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AN

LIFE

OF

ROBERT OWEN

The evil that men do lives after them:
The good is oft interred with their bones.

These two parties still divide the world,
Of those that want and those that have; and still
The same old sore breaks out from age to age,
With much the same result.

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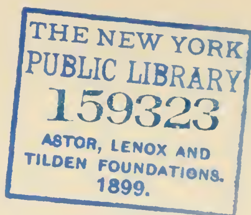

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PREFACE.

An earnest life rarely fails to excite sympathy. Even if its purpose is fanciful or impracticable, a dauntless devotion to it awakens interest.

In preparing this brief life of Robert Owen, the author's purpose has been to present fairly the principles by which he professed to be governed, and their fruits. The man is dead; but those who habitually watch the progress of opinion are aware that the principles he inculcated are, "in one form or another, the actual creed, at the present time, of a great portion of the working-classes."* Instead of being promulgated openly, however, as they were by him, they are diffused ingeniously through the periodical press and are incidentally taught in popular tales and harangues. "Men are like nettles," says M. Hugo, in one of the most widely-circulated books of our time. "Cultivation will turn them from noxious to useful plants. *There are no bad herbs or bad men: there are only bad cultivators.*" This is Robert Owen's philosophy in a nutshell.

There are thousands of minds in our country exercised on the subject of social evils and their remedy. In newspapers and debating clubs opinions are often ex-

* Westminster Review, April, 1839, as cited in the Report of the Congress of Reformers at Birmingham (Eng.), May 10, 1839.

pressed involving a bold denial of the cardinal principles of the true social state, by which the unwary may easily be deceived and misled. Robert Owen's history serves the threefold purpose of encouragement, instruction and warning. It shows what marvellous power lies in the continuous pursuit of one object; it teaches the necessity of dealing with the world as it is; and it bids us beware of putting asunder what God has joined, or contravening His immutable laws.

The "Autobiography"* has been implicitly relied on as authority for statements of fact; and no elaboration of the subject has been attempted beyond that of presenting the leading incidents of Mr. Owen's eventful life in their true relations. Some repetition of his opinions, and of the comments upon them, seemed unavoidable, to show their bearing on his various enterprises.

The author's hope is that his work may fall under the notice of those who are most likely to be misled by social empirics. And his purpose will be answered just so far as he succeeds in convincing men that "for the evils of this world there are two remedies: one is the world's, the other is God's. The world says, Give us a perfect set of *circumstances*, and then we shall have a set of perfect men. But Christianity proves that the fault is not in outward circumstances, but in ourselves."†

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* In two volumes: London, Effingham Wilson, 1857 and 1858. The first volume contains the Life; and the second is a Supplementary Appendix, containing Reports, Addresses, &c. &c.

An interesting "Life of Owen," from the pen of William Lucas Sargant, published in London in 1860, has also been relied upon for facts.

† Robertson.

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LIFE OF ROBERT OWEN.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE — EARLY INFLUENCES — PRECOCIOUS ATTAINMENTS — UNHAPPY DOMESTIC ASSOCIATIONS — CHARACTERISTIC ANECDOTES — FRIENDSHIPS — BECOMES AN USHER — A GRAND MISTAKE IN DISCIPLINE — GOES TO LONDON — EMPLOYMENT THERE — RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES — ARRIVES AT A CONCLUSION.

ROBERT OWEN was born May 14, 1771, at the village of Newtown, in North Wales, and in the vicinity of the famous castle* once owned

* A stately pile of ruins in Montgomeryshire, in which Lord Herbert of Cherbury was born, nearly three centuries ago. He attempted to reduce deism to a system, and held to the sufficiency, universality and absolute perfection of natural religion,—or that the light of reason and the principles implanted in every human mind are adequate to the discovery of all the laws needful to regulate our moral conduct and to lead us to happiness in a future state, without any divine revelation. The life of Lord Herbert, written by himself, after being long mislaid, was recovered by the family, and printed for private circulation in 1754, and reprinted in 1770 in London. How far young Owen may have been familiar with Lord Herbert's name and opinions we are not informed; but it may be said

and occupied by Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Robert was the youngest but one of seven children. His parents were members of the Established Church, and of respectable condition. His father was at one time possessed of an estate the yearly income of which was twenty-five hundred dollars, and lost it, as he believed, by the treachery of his lawyer, through the influence of a bribe from the opposite party. It is not improbable that such an event was the subject of frequent and severe animadversion in the family and in presence of the children; and this may have contributed to engender prejudices in the mind of the young child who was thereafter to act so conspicuous a part in attempts to mitigate social evils.

It seems Robert had an ambition to be foremost in every thing; and, as he was fleet of foot, he generally managed to outrun the other school-children, and so be first at school or at home. A trivial incident of his early life will serve as an illustration of this impetuosity. One morning, when he was about five years old, he found his breakfast of flummery (a preparation of oat-meal somewhat like milk-porridge) all ready for him; and, as it was covered with a scum, such as he had seen upon it when cool, he hastily took a spoonful of the scalding fluid, and instantly fainted.

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of his autobiography, as Lord Orford said of Lord Herbert's, that it is one of "the most extraordinary accounts that was ever given by a wise man of himself."

So serious was the effect that fears were felt that he could not be restored. After a considerable period, however, he revived; but the internal injury was permanent, and made it necessary, as he thought, to attend with more than ordinary care to the fitness of different kinds of food to his system. The habits of "close observation and continued reflection" which this circumstance induced he regarded as having no inconsiderable effect on the formation of his character. Perhaps his conjectures as to the mischief done by hot flummery were wide of the mark, and a minute investigation might have shown that, instead of any influence on his character, it helped to counteract unhealthy tendencies in his physical system, and so to protract life through the long period of fourscore and more years.

By the time he was seven years old, Robert could read fluently and write legibly; and he also understood the elementary rules of arithmetic. Unhappily, the ability and inclination to read were not controlled by the judgment or authority of parents or teachers. The "child was left to himself" in this as in other respects. Having free access to any and every collection of books in the village, with liberty to take home any volume of law, physic or divinity that he might fancy, and having even at that early age acquired the very baneful habit of superficial reading (for he tells us that he "generally finished a volume daily"), it is scarcely a

matter of wonder that he confounded fact with fiction and truth with error, or, as one of his biographers says, that "Adam and Crœsus, Eve and Pamela, were equally historical personages in his mind." That he read "Paradise Lost" intelligently and thoughtfully at that age (as it is said he did) we can scarcely believe, nor that he was then led to the conclusion which in his old age he traced to that early period of his life, viz.:—"that truth must always be consistent with itself and in accordance with facts." It certainly has not the complexion of a child's philosophy.

The narrow circumstances of the family at one time may be inferred from an arrangement to which the father consented, and which could scarcely fail to be prejudicial to a child of his temperament. It was that he should become assistant, or usher, to his teacher, and pay by this service for his own tuition. We can scarcely suppose that at that early age there could be any degree of that maturity of judgment or the self-control which is essential to one's usefulness in such a position; and the two years he passed in this way probably conduced much more to the inflation of vanity and to the engendering of an obstinate opinionativeness in the juvenile usher than to the improvement of his pupils.

There is no evidence that any direction was given to the early religious emotions of this precocious child. We hear nothing of little prayers

that he was taught to offer to his heavenly Father, when he could barely lisp the words, nor of simple hymns learned and recited at his mother's knee; no catechetical instruction, at home or at school, seems to have been given him; nor do any texts or stories of Scripture seem to have been familiar to his infancy or early childhood. Nor, indeed, would any account we have of his home lead us to suppose that he was happy there, or that he saw among those nearest and naturally dearest to him any of those blessed, heavenly influences which true domestic piety diffuses through households and neighbourhoods. His own reticence on the subject may not be conclusive, but it suggests a strong probability that the instincts of his religious nature were left like tender vines with no supporting trellis. That there was "a great Bible" in the family we learn from a reference he makes to it for a record of his own age. And we are also told that his parents observed the ordinances of the Church to which they belonged, by subjecting the child, when four weeks old, to the rite of baptism. Beyond this, we are without evidence that Robert had any Christian nurture or admonition,—though he was (as he says of himself) "religiously inclined."

When he had attained his ninth year, two or three persons became inmates of his father's family, whose influence was by no means favourable to the healthy growth of his character. A bright, active boy, at that age, naturally became their pet; and,

as he says, they attempted to "convert him to their peculiar faith." To this end, they very injudiciously gave him books to read, vindicating their views; and, having free access to other controversial works, and no guide through the mazes into which they led his impressible mind, it is not a matter of much wonder that he was bewildered by them and sought relief in the rash rejection of them all. It was not so much the variety of religions that he found to prevail, which stumbled him, as the conflicting creeds and usages of those who profess to be of one faith and call themselves "brethren."

Whether at this early period of his life he conceived the idea of presenting himself to the world in the capacity of a great reformer, we cannot determine. He certainly did not lack the vanity which might prompt one to assume such a character; for he tells us that he threw the results of earnest study and thought on such subjects into the form of three sermons, which he afterwards found bore so close a resemblance to some of Sterne's that, to save himself from the imputation of plagiarism if they should be discovered, he burnt them. In after-life he regretted their destruction, as he would have liked to refer to them, he says, to see what he thought and how he expressed himself at that stage of his life. We, too, regret it; for they perhaps might have given us a much more trustworthy view of his opinions and intel-

lectual habits at that time than his own memory could supply for an autobiography.

