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Herman Melville,

When you wrote *The Tartarus of Maids* in 1855, the Panama Railway had just been finished, linking the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Indians still lived freely in the western half of the United States, and scientists had just discovered the process of making steel. There were no phones; messages had to be sent by telegram. Television would have been a mind-boggling concept for people in the 1800s. But somehow, without any exposure to 21st century technology, you, Mr. Melville, wrote about it perfectly. In your short story, you describe the paper press as an "inflexible iron animal". Most people would see that description fit for the gargantuan machines in factories in the 1800s, but I see it fit for the small devices in our pockets today.

Technology has been a staple in my life as long as I can remember, from watching Disney movies to taking pictures of life's big events. I had always thought of technology as harmless, something that could only improve daily life, until the winter of 2016, when my smartphone got taken away and my eyes were opened. I, phoneless, would be hanging out with friends, and instead of us doing something together they would be looking at their phones. You described the factory girls as "blank-looking girls, all blankly folding blank paper", which you wrote in 1855, but I saw in 2016. I observed my friends "blank" expressions as they "blankly" checked their phones. I also saw the way my peers acted when they were on their school assigned computers, not using them for schoolwork but for games and entertainment. Students were better at typing than writing by hand, complaining when we were given written assignments. Technology has been ingrained in our youth as a given.

You wrote, "But what made the thing I saw so specially terrible to me was the metallic necessity, the unbudging fatality which governed it". Society is run by technology, from the computer supplied to the youth in schools to new models of smartphones. Electronics are deeply rooted in our modern day world, from paying for our dinner electronically to recording a child's piano recital. And don't get me wrong, technology can be used for good, but I think we need to be taught how to control ourselves, and use it only for necessary matters. The exponential growth of the use of technology is good in some aspects, but horrible in others.

The Merriam-Webster definition of addiction is "Compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance." When you read that, what do you think of? Do you think of alcohol, narcotics, nicotine? These addictions are the most common in the United States, and are widely talked about. There are many sources from which to get help for these addictions. But what people don't realize is that like alcohol, narcotics, and nicotine, technology can also be an addiction.

88% of American teens have access to cell phones. Modern teenagers are learning how to make their social connections while looking at a screen, losing the valuable experiences of human interaction. Relationships are being formed over text instead of face-to-face, and no one seems to notice how such relationships are without true depth. Most of my peers are lacking in empathy, which directly correlates to the use of technology. Forming a friendship through a mobile device is drastically different than forming a friendship through talking together, laughing together, and sometimes fighting together. What is a gain in convenience is a loss in human connection. In today's world, there is a never-ending news stream, and much of it is negative. And we are numb to it, as a people. We are instantly alerted whenever something happens, monumental or insignificant. There is no time to process, because we have stories bombarding us from every angle. My generation has grown up with this all around us and we haven't been properly taught how to care for other human beings.

So, Mr. Melville, what I am trying to say is thank you. Thank you for putting into words the feelings I have when I see electronics taking over my fellow man, feelings such as disgust and confusion. Now, after reading your story, I know that technology has been steadily replacing humanity for quite some time, but I don't have to stand by and let it happen to me. There are things I can do to help change happen in my school and around my community, as simple as leaving my computer at school overnight, and doing my written assignments by hand. Thank you for reassuring me, that, even though technology is considered the norm it doesn't have to be *my* norm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Conleigh Hemmer".

Conleigh Hemmer