of the adding wheels, sign wheels and framing complete.
  6. Impression from the original wooden block.
  7. Impressions from a stereotype cast of No. 6, with the letters and signs inserted. Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5 were stereotypes taken from this.
  8. Plan of adding wheels and of long and short pinions, by means of which *stepping* is accomplished.
- N.B. This process performs the operation of multiplying or dividing a number by any power of ten.
9. Elevation of long pinions in the position for addition.
  10. Elevation of long pinions in the position for stepping.
  11. Plan of mechanism for carrying the tens (by anticipation), connected with long pinions.
  12. Section of the chain of wires for anticipating carriage.
  13. Sections of the elevation of parts of the preceding carriage.

All these were executed about five years ago. At a later period (August 1840) Mr. Babbage caused one of his general plans (No. 25) of the whole Analytical Engine to be lithographed at Paris.

Although these illustrations have not been published, on account of the time which would be required to describe them, and the rapid succession of improvements made subsequently, yet copies have been freely given to many of Mr. Babbage's friends, and were in August 1838 presented at Newcastle to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and in August 1840 to the Institute of France through M. Arago, as well as to the Royal Academy of Turin through M. Plana.  
 —EDITOR.]

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*Sketch of the Analytical Engine invented by Charles Babbage, Esq. By L. F. MENABREA, of Turin, Officer of the Military Engineers.*

[From the *Bibliothèque Universelle de Genève*, No. 82. October 1842.]

THOSE labours which belong to the various branches of the mathematical sciences, although on first consideration they seem to be the exclusive province of intellect, may, nevertheless, be divided into two distinct sections; one of which may be called the mechanical, because it is subjected to precise and invariable laws, that are capable of being expressed by means of the operations of matter; while the other, demanding the intervention of reasoning, belongs more specially to the domain of the understanding. This admitted, we may propose to execute, by means of machinery, the mechanical branch of these labours, reserving for pure intellect that which depends on the reasoning faculties. Thus the rigid exactness of those laws which regulate numerical calculations must frequently have suggested the employment of material instruments, either for executing the

whole of such calculations or for abridging them; and thence have arisen several inventions having this object in view, but which have in general but partially attained it. For instance, the much-admired machine of Pascal is now simply an object of curiosity, which, whilst it displays the powerful intellect of its inventor, is yet of little utility in itself. Its powers extended no further than the execution of the first four\* operations of arithmetic, and indeed were in reality confined to that of the first two, since multiplication and division were the result of a series of additions and subtractions. The chief drawback hitherto on most of such machines is, that they require the continual intervention of a human agent to regulate their movements, and thence arises a source of errors; so that, if their use has not become general for large numerical calculations, it is because they have not in fact resolved the double problem which the question presents, that of *correctness* in the results, united with *economy* of time.

Struck with similar reflections, Mr. Babbage has devoted some years to the realization of a gigantic idea. He proposed to himself nothing less than the construction of a machine capable of executing not merely arithmetical calculations, but even all those of analysis, if their laws are known. The imagination is at first astounded at the idea of such an undertaking; but the more calm reflection we bestow on it, the less impossible does success appear, and it is felt that it may depend on the discovery of some principle so general, that, if applied to machinery, the latter may be capable of mechanically translating the operations which may be indicated to it by algebraical notation. The illustrious inventor having been kind enough to communicate to me some of his views on this subject during a visit he made at Turin, I have, with his approbation, thrown together the impressions they have left on my mind. But the reader must not expect to find a description of Mr. Babbage's engine; the comprehension of this would entail studies of much length; and I shall endeavour merely to give an insight into the end proposed, and to develop the principles on which its attainment depends.

I must first premise that this engine is entirely different from that of which there is a notice in the 'Treatise on the Economy of Machinery,' by the same author. But as the latter gave rise† to the idea of the engine in question, I consider it will be a useful preliminary briefly to recall what were Mr. Babbage's first essays, and also the circumstances in which they originated.

It is well known that the French government, wishing to promote the extension of the decimal

\* This remark seems to require further comment, since it is in some degree calculated to strike the mind as being at variance with the subsequent passage (page 10), where it is explained that *an engine which can effect these four operations can in fact effect every species of calculation*. The apparent discrepancy is stronger too in the translation than in the original, owing to its being impossible to render precisely into the English tongue all the niceties of distinction which the French idiom happens to admit of in the phrases used for the two passages we refer to. The explanation lies in this: that in the one case the execution of these four operations is the *fundamental starting-point*, and the object proposed for attainment by the machine is the *subsequent combination of these* in every possible variety; whereas in the other case the execution of some one of these four operations, selected at pleasure, is the *ultimatum*, the sole and utmost result that can be proposed for attainment by the machine referred to, and which result it cannot any further combine or work upon. The one *begins* where the other *ends*. Should this distinction not now appear perfectly clear, it will become so on perusing the rest of the Memoir, and the Notes that are appended to it.—NOTE BY TRANSLATOR.