An incident which occurred when he was six or seven years old is recorded to show the imminent peril to which he was exposed; but we advert to it more particularly as an illustration of character. His father owned a cream-coloured mare, and the lad was often sent to the pasture for her. In the way was a narrow bridge,—so narrow as to allow little more than room for a wagon to pass. When about half-way over, our young adventurer saw a wagon coming in the opposite direction, which, of course, could not be turned back; while it was evident that if the horse proceeded his rider's legs would be exposed to a painful contact either with the railing of the bridge or the wheels of the wagon. As the youngster, according to his own confession, "had not sense enough to turn about," the consequence was that, while throwing one leg over to avoid a collision with the wheels, he lost his balance, and fell. The fright overpowered his senses for a few moments; but when he recovered he found himself unhurt, the cream-coloured mare standing by him still as a post, and the wagon well over the bridge! It was not strange, perhaps, that always thereafter, as he tells us, he felt an "especial liking" for cream-coloured horses. But it is strange that he did not see, when in after-life he recorded the incident in his autobiography, the striking analogy it bears to the grand error of his

philosophy. He insisted upon threading passages in the social condition of mankind too narrow and intricate for human sagacity to explore. The lesson which his narrow escape might have taught him and all social reformers is that there are "anomalies and disturbing agencies in human society and its complicated relations which are the results or the necessary concomitants of the apostasy of the race. We cannot exclude nor control them, nor will they bend to our wit or will. We must take human nature as we find it,—improve it in all practicable ways; but we may as well dismiss at once all thoughts of perfecting it by any process of man's device. Such attempts will end in defeat and mortification." In the effort to avoid inevitable collisions, the social reformer loses his balance, and comes to the ground.

It is not improbable that even at this early stage in his career Owen entertained the idea that he had extraordinary endowments and was destined to some extraordinary mission. If his recollections are to be trusted, he excelled, in all the athletic games of boyhood, not only his equals in age, but those two or three years older than himself: so that he was "the best runner and leaper, both as to height and distance, in the school." He was "a favourite with the whole town," he tells us; and such was the popular notion of his superiority to common boys that he was "sometimes pitted against his superiors in age." In one instance a bet was

made that he could write better than a brother who was two years older than himself; and, upon trial, he proved his superiority. This result, however (as Robert believed), alienated his brother's affection; and he refers to it as an example of the evils of competition, to which in after-times he attributed some of the chief disorders and sufferings of society. It was certainly ill judged to place two brothers in such a relation to each other; but all the world knows that competition in some form enters into the structure and life of society, and is absolutely essential to its progress, if not to its existence. That it may be unduly stimulated, and that the lusts and passions of men may, and perhaps generally do, pervert the principle to base and selfish ends, cannot be denied. We do not suppose young Robert was averse to such a trial of skill,—certainly not to a decision in his favour; and, indeed, it may have been one of the many incidents that combined to push him forward to enterprises and adventures of which his older brother would never have dreamed.

Most of us can remember associations in early life that exerted an indirect influence on our character and opinions much more lasting than the injunctions and admonitions of tutors and governors. It was Robert's misfortune, when between six and eight years of age, to be a frequent visitor at the house of an "eccentric minister." Of all men to have eccentricities, a minister of Christ's gospel

should be the last; and we are sure that of all boys to come under the influence of such a one, none would be likely to suffer more than our already ambitious, self-opinionated, and susceptible young hero, Master Robert Owen.

What share this odd minister had in shaping the course or shading the opinions of his youthful guest we cannot say; but it is obvious that no fervency or pungency of public ministrations, or frequency of private admonitions, can compensate for the absence of that godly simplicity and consistent propriety of conduct by which religion and its ministers are most effectually commended to men's and children's consciences in the sight of God.

A more agreeable and useful friendship was formed, about the same time, with a young man,—his senior by ten years,—with whom he was accustomed to ramble daily through fields and woods, and from whose cultivated taste and enthusiastic love of natural scenery a young lad of Robert's disposition could scarcely fail to derive lasting benefit. It is not easy to overrate the advantages of such an intimacy with a congenial spirit, provided the seniority is not so great as to prevent a full and hearty sympathy and yet enough to temper without repulsing the ardour of youth. Such friendships often grow brighter and stronger till death dissolves them; but in Robert's case the time came when he was too busy to extend to this con-

descending companion of his boyhood even common courtesy!

Among other influences which contributed to the peculiarities of the boy's character we must reckon the inconsistent course of his parents. His autobiography furnishes an apposite anecdote. He was nearly or quite seven when he received his first correction; and the character and result of it show most conclusively that it was unwisely postponed or injudiciously administered. Robert's account of the matter is not very clear; but it would seem that to something his mother had said to him he answered, "No,"—meaning by it to indicate his compliance with her wishes, but which in fact, from his indistinct understanding of what she said, was a flat refusal to obey. She, assuming it to be a flagrant case of disobedience (which she would probably have been slow to do had no previous instance of the kind occurred), replied, rather sharply, "What? Won't you?" Such language, in such a tone, must have apprised him of the mutual misunderstanding; but, instead of saying, in a straightforward, simple way, "I did not understand what you said," he persuaded himself that consistency required him to persist in error; and so he repeated the offensive reply. This led to a complaint to the father, to whom any case supposed to require the use of the rod was to be referred. Before the chastisement was inflicted, he admits that he was distinctly asked if he would do as his

mother required; but, instead of saying, promptly (as he tells us it was in his heart to say), "Certainly: nothing was farther from my thoughts than disobedience to my mother," he repeated, firmly, "No." This the father regarded as an unmistakable avowal of a rebellious spirit in a boy seven years old; and it brought upon him the strokes of the rod in rapid succession, each blow being followed, on the child's part, by the emphatic repetition of "No!" "No!" He tells us that his language to his father, finally, was, "You may kill me, but I will not do it." And he carried his point! The child triumphed, and not only escaped all correction thereafter, but was soon restored to his former position as the "favourite" of the household.

How far this single instance of misgovernment may have contributed to give the child a false estimate of himself and of the rights and relations of those around him, we do not know; but it is only to repeat a truism to say that the strong foundations of order and submission to authority, social and civil, are laid in the nursery; and from what we can learn of Robert's parents we are inclined to think that they lacked judgment and firmness in domestic discipline, and hence may be largely accountable for much of the error into which their pet son fell. And there can be no doubt that similar mistakes in thousands of families engender most of the distress and disorder which move men and women of Mr. Owen's tem-

perament to attempt radical measures for their relief. The incident just mentioned is one proof of the absence of good judgment in young Owen's training; and another is the fact, which he states, that when he was passing from eight to ten years of age "they were accustomed to consult him whenever any matter of importance was to be decided," —though there were three children older than himself, and but one younger. That he should not have cherished an overweening conception of his own judgment and sagacity is scarcely possible.

Before he had attained to his teens, Robert conceived the idea that his present province was too circumscribed for such an one as himself. True, he was an usher in a school, and had occasionally served as a sort of salesman in a country store; but he felt a desire to be something more, and he obtained from his parents a promise that as soon as he was ten years old he should go to London.

Upon reaching that age, Robert insisted on the redemption of the pledge; and he was allowed to go to his brother, who was settled in London, and with whom he remained during the few weeks in which he was looking for employment. This he obtained in a large establishment at Stamford, which, by the skill and labour of a Mr. McGuffog, had grown up from an insignificant peddling concern to a repository of the finest goods, selected from the best markets and attractive to the wealthy and noble families in the vicinity. His engage-

ment was for three years. He was to board and lodge and have his washing done in the family. His service the first year was to be gratuitous; for the second year he was to receive forty dollars, and for the third year fifty dollars. As he brought a good stock of clothes from home, he was enabled, by close economy, to support himself, and was never from that time a burden on his parents.

There must have been something very winning in the person, manners or character of the apprentice to have secured for him such general favour as he seems to have enjoyed. Mr. and Mrs. McGuffog, of whose family he was an inmate, were very worthy people; and, if his young ideas had not been already perverted by the vagaries in which he was allowed to indulge, he must have seen in them an example of quiet domestic enjoyment, and of high-toned moral character, which he could hardly expect to improve by any system of philosophy.

Mr. McGuffog, whose strict integrity and courteous manners drew to his store the best class of customers, was careful to instruct his young clerk in the details of the business. It was here that he had the opportunity to learn the quality and value of the finest fabrics then manufactured, as well as the whims and weaknesses of those who were by title the lords and ladies of the realm.

One of Robert's habits at this period the young men of the present day would do well to imitate, —though they will do still better to shun his grand

mistake of resorting to pagan philosophy for his store, when the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge were within his reach. He was accustomed, as he tells us, to rise between three and four o'clock of a summer's morning, and to spend the interval until eight in reading and meditation. It was then he studied and transcribed many of Seneca's moral precepts. And so, again, in the evening, during twilight. Few are aware of the prodigious amount of useful knowledge attainable in this way, without encroaching on the hours of business or recreation, and still fewer of its inestimable value in the conduct of life.

One circumstance in the order of Mr. McGuffog's family seems to have had an unfavourable influence on Robert's mind; though if he had not been already deeply imbued with false views it might have produced a directly contrary impression. Mr. McGuffog was a member of the Scotch (Presbyterian) Church, and his wife of the English (Episcopal) Church; and it was their custom to attend service together at one church in the morning and at the other in the evening; and they always took Robert with them. He was at this time not more than eleven or twelve years old,—an age at which children are not apt to discriminate very closely between the dogmas of different sects. And, moreover, in Mr. and Mrs. McGuffog he had a bright example of the influence of the Christian faith to produce good works, and to infuse into the most

intimate relations of life the spirit of peace and charity even where there is a diversity of religious opinions and usages. Yet he assures us that he was all this time perplexed by the sectarian contentions to which he was obliged to listen,—that, "upon investigation," he found each of these various religious communities claimed to have the true religion,—and that in the end he became satisfied of the false and delusive character of them all!

It does not appear how long this perplexity lasted, nor at what precise period he came to the grand conclusion that all religions are alike vain. That he was mistaken in supposing himself ever to have embraced any of them, no one who reads his autobiography can doubt. It is only in self-ignorance and the incomparable deceitfulness of the human heart that we can find an apology for the extraordinary assertion that it was "with the greatest reluctance, and after long contests in his mind, that he was compelled to abandon his first and deep-rooted impressions in favour of Christianity!"

The discovery which, he says, he made—long before his beard was grown—was twofold. First, that all existing religions rested upon the absurd notion that the qualities of a man are formed by himself, and that he determines his own thought, will and actions, and is responsible for them to God and to his fellow-men; and, second, the converse, positively

stated,—viz.: that "the qualities of a man are forced upon him by nature; that his language, religion, and habits are forced upon him by society: so that he is entirely the child of nature and society,—nature giving him the qualities which society directs." The effect of this discovery, he tells us, was the disappearance of all his previous religious feelings, and the immediate substitution of "the spirit of universal charity."

Whatever else he may have studied or known of the Christian revelation, we may venture to say that our young clerk could not have been familiar with the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians: otherwise he would not have placed the spirit of Christianity and the spirit of charity in such a strange relation to each other. We shall have occasion to see, by-and-by, what success he had in adapting his theory to the actual condition of mankind.

His three years with Mr. McGuffog having expired, he resisted his employer's urgent wish that he should remain a year longer at least. After a brief visit to his parents, he returned to London, being now about fourteen years old, and accepted a situation, at a salary of one hundred and twenty-five dollars per annum, with board, washing and lodging, in a retail store, where the service was much more laborious, and the character of the business and of course the class of customers very different from those at Mr. McGuffog's. After a few months, he was of-

fered a place in a large establishment at Manchester, with increased pay,—which he regarded as more eligible on every account, and accepted it.

Mr. Sattersfield, the proprietor of the establishment, did a larger business, but at less profit, than Mr. McGuffog. His customers were of a different class from any Owen had known at either of his former places. His fellow-clerks were generally respectable and agreeable, and the service required was by no means burdensome. Here he remained till he was eighteen.

CHAPTER II.

HOW INTRODUCED TO THE MANUFACTURING WORLD—DECLINES A FLATTERING OFFER FROM A FORMER EMPLOYER—GOES INTO BUSINESS FOR HIMSELF—A BOLD ADVENTURE, BUT SUCCESSFUL—BECOMES THE HEAD OF A LARGE ESTABLISHMENT—HIS TACTICS IN EMBARRASSING CIRCUMSTANCES—REMARKABLE SUCCESS—COTTON, EARLY KNOWLEDGE OF IT—IMPORTS OF IT, AND RESULTS.

WHILE in Mr. Sattersfield's store, it was Robert's business to receive from a Mr. Jones, the manufacturer, frequent invoices of wire frames, which were then much used for ladies' bonnets. Jones was familiar with the machinists of Manchester, and his calls afforded Robert an opportunity to learn something of new inventions in the machinery for spinning cotton, then much talked of in that city and vicinity. After a time, Mr. Jones told Robert that he had seen one of the new machines, and was satisfied he could make them if he could obtain a loan of five hundred dollars with which to begin; and he offered him one-half the profits if he would raise the capital. This he did, through the good offices of his brother, and soon after left Mr. Sattersfield, and suddenly found himself, with his new partner, in a large shop erected

for the purpose, with forty men at work, making the new machines, called "mules."

He soon ascertained that his partner was quite ignorant of all kinds of business, and especially deficient in financial skill; and young Owen was obliged to exert himself manfully to save the concern from discredit and ruin. He undertook to keep the accounts, receive and pay out all moneys, and exercise a general oversight and control of the establishment.

After a brief pursuit of what seemed to be prosperous business, an offer was made by a capitalist to become a partner in the concern. Supposing Jones to be the head man, the proposition was first made to him, in confidence, and with a secret fear that Owen would object; but no sooner were reasonable terms offered than they were accepted on Owen's part; for he was so well satisfied of the incompetency of Jones that he was quite ready to dissolve the connection. How he reconciled it with his new views of universal charity (if he then entertained them) to place the new partner in his shoes without apprising him of his (Jones's) deficiencies, we are not informed. Perhaps we are bound to suppose that he gave the information, and that it did not change the purpose of the capitalist.

During the brief period of his partnership with Jones, Owen received a very generous offer from his old employer, Mr. McGuffog, to take him into

the business on the most advantageous terms; but he had already made engagements which obliged him to decline it. "How different would have been the history of my life," he says, "if I had accepted this offer, which ninety-nine young men out of a hundred, at my age and in my circumstances, would have rejoiced to obtain, and perhaps not one out of a thousand would have refused!"

We must suppose that in accepting one position and declining another he acted according to his best judgment in view of the facts; and that, whether he failed or prospered, his choice was made intelligently and deliberately, and the consequences he must expect to be laid at his own door. All this, and much more, is the prerogative and the responsibleness of every reasonable being. An acceptance of Mr. McGuffog's offer would probably have been followed (as Owen afterwards learned) by a marriage with his niece; and thus, upon the event of becoming his heir, he might have lived and died a rich Stamford linen-draper. So vainly do men map out paths in the impenetrable secrecy of their future being!

For his interest in the concern of Owen & Jones he was to receive six finished mules, and one or two other articles of importance in carrying on the business. And although only three of the mules were delivered, yet, with characteristic promptness and energy, Owen engaged hands, set his machines in

motion, and was soon in the receipt of thirty dollars a week clear profit.

Just at that time the famous Sir Richard Arkwright brought into public notice an important improvement in cotton-spinning machinery, which gave new impetus to this branch of manufacture; and a wealthy merchant of Manchester (Mr. Drinkwater) built a large mill, and was about supplying it with the new machinery, when the party under whose superintendence the works were to be put in operation, and in dependence upon whose assistance Mr. Drinkwater had embarked in the enterprise, suddenly deserted him. In this dilemma, he advertised for some one to fill the vacancy. Young Owen was told of it by one of the hands in his machine-shop, who had seen the advertisement, and, without an hour's reflection, he called and offered his services.

A colloquy ensued, touching the age, habits and previous occupation of the applicant, and, finally, as to the compensation which would be expected; and, to Mr. Drinkwater's manifest surprise, fifteen hundred dollars was named. The young man assured him that he was in the receipt of that sum in his present business, and could not think of taking less,—at the same time inviting an inspection of his books. Mr. Drinkwater accompanied him to his place of business, and satisfied himself of the truth of his representations; but whether it was his actual receipts, or the skill and intelligence

which were apparent in the conduct of his business, that won his confidence, we can only conjecture. That one's character and capacity are often estimated by a standard that he does not suspect is applied, we all know; and hence the importance of *really* being what we *seem* to be.

The reference to former employers also proving satisfactory, Mr. Drinkwater agreed to his terms, volunteering to take his machinery at cost. And the very day after the former manager left, with a courage and self-confidence we cannot but admire, he found himself at the head of five hundred men, women and children, whose labours he was to direct, and in charge of extensive and intricate machinery, much of which was new to him! In utter ignorance of the extent and character of its responsibilities he had sought the post; and now it seemed to him a most presumptuous act. To increase the embarrassment of his situation, he was obliged to present himself as the new manager without any introduction, and unaccompanied even by the proprietor of the works.

The only course before him was to enter boldly upon the discharge of his duties. Among them were not only buying the raw material, making the machinery for spinning it, and manufacturing it into yarn, but securing a market for it, keeping the accounts, and paying the hands. Thus, before he was of age he was put in sole charge of the first mill for

the manufacture of fine cotton-yarn by machinery that was ever built!

Of course there was much speculation in the neighbourhood concerning the new arrangement; and some regarded it as little less than madness in Mr. Drinkwater to intrust so young and inexperienced a person with the conduct of so extensive and important a business. But, without taking heed to any thing but the daily duties of his place, Owen threw his whole heart and energy into the task before him. For a few weeks he wisely abstained from any measure by which he might betray ignorance, or that could possibly involve material error. And in the mean time he carefully studied the construction of the machinery (having access to the drawings and plans used by his predecessor, who was noted for scientific skill), and acquainted himself with the minute details of the business: so that before the end of two months he felt himself to be the master of the concern, and entered at once upon a more active superintendence and direction.

Mr. Drinkwater rarely came to the mill, but required the manager to take to his counting-house in Manchester, from time to time, specimens of the manufactured goods. In a very short time he noticed quite a perceptible improvement in the fineness of the yarn; and the demand for it soon far exceeded that for the old stock. The good order

and general contentment of the work-people were also subjects of common observation.

It is difficult to believe that a young man who possessed the courage to undertake such a service, and the good sense and sound judgment to conduct it skilfully, could have deliberately attributed his success in a large degree to "a knowledge of human nature acquired by having early overcome the prejudices of religion"! Yet, if we may rely upon his own account of the state of his mind, we must suppose that if one had inquired of him on his way to or from the mill how he explained the success of one person and the failure of another, he would have said, "No man makes his own organization, or any one of his qualities: these qualities are more or less influenced by circumstances in which the individual is placed, and which *he* cannot control, though society can: hence, whatever character or disposition men manifest, it is the result of conditions and circumstances of which they are not the authors; and yet these circumstances and conditions force them to be that which they become. Considering every man's character the necessary result of his organization and of the conditions by which nature and society surround him, I am prepared to look upon all his acts with indiscriminate charity." Of course he could not bestow praise or blame on his work-people, since their good or ill conduct was not the result of voluntary action; but by treating all as if they did the best they could under such inexorable

conditions, he sought their good will and confidence. Yet our young philosopher would doubtless admit that if he had yielded to the suggestions of indolence and indulged in a morning nap, or been won by the solicitations of appetite to inordinate indulgence of any kind, Mr. Drinkwater's yarns would not have increased in fineness, nor would the order of his establishment have been the admiration of visitors. And surely he would not have maintained that sleeping, eating and drinking are matters over which a man in health has no control!

It was the pride of young Owen to have his mill in perfect trim at all times: so that a stranger, however unexpectedly he might come in, should find every person and thing in its proper place and employment. Perhaps he was not himself aware how much more this feature of his management had to do with the success of the concern and with the regularity, sobriety and contentment of the hands, than any thing growing out of his extraordinary theory of human character and responsibility.

However this may have been, the condition of the business was so satisfactory that Mr. Drinkwater volunteered a proposition to add five hundred dollars to his salary the second year, and the like sum the third,—making it two thousand five hundred dollars,—and in the fourth year to admit him into the concern as a partner, allowing him

one-fourth of the profits. All this, we must remember, occurred while he was under age.