† The idea that the one engine is the offspring and has grown out of the other, is an exceedingly natural and plausible supposition, until reflection reminds us that no *necessary* sequence and connexion need exist between two such inventions, and that they *may* be wholly independent. M. Menabrea has shared this idea in common with persons who have not his profound and accurate insight into the nature of either engine. In Note A. (see the Notes at the end of the Memoir) it will be found sufficiently explained, however, that this supposition is unfounded. M. Menabrea's opportunities were by no means such as could be adequate to afford him information on a point like this, which would be naturally and almost unconsciously *assumed*, and would scarcely suggest any inquiry with reference to it.—NOTE BY TRANSLATOR.

system, had ordered the construction of logarithmical and trigonometrical tables of enormous extent. M. de Prony, who had been entrusted with the direction of this undertaking, divided it into three sections, to each of which was appointed a special class of persons. In the first section the formulæ were so combined as to render them subservient to the purposes of numerical calculation; in the second, these same formulæ were calculated for values of the variable, selected at certain successive distances; and under the third section, comprising about eighty individuals, who were most of them only acquainted with the first two rules of arithmetic, the values which were intermediate to those calculated by the second section were interpolated by means of simple additions and subtractions.

An undertaking similar to that just mentioned having been entered upon in England, Mr. Babbage conceived that the operations performed under the third section might be executed by a machine; and this idea he realized by means of mechanism, which has been in part put together, and to which the name Difference Engine is applicable, on account of the principle upon which its construction is founded. To give some notion of this, it will suffice to consider the series of whole square numbers, 1, 4, 9, 16, 25, 36, 49, 64, &c. By subtracting each of these from the succeeding one, we obtain a new series, which we will name the Series of First Differences, consisting of the numbers 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, &c. On subtracting from each of these the preceding one, we obtain the Second Differences, which are all constant and equal to 2. We may represent this succession of operations, and their results, in the following table:—

A. Column o Square Numbers.	B. First Differ- ences.	C. Second Differ- ences.
1		
4	3	
9	5	2 <i>b</i>
16	7	2 <i>d</i>
25	9	2
36	11	2

From the mode in which the last two columns B and C have been formed, it is easy to see, that if, for instance, we desire to pass from the number 5 to the succeeding one 7, we must add to the former the constant difference 2; similarly, if from the square number 9 we would pass to the following one 16, we must add to the former the difference 7, which difference is in other words the preceding difference 5, plus the constant difference 2; or again, which comes to the same thing, to obtain 16 we have only to add together the three numbers 2, 5, 9, placed obliquely in the direction *a b*. Similarly, we obtain the number 25 by summing up the three numbers placed in the oblique direction *d c*: commencing by the addition  $2 + 7$ , we have the first difference 9 consecutively to 7; adding 16 to the 9 we have the square 25. We see then that the three numbers 2, 5, 9 being given, the whole series of successive square numbers, and that of their first differences likewise, may be obtained by means of simple additions.

Now, to conceive how these operations may be reproduced by a machine, suppose the latter to have three dials, designated as A, B, C, on each of which are traced, say a thousand divisions, by way of example, over which a needle shall pass. The two dials, C, B, shall have in addition a registering hammer, which is to give a number of strokes equal to that of the divisions indicated by the needle. For each stroke of the registering hammer of the dial C, the needle B shall advance one division; similarly, the needle A shall advance one division for every stroke of the registering hammer of the dial B. Such is the general disposition of the mechanism.

This being understood, let us, at the beginning of the series of operations we wish to execute, place the needle C on the division 2, the needle B on the division 5, and the needle A on the division 9. Let us allow the hammer of the dial C to strike; it will strike twice, and at the same time the needle B will pass over two divisions. The latter will then indicate the number 7, which succeeds the number 5 in the column of first differences. If we now permit the hammer of the dial B to



strike in its turn, it will strike seven times, during which the needle A will advance seven divisions; these added to the nine already marked by it will give the number 16, which is the square number consecutive to 9. If we now recommence these operations, beginning with the needle C, which is always to be left on the division 2, we shall perceive that by repeating them indefinitely, we may successively reproduce the series of whole square numbers by means of a very simple mechanism.

The theorem on which is based the construction of the machine we have just been describing, is a particular case of the following more general theorem: that if in any polynomial whatever, the highest power of whose variable is  $m$ , this same variable be increased by equal degrees; the corresponding values of the polynomial then calculated, and the first, second, third, &c. differences of these be taken (as for the preceding series of squares); the  $m$ th differences will all be equal to each other. So that, in order to reproduce the series of values of the polynomial by means of a machine analogous to the one above described, it is sufficient that there be  $(m + 1)$  dials, having the mutual relations we have indicated. As the differences may be either positive or negative, the machine will have a contrivance for either advancing or retrograding each needle, according as the number to be algebraically added may have the sign *plus* or *minus*.