In addition to this liberal offer, which he did not hesitate to accept, he was allowed the privilege of putting his own name on the packages of manufactured goods, the quality of which had already given them a decided preference in the market.

It may be interesting to advert for a moment to the condition of the branch of commerce which occupied our young friend at that period.

It is generally supposed that in England cotton was little known as a material for clothing until the seventeenth century. If it was known and used at all previously, it was probably chiefly for candle-wicks. Even in the early part of the eighteenth century its use was very limited, though it had obtained so much of a foothold as to excite the jealousy of those who had been accustomed to other materials as exclusively suitable for raiment. As lately as in 1734,—more than a century after the landing of the Pilgrims at Cape Cod,—Michael Carmody was executed in England for some capital crime, who apologized for his guilt by alleging the straits to which he was reduced by the introduction of the "pernicious practice of wearing cotton;" and he called upon all Christian people to resist the practice, or the blood of every felon would be required at their hands. And, as an expression of the popular sympathy in this condemnation of the detested article, the people who had assembled to wit-

ness the execution not only insisted on clothing the hangman and the poor culprit in cotton garments, but they contented themselves with covering the gallows itself with the abominable stuff.*

The finest cotton thread spun by machinery, at the time young Owen entered into Mr. Drinkwater's concern, was known as "No. 120;" that is, it required one hundred and twenty hanks, each containing eight hundred and forty yards of the thread, to make a pound. By close attention to the various qualities of the raw material, Owen had acquired unusual skill in selecting stock. This was bought of brokers, to whom it was consigned by shippers. The cotton imported from the United States at that time could not be spun by the machinery then in use. The finest threads in the market were from Mr. Drinkwater's mill; and it was spun from cotton sent from the island of Bourbon, and was called

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* The "Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer," under date of May 3, 1784, contains an account of this execution; and the following paragraph is extracted from the culprit's speech from the gallows.—

"If you have any regard for the prayers of an expiring mortal, I beg you will not buy of the hangman the cotton garments that now adorn the gallows, because I can't rest quiet in my grave if *I should see* the very things worn that brought me to misery, thievery, and this untimely end; all of which I pray of the gentry to hinder their children and servants for their own characters' sake, though they have no tenderness for their country, because none will hereafter wear cotton but oyster-women, convicts, hucksters, and common hangmen."

Orleans cotton. But near the opening of the year 1791, an honest and intelligent cotton-broker (Mr. Spear), with whom Owen had dealt largely, received two packages of American sea-island cotton,* which had been consigned to him by the Liverpool agent of the American planter, with a request that he would have its quality tested by some competent spinner. Mr. Spear submitted the specimen to Mr. Owen, saying, at the same time, that the consignees had no idea of the worth of the article, nor to what use it could be put; they only wanted it worked up at whatever price it was found to be worth. There were, in all, but three hundred pounds of it,—ill packed, of a dingy colour, and abounding with seeds. This, it is said, was the first cotton sent from the United States to be spun by machinery; and Mr. Owen took it, and made from it a finer article than the French product could supply, though inferior in colour. A Scotch manufacturer took some of the yarn, being tempted by the low price at which it was offered on account of the colour, and, soon after, returned for more; but in the interval it had all been sold. Thus it was that Mr. Owen first came to the knowledge of the superior quality of our American sea-island cotton, whose long fibre was suited to the machinery then in use; but it was some time before

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* So called from its being grown only upon islands near the southern coast of the United States.

machines were invented for spinning the upland or short-fibre cotton, which is the chief product of our cotton-growing regions.

Improvements in machinery and in the quality of the stock enabled Mr. Owen, within the first year of his engagement with Mr. Drinkwater, to increase the fineness of his threads to such a degree that, instead of spinning seventy-five thousand yards from a pound, he spun two hundred and fifty thousand!

At once, new and extensive mills for the manufacture of fine muslins were erected, and the call for fine yarns altogether exceeded the supply. It is an interesting fact that at that time a pound of cotton, which cost one dollar and a quarter, by passing through the spinning-machine, became worth fifty dollars.

CHAPTER III.

INTRODUCED TO A NEW CIRCLE—COLERIDGE—CROPPING OUT OF NEW PHILOSOPHY—PROPOSES TO PREPARE A PAPER ON COTTON—PARTNERSHIP WITH ROBERT FULTON—HIS RESPONSIBILITIES ENLARGED—IS DISGUSTED WITH HIS EMPLOYER, AND LEAVES HIM—SHOWS HIS DECISION OF CHARACTER AND HIS GOOD NATURE—ENTERS A NEW CAREER—AN INCIDENT AND AN INFERENCE—INTRODUCTION TO DAVID DALE'S FAMILY—EXTRAORDINARY CLAIM FOR FEMALE SYMPATHY—WHICH HE HAPPILY SECURES—PURCHASES THE NEW LANARK MILLS—HIS MARRIAGE.

MR. OWEN, taking thus early the foremost place among this class of manufacturers, was at once introduced to a new circle of associates and friends,—whose influence was, however, by no means advantageous to his intellectual or moral welfare. Among them were two gentlemen connected with "Manchester College," as it was called, with whom he was accustomed to discuss various questions of philosophy, morals, and religion. He tells us that Coleridge, whose genius and eloquence already attracted public attention, sought admission to their society, that he might discuss with him (Owen) the grounds of his opposition to the "religious prejudices of all sects." He intimates that the spirit

of charity and kindness which he manifested towards opponents, and which had been "forced upon him by his knowledge of the true formation of character by nature and society," led Coleridge to desire such an interview. If Mr. Owen's report is to be received, the genius and eloquence of the poet were no match for the logic of the cotton-spinner. Whether Mr. Coleridge left any memorandum of the discussion we are not informed.

Of the nature of the ordinary debates which engaged the three complacent philosophers, some idea may be formed from the fact, which Owen (not very modestly) states, that they attracted the attention of the principal of the "college," who, fearing that his two assistants might be converted from their orthodoxy, requested them to meet less frequently. We can scarcely account for the fears of the learned principal upon any grounds except that the orthodoxy of his coadjutors was of a very flimsy texture, or that Mr. Owen had forces of logic that were never brought into public view.

The wishes of Principal Baines were respected, however, and the philosophical trio held their debates elsewhere, and with increased numbers. Mr. Owen's theory that man is made what he is "by nature and society" in spite of himself, led some of the parties in these discussions to call him "the reasoning machine." Afterwards, and in another connection, he maintained "that the universe is one great laboratory; that all things are chemical

compounds, and that man himself is only a complicated chemical compound." The announcement of this theory occasioned his being called "the philosopher who intended to make man by chemistry."

But another and wider door was opened for Owen's introduction to public notice. He was invited to become a member of a literary and philosophical society in Manchester, to which (as he assures us) the leading professional men, the principal merchants, and the aristocracy of the town belonged. Here he was thrown at once into the company of persons of general science; and on one occasion, when the subject of cotton was under consideration, he was unexpectedly called upon for information. Unused to expressing himself in such a presence, he replied in a few incoherent sentences; but, conscious that his knowledge of the subject was far beyond their's, he soon after prepared a paper upon it, which was read and discussed, and much complimented, at a subsequent meeting.

It was during this period of his life that Owen was thrown into somewhat intimate business relations with our countryman Robert Fulton, and befriended him with characteristic generosity. They chanced to be fellow-boarders in Manchester; and Fulton made known to him an important discovery of a method of digging canals, and transferring boats from one water-level to another with-

out the intervention of locks. They entered into a limited copartnership, and Owen advanced several sums of money to enable Fulton to test his machinery; but we do not learn that any advantage or profit resulted to either of them from the connection.

The year 1792 was disastrous to commerce, and materially checked the progress of the cotton manufacture; but Mr. Drinkwater's resources allowed him to withstand the shock and to keep his mills in operation. One of them was known as the Cheshire Mills, the manager of which was an elderly man, who had been employed in that capacity for several years. The evidence which Owen already had given of his energy and skill induced Mr. Drinkwater to intrust to him the ungracious task of rearranging and supervising the Cheshire Mill. This he did satisfactorily, and continued the double service till his connection with Mr. Drinkwater terminated,—as it did shortly after, with singular abruptness, the circumstances of which illustrate so strikingly a phase of Owen's character that they must be stated.

Mr. Drinkwater's eldest daughter was a well-educated and accomplished lady, attractive in person, and the heir-apparent to a very large estate. She was addressed by a gentleman of agreeable manners, good temper, and well connected, and, though her senior by some ten or twelve years, he had so far ingratiated himself into her favour that

the alliance was regarded by the gossiping world as a settled matter. But just at this juncture a wealthy merchant and manufacturer, Mr. Oldknow, presented himself. So successful had he been in business that in each of two successive years he had realized a clear profit of eighty-five thousand dollars! To amass wealth still more rapidly, he determined no longer to buy his yarns of the spinners, but to turn spinner himself, and thus pocket the large profits which he presumed they must make. With this view he erected large and expensive buildings for the various branches of the business, which absorbed so much of his capital that when a reverse came in commercial affairs he was greatly embarrassed. To avert ruinous sacrifices, and to secure the capital needful to complete his gigantic plans, he could not adopt a better measure than to connect himself with such a man as Mr. Drinkwater; and, as a means to this end, he asked permission to pay his addresses to his daughter. A connection with so prominent a personage in the cotton-manufacturing world was not to be lightly esteemed. Mr. Oldborrow was five or six years younger than the other suitor, and, withal, "a hearty, healthy, handsome man." And as her father, on whom she was dependent, was evidently favourable to the connection, he was accepted, and his rival dismissed. Such a proceeding was not calculated to elevate Mr. Owen's ideas of the laws governing social life, and it was followed by an interview between Mr. Drinkwater and him-

self not less unfortunate in its aspect and influence. He avowed to Mr. Owen his purpose of receiving Mr. Oldknow into partnership, in order that the business might all be in one family. The only obstruction was the outstanding agreement with Mr. Owen, under which he would be entitled, the next year, to the privileges of a partner; and Mr. Drinkwater asked on what terms he could be released from that obligation, Mr. Owen to retain his place as manager at any salary he might name. Owen, anticipating the purpose of the interview, had taken the agreement with him; and Mr. Drinkwater's words had scarcely left his lips when he drew it from his pocket and deliberately committed it to the flames, saying that he had no wish to become a partner with those who did not desire the connection; nor could he consent, under the circumstances, to occupy the position of manager with any salary that Mr. Drinkwater could offer. The agreement was in ashes before he had finished the sentence, and all efforts to change Owen's determination were ineffectual. Lest, however, so clear an instance of choice upon such obvious personal responsibility should be thought to militate against his theories, he takes occasion to say that it was "an act of feeling, and not of judgment," and that that feeling "was created by his constitution, and by the circumstances in which he had been placed, so that he could not have acted otherwise at that time."

With great good nature and generosity, Owen ac-

ceded to Mr. Drinkwater's request that he would remain till some suitable person could be engaged to take the place. In the mean while, two or three eligible business connections were proposed to him, which he declined, in opposition to sound judgment, but, as he maintained, under the overwhelming influence of feeling "which he could not avoid." He finally became a partner in a new concern, known as the Charlton Twist Company, and was soon fully occupied in superintending the erection of their buildings and the preparation of the necessary machinery.

Two or three years elapsed before the new works were in operation; but the article the company made soon gained a wide reputation. In the prosecution of the business, Owen was frequently called to visit Scotland, and especially Glasgow, in and near which the concern had valuable customers. In one of these journeys, in company with a friend, they passed a place where some women were employed in washing clothes; and, as the custom was, they were treading upon the clothes instead of rubbing them with their knuckles,—for which purpose, as the strangers thought, they unnecessarily exposed their persons, and did not seem to shrink at all from observation. This induced Owen to remark to his friend that by "commencing early in life people may be taught to think any custom right or wrong, and thus education alone makes them what they are." This casual remark discloses the radical error which

warped more or less all the plans and efforts of our hero's busy, earnest life. If he had repeated John Locke's saying, that of all men we meet with, nine parts in ten are what they are—good or evil, useful or not—by their education, we might have concurred with him; but our young philosopher overlooked almost entirely the *moral* endowments of the human soul, and assigned to reason and conscience a place but little above mere animal instinct.

It was during one of these visits to Glasgow that an acquaintance was formed which greatly influenced the current of Mr. Owen's future life. Miss Spear, the sister of the Manchester cotton-broker from whom he received the first two bags of sea-island cotton exported from the United States, was on a visit to the family of Mr. David Dale, who owned extensive mills at the Falls of the Clyde, about thirty miles from Glasgow. Besides his engagements as a manufacturer, he was largely concerned in commercial and banking-business, and was, withal, a magistrate and a lay-preacher! This active and enterprising gentleman was blessed with five daughters, the eldest of whom was then just about twenty. Her mother having died when this child was but twelve years old, the care of her four younger sisters devolved upon her,—a responsibility of no ordinary weight, and the assumption of which may have served to fit her for her somewhat eventful life. Of this family Miss Spear was

a temporary inmate; and on one occasion Owen, who had a previous acquaintance with Miss Spear, met her walking with Miss Dale. This street-interview sufficed for an introduction to the young stranger from Manchester; and, ascertaining in the course of conversation that he would like to visit her father's mills at the Falls, she kindly offered to obtain a note to her uncle, Mr. James Dale, who was the resident manager of the establishment, at the same time expressing a wish to hear a report of his visit upon his return from the "New Lanark Mills," as they were called. The note of introduction for Mr. Owen and his fellow-traveller was duly furnished, and the visit satisfactorily accomplished. Mr. Owen tells us that upon surveying this primitive manufacturing Scotch village he said to his friend that, of all places he had ever seen, this was best fitted for a great experiment which he had long contemplated.

Upon his return to town he called on Miss Dale, and told her how much his visit had gratified him; and when he was about to leave, she expressed a hope that he would not fail to call upon them when he was again in Glasgow.

If it were in our power to trace the subtle influences which fashion our opinions of men and things, we might find that young Owen's were not inconsiderably affected by two incidents occurring about this time, which were far from creditable to the parties concerned. It would seem, from his

own account, that the sensitiveness of his feelings was so great that, though he "felt inclined to look for a wife," he could take no steps towards obtaining one until (contrary to the received laws of propriety) some lady should give him such tokens of encouragement as should "overcome his diffidence." Whether he made known this extraordinary claim upon female sympathy we are not directly informed; but, either in fact or fancy, it was favoured, according to Mr. Owen's account, and that, too, by more than one lady. He describes a "most wealthy and respectable family near Manchester," so elevated in social position that an introduction was entirely out of his reach, and even the thought of it was inconceivably presumptuous. Nevertheless, it so fell out that the eldest daughter of this family,—a beautiful and accomplished lady of seventeen, and irresistibly fascinating in manners,—whom Owen had often seen in public assemblies, came with her aunt for the ostensible purpose of visiting a famous garden belonging to the Charlton Company's estate. In an old family mansion to which this garden was attached, Owen was residing as an independent bachelor; and, happening to be at home when the ladies called, he courteously and "innocently" conducted them through the grounds. He was far from regarding this casual interview as any warrant for seeking an introduction to the young lady; but, to his great surprise, he afterwards learned (as he says) that this incomparable personage had

in some mysterious way obtained such a favourable impression of his character as to prefer him to any of the suitors who sought her smiles. That he did not discern her partiality and seize the opportunity to secure so rare a prize, he ascribes to the inexorable influence of "circumstances."

Between his second and third visits to Glasgow, he learned from Miss Spear that her friend Miss Dale had "confidentially" expressed to her a determination to marry Mr. Owen or nobody! and, moreover, that she had actually refused several offers of marriage since their first interview, to which her father's consent would have been readily given. But for this information, he assures us, he should not have ventured to think of Miss Dale for a wife. He had never been introduced to her father; and his elevated position, and especially his religious "prejudices," would prove (as he thought) an insuperable barrier to his success.

Upon his third visit to Glasgow he became more intimate with the lady,—visited New Lanark with her; and in one of their rambles on the banks of the Clyde she informed him that her father was anxious to retire from business, and would be willing to sell his mills; while he, with like ingenuousness, informed her of his wish to pay his addresses to her, if her affections were not already engaged. Her reply was framed in admirable consistency with the avowal she had made to her treacherous friend Miss Spear, and of which Mr. Owen had been

already notified. Of course she could not express any objections on her own part; but he could scarcely expect her father, who was very peculiar and cautious in reposing confidence, would consent to her marrying one who was an entire stranger to him; and, as she could not think of acting contrary to his wishes, she should probably remain unmarried.

The modest lover was too shrewd to misunderstand this logic. It fairly opened the way for an appeal to Mr. Dale,—whom, however, he had never seen, and to whom he was not even known by name; for he had always been absent from home when Mr. Owen's visits were made. Casting about for some way of introducing himself to the wealthy proprietor of the New Lanark Mills, what could be more natural than to assume the character of a purchaser, and call to inquire the terms of sale, &c.? This happy device was forthwith adopted; and we find our adventurer, at the age of twenty-seven, negotiating with one of the most conspicuous manufacturers and merchants of the day for a purchase so large as to forbid the idea of his being serious in inquiring the terms. Upon Mr. Owen's disclosure of his relations to capitalists already engaged in manufacturing, Mr. Dale was disposed to give more heed to the young stranger; and before they parted it was understood that if, upon a more exact survey of the New Lanark property, his partners were disposed to join in the purchase of it, he should be prepared to entertain a proposition to that effect.

Thus encouraged, he left Glasgow, first informing Miss Dale of the result of his interview with her father, and on his way home stopped at New Lanark and made a thorough examination of the property. Without much expectation that his partners would view the subject in the same light that he did (as they had not the same stimulus to embark in the adventure), he informed them of what had occurred; and so favourably were they impressed by his report that one partner from each of two firms with which he was connected, agreed to accompany him to Glasgow, taking New Lanark in their way, with full authority, if they should think it expedient, to make the purchase.

In the interview with Mr. Dale, he having satisfied himself of the responsibility of the parties, the price of the property was, of course, the main consideration; but the owner had seldom visited the premises, had left the management of the concern very much to his agents, and was unable to judge of its value, and, to Mr. Owen's surprise (as he assures us), it was referred to him to name the terms. Such singular confidence seems scarcely consistent with what Miss Dale had told him of her father's distrust of strangers, and of the hopelessness of any attempt to reconcile him to the projected matrimonial alliance; but Owen evidently possessed a remarkable faculty of ingratiating himself into the favour of others, and his energy, promptness and intelligence about the matter in hand would be

likely to charm such a man as Mr. Dale. Owen estimated the property at three hundred thousand dollars. This valuation was accepted; and, all parties concurring in the terms of payment, the property passed at once into the new hands.

It is difficult to conceive how Mr. Owen, with the least reflection or discernment, could review the events of the few preceding months of his life, and not perceive that, while all the circumstances were concurring to accomplish a definite end, he acted in reference to each and all of them with absolute independence. His first interview with Miss Dale was (as men say) accidental. He did not seek it, nor could he well avoid it with ordinary courtesy. But whether he should make or omit a second visit to her father's mills, and whether he should accept or decline a note of introduction to the manager, were just as truly matters of choice with him as whether he should sleep on a feather bed or a mattress at night, or have tea or coffee for breakfast. Yet he refers to the "new combination of circumstances" into which he was thus thrown, as having been "not at all under his control,"—though they produced such extraordinary results to himself and others, and, as he vainly imagined, would produce still "more extraordinary results to the entire population of the globe."

Soon after the sale, Mr. Owen took possession of the new premises, his lodgings being about a mile from the mills. Two cottages in the village had

been occupied during the summer months, one by Miss Dale and her sisters, and the other by the resident manager, their uncle James, and his family.