If from a polynomial we pass to a series having an infinite number of terms, arranged according to the ascending powers of the variable, it would at first appear, that in order to apply the machine to the calculation of the function represented by such a series, the mechanism must include an infinite number of dials, which would in fact render the thing impossible. But in many cases the difficulty will disappear, if we observe that for a great number of functions the series which represent them may be rendered convergent; so that, according to the degree of approximation desired, we may limit ourselves to the calculation of a certain number of terms of the series, neglecting the rest. By this method the question is reduced to the primitive case of a finite polynomial. It is thus that we can calculate the succession of the logarithms of numbers. But since, in this particular instance, the terms which had been originally neglected receive increments in a ratio so continually increasing for equal increments of the variable, that the degree of approximation required would ultimately be affected, it is necessary, at certain intervals, to calculate the value of the function by different methods, and then respectively to use the results thus obtained, as data whence to deduce, by means of the machine, the other intermediate values. We see that the machine here performs the office of the third section of calculators mentioned in describing the tables computed by order of the French government, and that the end originally proposed is thus fulfilled by it.

Such is the nature of the first machine which Mr. Babbage conceived. We see that its use is confined to cases where the numbers required are such as can be obtained by means of simple additions or subtractions; that the machine is, so to speak, merely the expression of one\* particular theorem of analysis; and that, in short, its operations cannot be extended so as to embrace the solution of an infinity of other questions included within the domain of mathematical analysis. It was while contemplating the vast field which yet remained to be traversed, that Mr. Babbage, renouncing his original essays, conceived the plan of another system of mechanism whose operations should themselves possess all the generality of algebraical notation, and which, on this account, he denominates the *Analytical Engine*.

Having now explained the state of the question, it is time for me to develop the principle on

\* See Note A.

which is based the construction of this latter machine. When analysis is employed for the solution of any problem, there are usually two classes of operations to execute: first, the numerical calculation of the various coefficients; and secondly, their distribution in relation to the quantities affected by them. If, for example, we have to obtain the product of two binomials  $(a + bx)(m + nx)$ , the result will be represented by  $am + (an + bm)x + bnx^2$ , in which expression we must first calculate  $am, an, bm, bn$ ; then take the sum of  $an + bm$ ; and lastly, respectively distribute the coefficients thus obtained amongst the powers of the variable. In order to reproduce these operations by means of a machine, the latter must therefore possess two distinct sets of powers: first, that of executing numerical calculations; secondly, that of rightly distributing the values so obtained.

But if human intervention were necessary for directing each of these partial operations, nothing would be gained under the heads of correctness and economy of time; the machine must therefore have the additional requisite of executing by itself all the successive operations required for the solution of a problem proposed to it, when once the *primitive numerical data* for this same problem have been introduced. Therefore, since, from the moment that the nature of the calculation to be executed or of the problem to be resolved have been indicated to it, the machine is, by its own intrinsic power, of itself to go through all the intermediate operations which lead to the proposed result, it must exclude all methods of trial and guess-work, and can only admit the direct processes of calculation\*.

It is necessarily thus; for the machine is not a thinking being, but simply an automaton which acts according to the laws imposed upon it. This being fundamental, one of the earliest researches its author had to undertake, was that of finding means for effecting the division of one number by another without using the method of guessing indicated by the usual rules of arithmetic. The difficulties of effecting this combination were far from being among the least; but upon it depended the success of every other. Under the impossibility of my here explaining the process through which this end is attained, we must limit ourselves to admitting that the first four operations of arithmetic, that is addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, can be performed in a direct manner through the intervention of the machine. This granted, the machine is thence capable of performing every species of numerical calculation, for all such calculations ultimately resolve themselves into the four operations we have just named. To conceive how the machine can now go through its functions according to the laws laid down, we will begin by giving an idea of the manner in which it materially represents numbers.

Let us conceive a pile or vertical column consisting of an indefinite number of circular discs, all pierced through their centres by a common axis, around which each of them can take an independent rotatory movement. If round the edge of each of these discs are written the ten figures which constitute our numerical alphabet, we may then, by arranging a series of these figures in the same vertical line, express in this manner any number whatever. It is sufficient for this purpose that the first disc represent units, the second tens, the third hundreds, and so on. When two numbers have been thus written on two distinct columns, we may propose to combine them arithmetically with

\* This must not be understood in too unqualified a manner. The engine is capable, under certain circumstances, of feeling about to discover which of two or more possible contingencies has occurred, and of then shaping its future course accordingly.—NOTE BY TRANSLATOR.