Upon the transfer of the property, Mr. Dale very discreetly proposed to his daughters to return to Glasgow; but by some means Mr. Owen obtained a reversal or suspension of the order, and thus secured a favourable opportunity to prosecute his suit to the eldest of them. It appears, however, that Mr. Dale continued averse to the connection; though, upon a further acquaintance, and by the intercession of influential friends, his opposition was allayed and finally overcome, and Miss Dale in due time became Mrs. Owen.

Before he conceived the idea of proposing himself to Miss Dale, Mr. Owen had purchased a very expensive mansion, with a walled garden and pleasure-grounds attached, near Manchester. The house was built by a wealthy merchant for his own occupation; but just as it was finished in every part to his mind he died, and the family never took possession of it. As Mr. Owen had occasion for only a portion of the rooms, he leased what he did not occupy. Here he lived for two years preceding his marriage; and hither he now brought his new wife, but only for a three-months' residence.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ORIGINAL PROPRIETORS OF NEW LANARK — SKETCH OF RICHARD ARKWRIGHT — HIS INVENTIONS — HIS SUCCESS IN LIFE—SKETCH OF DAVID DALE—HIS MOTIVE FOR ESTABLISHING THE NEW LANARK MILLS — HIS INFLUENCE THERE, AND ITS PERMANENCY—MISAPPREHENSION OF IT BY MR. OWEN.

AS the Clyde, or rather the mills and schools on its banks, were (to use a military phrase) the base of most of Mr. Owen's operations, or that on which in after-life he uniformly fell back when the practicability of his schemes was questioned, it will not be amiss to advert for a moment to the characters and doings of the founders and preceding owners of that famous property.

The manufacturing works at New Lanark were originally established by Messrs. Arkwright and Dale in 1784, when Robert Owen was thirteen years old. In natural good sense and practical views of men and things the two men were much alike. The name of Arkwright is doubtless familiar to our readers as the representative of a class called "self-made" men. His history is so remarkable, however, and forms so striking a contrast to that of his partner, the original proprietor

of New Lanark, that we must present a brief outline of both.

He was born at Preston, in 1732, the youngest of thirteen children of poverty and ignorance. He never was at school, and never saw the time when he could write a good hand. At an early age he was apprenticed to a barber. When he was twenty-eight, he ventured to rent a basement-cellar, and put up as a sign—

COME TO THE SUBTERRANEAN BARBER:

HE SHAVES FOR A PENNY.

It proved to be a shrewd manœuvre. Other barbers soon lost their customers, and were compelled to adopt the "subterranean" terms. Soon another sign appeared over Arkwright's entrance:—

A CLEAN SHAVE

FOR HALF A PENNY.

This brought him all the work he could do, and probably stimulated him to seek a larger field of enterprise; and, as wigs were much in vogue then, he traversed the country, purchased hair in large quantities, and employed a chemical hair-dye, which he managed so adroitly as to secure a large trade.

His mind seems to have been drawn to schemes of the abridgment of labour by machinery, from which no change of time or place could divert; and his ingenuity was constantly put to task in making plans or models of what his brain conceived. This, of course, interfered sometimes with his business; and his wife, convinced that he would starve his family by scheming when he ought to be shaving, in a fit of anger destroyed his models, and so annihilated his prospects of wealth and fame. It is said he never forgave the ruthless deed, but separated from her at once, and nothing would induce him to live with her again.*

In one of these peregrinations he formed an acquaintance with a clockmaker. His thoughts had been often drawn to mechanical inventions, and this new acquaintance prompted him to abandon the hair-speculation, and give his mind to the construction of a machine for spinning cotton by rollers, the principle of which was, perhaps, made known to him by the clockmaker. The model was in due time completed, and in 1769 was patented. The strong prejudice which existed at that time against machinery as the enemy of labour, exposed Arkwright

* The temper of the great Sir Isaac Newton was much more creditable, though the trials may not be analogous. When he saw that a favourite dog had, during his temporary absence, overturned a lighted candle and set fire to papers containing the results of years of severe labour, he exclaimed, "Oh, Diamond, Diamond! little do you know the mischief you have done me!"

to many embarrassments. A mill, which he built at considerable expense, was destroyed by a mob, in defiance of the police, backed by a military force. A combination was also formed to invalidate his patent, and it succeeded. But, though discouraged, he was not subdued. With a marvellous energy he applied himself to perfecting his machinery. He built several large mills, in different places, and, among them, that at New Lanark. He was accustomed to severe and continuous labour from four in the morning till nine at night. He travelled from place to place with great speed, and was a rigid economist of time. At fifty years of age he applied himself, in odd minutes, to the study of grammar, and to improvement in spelling and writing. With an indomitable energy he continued to prosecute his plans, and with such success, too, as to amass a very large fortune. Twenty-five years after he left the barber's shop he became high-sheriff of the county; and, on the occasion of his presenting *ex officio* an address to the king, the order of knighthood was conferred upon him. He died eight years after (1792), at the age of sixty.

Whatever doubt may exist as to Arkwright's claim to the original invention of the spinning-machine, which so greatly modified the material interests of the whole civilized world, it is universally conceded that by his spirit and perseverance it became what it was; and "he who matures a crude idea, and understands how to apply

it, is the true benefactor of mankind, and not he who simply conceives it."

Notwithstanding the prodigious disadvantages of Sir Richard Arkwright's early life, his comprehensive judgment and well-balanced mind enabled him to lay his plans with skill and with a view to direct practical ends. His patient energy and unwearied industry were expended in the execution of well-digested and consistent projects of present utility; and, so far as worldly interests are concerned, he lived to good purpose.

The career of his partner in the enterprise at New Lanark was of a different character. David Dale was a Scotchman, born (1738) in humble circumstances, and, on leaving school, was apprenticed to the weaving business. After serving out his term, he worked as a journeyman. He had a generous spirit; and, scanty as were his earnings, he devoted a portion of them to the relief of the poor. In process of time he engaged in trade, and, after acquiring a considerable fortune, he determined to use it in some way for the encouragement of industry. The prospect of a great enlargement in the various branches of cotton-manufacture in consequence of the introduction of Arkwright's spinning-machine induced him to purchase the water-power at the Falls of the Clyde, and to erect extensive mills there, mainly with a view to the employment of those who were without work. He was a man of deep religious emotions, conscientious and benevo-

lent. It would seem, from Mr. Owen's account of him, that he was a public teacher of religion, having stated times and places in the vicinity of his residence at which to meet assemblies of the people for religious service. These stations, or appointments, he says, were not less than forty in number; and he adds that Mr. Dale was accustomed "to receive these people kindly and hospitably, and was truly a good pastor to them in every sense of the word, expending his private fortune freely to aid and assist them." It is said by his contemporaries that the gentleness and benevolence of his heart were very conspicuous in his speech and manners, and, added to his scrupulous integrity in word and deed, attracted the love and respect of all who knew him. His death was regarded as a great public loss. We are told that the inhabitants of Glasgow—the city of his residence—closed their places of business, that they might pay due respect to the memory of "the man without guile, benevolent and kind to all, regardless of creed and country."

We can readily imagine such a man breaking ground in a sequestered dell on the margin of the Clyde, with the charitable design of supplying the unemployed poor with work. We see the substantial workshops rising to view, the buzzing machinery in motion, and ranges of neat, comfortable dwellings, with nice green plats attached, stretching off on either side, and already occupied by

grateful tenants at a nominal rent; while a becoming place for worship and four spacious school-buildings indicate a careful regard to the religious, moral and intellectual well-being of the operatives and their children. The benevolent Christian proprietor comes among them, at intervals of a few weeks, inquires into their circumstances, sympathizes with their cares and crosses, gives them a word of encouragement, admonition or reproof (made welcome by his consistent example and bland manners), supplies competent and conscientious teachers for the minds of their little children, as well as food and raiment for their bodies, scatters copies of the Holy Scriptures, and other wholesome books, in their families, and, in a word, exerts a powerful and steady influence for good, which is felt in every household, if not in every heart.

Thirteen years pass, and advancing age or engrossing duties elsewhere induce the proprietor to sell out; and he accepts the terms which the purchaser himself offers after a full survey of the premises, and the mills pass under new management; but the same men, women and children are there, and their habits, views and associations are unchanged. The religious sentiment which was implanted under such favourable auspices still pervades the place. To what shall we ascribe it if order, contentment, subordination to authority, industry and good fellowship shall be the character-

istics of the people for two or three successive generations?

We are told of the people of ancient Israel that they "served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord which he had done for them." And it would be contrary to all human experience if the people of New Lanark, and their children, and their children's children, were to fail in the distinct and prominent exhibition of the fruits of such early training. If the honourable and titled visitors who in after-years viewed the mills and the schools with such admiration could have read the secret history of those interesting results they witnessed, they would have found the name of David Dale, the Christian founder of the colony, written conspicuously on every page.

A tourist describes the New Lanark village before Mr. Owen ever saw it, as follows:—

"Mr. Dale deserves well of his country, dispensing happiness and comfort to so many of his fellow-creatures by his attention not only to their health but their morals, by training them up to useful habits of industry, instructing them in the necessary branches of education, and instilling into their minds a knowledge of the important truths of Christianity. Four hundred children are entirely fed, clothed and instructed at the expense of this venerable philanthropist. The rest of the children live with their parents, in comfortable and neat habitations, and receive weekly wages for their labour.

"The health and happiness depicted in the countenances of these children show that the proprietor of the Lanark Mills has remembered mercy in the midst of his gain. The regulations adopted here for the preservation of health, both of body and mind, present a striking contrast to the generality of large manufactories in this kingdom,—which are the schools of vice and of profligacy, the very hotbeds of disease and of contagion. It is a truth, which ought to be engraved in letters of gold to the eternal honour of the founder of New Lanark, that out of nearly three thousand children working in these mills, during a period of twelve years, only fourteen have died, and not one has suffered criminal punishment."

Such was the testimony of an unprejudiced traveller to the social condition of the place before the proprietorship changed hands. In citing this testimony, we do not detract from any credit to which Mr. Owen may be entitled for whatever he may have done to improve the place or the people; though the account he himself gives* of the condition of affairs when he assumed the charge may seem to be irreconcilable with it. For we are to bear in mind the temperament and prepossessions of the new manager. If he did not regard all pretensions to religious emotions or principles as hypocritical, he was not disposed to give them much consideration. And since his theory contemplated the thief, the adulterer and the drunkard as the victims of uncontrollable circumstances, such of-

* See Appendix to his Discourses of February 25 and March 7, 1825, published by Eichbaum & Johnson, Pittsburg, Pa.

fences could have had no more *moral* turpitude in his view than rheumatism, gout or fever. If an empirical adventurer has a specific for a certain disease, he is very likely to make the most of the malady he pretends to cure. And if Mr. Owen would make the impression that all social evils have their origin in the various religions of the world, it would be natural for him to see these evils in large proportions wherever religion was supposed to have had much sway. It is scarcely to be believed that a man of David Dale's acknowledged benevolence and zeal for the welfare of the poor would have expended so large a sum on the New Lanark Mills for the very purpose of giving the poor employment, and yet have left them under debasing influences! Among the forty neighbourhoods of which he is represented as having exercised a sort of spiritual oversight, it is quite unlikely that he would egregiously neglect the only one which owed its existence to his liberality and enterprise and which was within the distance of a couple of hours' ride from his residence. It is not less incredible that a man to whose catholicity of spirit Mr. Owen himself gives such strong testimony, should have introduced a strong infusion of "sectarianism" into the place, even though it were from the "best possible motive, and a conscientious adherence to principle." And especially improbable must we regard the statement that so intolerant was the spirit which then prevailed in New Lanark that

those who could not adopt a certain form of religious belief were excluded from very desirable privileges which others enjoyed who could adopt it.

If the population of the place were reduced to so low a condition, it was easy to imagine that Mr. Dale was impatient to be relieved of his connection with it, and, hence, to represent his retirement as a consequence of his disappointment and mortification at finding his exertions for the improvement and happiness of his race baffled. But we look in vain for any evidence of all this, outside of Mr. Owen's fancy. The proposition to buy the mills was not seized by the proprietor with the eagerness of a disappointed speculator; and, from all the circumstances disclosed, we are forced to the conclusion that much (if not most) of the seed whose fruit excited the wonder and applause of visitors to New Lanark, and to which Mr. Owen was accustomed to direct men for evidence of the practicability and merit of his theory of social reform, was sown under the hand of his good father-in-law, and that but for such an anterior cultivation the experiment there would have been as futile as it was afterwards at Motherwell and New Harmony. We are far from imputing intentional misrepresentation to the earnest reformer. Having conceived himself to be Hercules, it was natural that the same exuberant fancy should find an Augean stable to test his powers.

CHAPTER V.

CHANGES BY THE NEW PROPRIETORS—MR. OWEN'S STAND-POINT AS A REFORMER ILLUSTRATED—PECULIARITY OF HIS CHARACTER—SINGULAR ABANDONMENT OF HIS OWN THEORY—HIS EMBARRASSMENTS—PLANS OF IMPROVEMENT—NEW DIFFICULTY HAPPILY OVERCOME—HOW HE REGARDED HIS EXPERIMENT—SANITARY REGULATIONS—THE BELL AND LANCASTER SYSTEM—SCHOOLS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN.

IT appears that at the time of the sale of the New Lanark property it was thought best to leave the management of the mills in the hands of the same parties whom Mr. Dale had employed; but the condition of affairs was by no means satisfactory. There was a want of harmony between the two managers; and it was at length determined that Mr. Owen should remove thither and take the personal oversight (or, as he preferred to say) "government" of the company's concerns; and this he did, about the 1st of January, 1800.

And now there was presented to our enterprising and enthusiastic reformer a long-coveted opportunity to apply some of his theories to practical ends. We must call to mind the aspect of society as it then, and for years afterwards, presented itself to his eye. There were three divisions:—1, the poor and the uneducated among the working-classes, who are

trained to commit crimes for which they are afterwards punished; 2, the remaining mass of the population, who are instructed to believe, or at least to acknowledge, that certain principles are unerringly true, and to act as though they were grossly false,—thus filling the world with folly and inconsistency, and making society throughout all its ramifications a scene of insincerity and counteraction;* and, 3, Robert Owen, who alone sees the true condition of things, and to whom alone the secret of the remedy has been revealed. His logic is, however, faultless. Assuming that good and evil in human character result from the "conditions and circumstances" in which men are placed, it would follow that the way to change their moral character is to change their "conditions and circumstances." When, therefore, Mr. Owen found, or thought, that intemperance, dishonesty, deceit, falsehood and hypocrisy prevailed among his work-people, he applied himself to ascertain in what "conditions and circumstances" these evils originated, that he might "supersede them by better."† He looked

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* First Essay on Formation of Character.

† "We are the creatures of external things
Acting on inward organs, and are made
To think and do whate'er our tutors please.
What folly, then, to punish or reward
For deeds o'er which we never held a curb!
What woeful ignorance, to teach the crime
And then chastise the pupil for his guilt!"
—*The Force of Circumstances:* a Poem, by John Garwood,

upon the thief and the drunkard as the victims of "circumstances and conditions" over which they had no control. They are made to be what they are by the evil conditions which surround them, and for which society alone, if any party, should be made responsible. In a letter to the London newspapers, July, 1817, Mr. Owen alludes to a visit to Newgate Prison, where he saw a boy of sixteen doubly ironed, and says, "My Lord Sidmouth [then Secretary of State for the Home Department] will forgive me, for he knows I intend no personal offence, but the chief civil magistrate of the country in such case is far more guilty than the boy; and in strict justice, if a system of coercion and punishment be rational and necessary, he ought rather to have been double-ironed and in place of the boy."*

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dedicated to Robert Owen, Birmingham, 1808. "The principles which it advocates," he says, in the dedication, "are those which you have taught me, and will, I firmly believe, at no very distant day, lead to the ultimate happiness of the whole human race."

*The fallacy and mischief of such a doctrine are well exposed by the "Westminster Review" in an analysis of Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables:" and it must be indeed a very lax view of moral responsibility that would call for such a rebuke from such a quarter:—

"The scope of Victor Hugo's teaching in this book appears to be that vaguest, easiest, oldest lesson of second-class morality, that 'society' is responsible for the errors and wrong-doing of each individual member. Society can, and ought to, redeem those whom it has caused to fall: it is

To reduce the idea to an absurdity, it would only be necessary to ask where the responsibility would

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society's business altogether. The individuals are always victims, to be pitied and comforted; the social mass are the betrayers, the deserters, the criminals. This is undoubtedly an affecting as well as a very easily conveyed lesson. It has, of course, its deep tincture of truth; it touches the hearts of most people, and relieves the consciences of a good many. No doubt 'circumstances,' or (as Victor Hugo would prefer to express it) society, must be held responsible for much of the lives of all of us. Had Jean Valjean been trained in early life for the church, it is very unlikely that he would ever have been a convict. Had Fantine never met with a profligate, she probably never would have been seduced. All this is so indisputably true that we may set it down as a truism. In judging of the life of a man or woman, we shall act stupidly and blindly if we fail to take into account early training, condition, surroundings, temptations; but nothing can be more untrue and more dangerous than the professedly moral and philosphical doctrine which would shift the entire burden of responsibility from each man's and woman's shoulders to the shoulders of society and circumstances in general."—*Westminster Review*, American reprint, Jan. 1863, p. 61.

In a criticism on the same work of Victor Hugo, which appeared (to the surprise of everybody) in a French paper, the following paragraph occurred:—"I must be allowed to tell the author that there exists a beautiful book which in no wise gives up the palm to the *Misérables* in regard to mercy to all the suffering and despairing ones on earth; and that book is the *gospel.* Human wisdom may institute a general gathering, and heap laws upon philosophical treatises, unite Confucius to Lycurgus, Solon to Numa, Socrates to Voltaire, place Mohammed by Luther, the Justinian Code by the Civil Code, &c., but it will not extract from all the millions of known books a divine and human solution of the social problem worth the morals of a few

rest if *all* the members of society were exempt. Where will the forest be when the trees are all removed? We shall have occasion to advert to this fallacy in another connection.

The task Mr. Owen undertook was, as he describes it, "by superior and good conditions to form superior and good characters in those whose inferior and bad conditions have made them inferior and bad characters." To carry out his plans, he found it necessary to obtain new superintendents of the different departments of the New Lanark Mills, as the present incumbents were too closely wedded to their "prejudices" to adopt such measures as he contemplated. They lacked faith in their practicability; but, while he was arranging to displace them, they resigned. If Mr. Owen's statement is to be accepted, they lacked other qualifications for the trust reposed in them; for he tells us that so general and unblushing was the crime of theft that Mr. Dale's property had suffered enormous depredations.

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parables composed and spoken by a Just One before a handful of rough fishermen and sinful women. The gospel reviles no one. It says not to society, with haughty empiricism, *I will heal thee*, but, *I will redeem thee* if thou wilt, and if thou art humble in heart. This is to promise less and to keep more. It lifts up the drop of water become mud after the fall; it restores it to its pristine limpidity in the crucible of faith, and says, with an ineffable smile, 'Hope on, and thou shalt become a pearl again in a better world than this!'"

The antipathy to employment in cotton-mills which prevailed at that time among people in respectable circumstances made it necessary to collect hands from any quarter and of almost any character: so that a more inviting field for the experiment which Mr. Owen was anxious to try could not be desired. The vices he saw were, to a large extent, what he called "vices of condition." In such a community as he describes that at New Lanark to have been, the ordinary restraints upon vicious inclinations were wanting; evil habits had become rooted, and temptations to the indulgence of animal appetites had imperious sway. If this were a true report of their social condition, here, if anywhere, a change in "conditions and circumstances" might be expected to result in a change of character and conduct. If a man's poverty tempts him to steal, give him an abundance, and the temptation is neutralized. If idleness begets a desire for strong drink, employment is very likely to counteract it. It probably did not occur to him to ask what virtue there is in contentment where every want is satisfied, or what firmness in principle that has never struggled with temptation, or what vigour in muscles that are never exercised. Not only was the population well fitted to his purpose, but no one could be better qualified to apply the new theory; for he regarded himself as the only one of his own generation, and of all the generations that preceded him, to whom the secret

of making an unhappy race happy had been imparted.

It is one of the most remarkable peculiarities of Mr. Owen's character, that, while a scheme of such absorbing interest had possession of his mind, and his conception of its importance was so overpowering, he retained perfect control of himself, and prosecuted his proper business with great punctuality, energy and success.

To qualify him for the task he had in hand, two things were regarded by him as essential:—1. "A knowledge of human nature, and of the science of the influence of circumstances over it;" and, 2. "Illimitable patience, forbearance and determination," —a combination of qualities which, he assures us, with imperturbable self-satisfaction, had been "unknown during the past history of the human race." This great secret, "which had been so long hidden from the world," was revealed to him through the "discovery of the knowledge that the character of each of our race is formed by God or nature, and by society, and that it is impossible that any human being could or can form his own qualities or character." This knowledge Mr. Owen had acquired, as he informs us, "by the gradual teaching of nature, through experience and reflection forced upon him by the circumstances through which he had passed." Thus furnished for his mission, so far as the "science of the influence of circumstances" is concerned, it was to be seen whether

he possessed the other qualities of "patience, forbearance and determination."*

Of the thirteen hundred inhabitants of New Lanark that he found settled in families through the village, between four and five hundred were pauper children, obtained from almshouses, ranging in age from five to ten,—though "put out" as from seven to twelve. While Mr. Dale owned the mills, these children were well fed, lodged and clothed, and after working-hours they were allowed to attend school, where, as Mr. Owen represents the case, some learned to read imperfectly, the older ones to write a little, and the rest to loathe the idea of school.

And now for the first step in the process of reform. Of course it will be to "supersede the evil conditions" in which these four or five hundred pauper children are found (children, of all others, least responsible for their present position) by "good conditions." To this end, he will probably dismiss their present teachers, if incompetent, and employ such as are in all respects qualified, and will appoint hours and supply means of instruction suited to their tender age and peculiar disadvan-

* If his own theory were true, he himself was only one automaton among the others, and his wish to benefit the rest was only the effect of circumstances, without any proper will of his own, and the actions of all were mere "magnetic mockeries" of life, with no more purpose than the movements of pasteboard puppets.

tages. But, so far from this, he determines that when Mr. Dale's engagement with the parishes for the employment of these pauper children should expire, no more such children should be received. As if a professional man should claim to have discovered an infallible process for the cure of a diseased limb, and should propose to the first patient that presented himself for treatment, to cut it off!

Having disposed of this evil thus summarily, he proceeds to improve the streets of the village, to provide better dwellings for the new families that are to succeed Mr. Dale's pauper children, and to make an entire change in the mills and machinery.

To accomplish the projected improvements would involve the expenditure of a large sum of money; and the business must be conducted with such skill and economy as to yield not only satisfactory profits to the owners, but a sufficient surplus to warrant the proposed outlay. To add to his embarrassment, the work-people showed a determined hostility to all his schemes; and to conciliate them he was obliged to avail himself of the good offices of a few influential persons, to whom he explained his design and sought their sympathy and aid.

Changes obviously conducive to the comfort and self-interest of the community could not fail to secure their good will. Instead of the low retail shops from which the people were accustomed to buy inferior goods at very extravagant prices, he

established stores stocked with the best goods, purchased for cash in the best markets, and sold at a small profit. For other necessary articles, as fuel, milk, bread, &c., he contracted at wholesale prices and sold them at cost. The people could not shut their eyes to such substantial improvements in their condition; and with these came improved personal habits, more cleanly and comfortable houses, and, of course, better health.

While Mr. Owen was thus gradually gaining confidence in himself and his plans, the mills were suddenly stopped and the hands thrown out of employment. In consequence of some diplomatic misunderstanding, the supply of cotton from the United States was cut off, and the price immediately advanced to a figure at which manufacturers were not disposed to buy; and a large number ("most of them," Mr. Owen says) stopped their machinery and discharged their hands.

To have adopted this course at New Lanark would have rendered abortive the half-completed schemes of reform, and exposed the people to great suffering. Fortunately, means were furnished to support them for a time without work. The machinery was stopped; and all that was required of the hands in return for full wages was to keep it clean and in good working condition. This interval of idleness lasted four months; and thirty-five thousand dollars were paid for that unemployed time, not a penny being deducted from any man's

wages. Perhaps it may have been thought by some that it was not so much from generosity as self-interest that this course was pursued. It might be regarded as no great sacrifice to retain skilful operatives for so brief a period, as the risk and loss attending the introduction of new hands would be by no means inconsiderable. Mr. Owen tells us that this proceeding won the confidence and good will of the whole population, and removed every obstacle to his reforming measures.

The return of commerce to its accustomed channels set the New Lanark wheels in motion; and Mr. Owen, having conciliated all prejudices by such an unprecedented outlay for the support of the people when employment failed, resumed his plans with brighter prospects.

It was, however, a subject of regret to him that he could not "create a combination of conditions" to suit himself,—as in that case he would not have chosen a cotton-mill, nor such a society as he found at New Lanark. But this is an embarrassment for which all reformers must be prepared. Had Mr. Owen arranged the preliminaries of the grand experiment, had he been allowed to prepare the raw material out of which his new social fabric was to be wrought, his task would have been comparatively easy. But reformers must needs take men as they rise, and make the best of the obstructions which sooner or later occur, and which in Mr.

Owen's case impeded, and finally frustrated, his philanthropic designs.

Inasmuch as the new "conditions" which he required in order to put society on its proper basis could not be secured at New Lanark, his attempt there was "merely to ameliorate, to some extent, the worst evils of a fundamentally erroneous system." To test his theory fairly, he maintained not only that the proposed new state of human existence should commence on "new sites" (inasmuch as to connect them with any existing conditions would be utterly incongruous, and could not produce a consistent, rational, true and beneficent state of society), but that "the new conditions should be universal everywhere."

"There would have been no difficulty," he says, "in forcing, without individual punishment or reward, a good character upon all, nor in enabling them with pleasure to surround themselves, at all times, with a superfluity of the most valuable wealth, if I had had the means to create, on a new foundation and site, the combination of conditions which can alone effect these results. Society has never yet put it in my power to show the world an example of these conditions; although it is the highest and most permanent interest of all that this example should be given in my lifetime, because my experience in scientific, practical arrangements for superseding evil by good conditions

is the only experience of that character yet known to the world."*

His success at New Lanark, therefore, though so marvellous in his view that but for the demonstration of facts it would have been considered utterly impracticable, he would only regard as the best he could do with such a population thrown upon his hands with habits and conditions already fixed.

One of the first steps in reform taken after the resumption of work was the introduction of a "character-book," as it was called. The four sides of a square block of wood were painted black, blue, yellow and white. The side painted black was known as No. 4, and denoted bad conduct, the blue (No. 3) indifferent, the yellow (No. 2) good, and the white (No. 1) excellent. One of these blocks was given to each operative, and it was to be suspended in his sight, with that side turned towards him which represented his conduct the preceding day,—the same report being also recorded against the party's name in the character-book. So that each had a silent Mentor (as Mr. Owen called it) constantly in sight, and knew every morning what was his standing on the preceding day. This device, he assures us, was eminently successful. That it was eminently simple we must admit; and its success, if not exaggerated, indicates a docility which

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* Autobiography, vol. i. p. 79.

one would not have anticipated in a population so debased and depraved as he describes that of New Lanark to have been.

But these silent Mentors, and the designated mode of their reports, referred only to the deportment of the hands while in the mills. The condition of things at home had a much more decided influence upon character; and it was plainly to be seen that a prolific source of prevailing evils (there as everywhere) was domestic mismanagement, and especially the mistakes and neglects which attended the rearing of infants and young children,—evils incident to all dense populations the world over.*

* The evils referred to in the text have become so rife in the English metropolis as to call for the formation of several very useful associations for their relief. Among them we have noted with special interest "*The Ladies' Sanitary Association*," and the admirable series of tracts they have published (three packages, twenty-four tracts in all), treating, in plain and familiar yet very attractive manner, those subjects which most concern the health and comfort of HOME. It is obvious to all that spiritual counsel and admonition, however well meant and important in its place, is not likely to be welcomed where empty stomachs, filthy floors and furniture, and a noisy, dirty, fractious brood of children are the most familiar objects of attention. Hence we regard with *religious* interest those measures which have respect to the health, comfort and self-respect of the poor. That our readers may judge of the character of the tracts, we subjoin their titles:—The Power of Soap and Water (A Charm that Came True); The Cheap Doctor (A Word about Fresh Air); When were you Vaccinated? The Health of Mothers (with engravings); How to Manage a Baby; The Black Hole in our Bedrooms; Washing the Children; The Worth of

The narrow accommodations to which a large class of the labouring people in cities and large towns are restricted afford no facilities for the physical training of young children; and, as their presence is often a care and hindrance to an industrious mother, they are suffered (if not urged), from the tenderest age, to roam the streets and alleys and contract all manner of moral and corporeal filth; so that, even if parents were not ignorant of the right methods of domestic training, they would, generally, be without the needful means and facilities to apply them. It was, therefore, a humane and sensible as well as a natural project which Mr. Owen now entertained, of establishing schools for the reception of the youngest children, not so much to instruct them as to keep them out of harm's way, and at the same time mould their habits, cultivate their affections, and exercise healthfully and harmoniously their physical powers.

The rival systems of public education devised and advocated by Bell and Lancaster were then exciting considerable attention; and Mr. Owen,

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Fresh Air; Whose Fault is it? The Bride's New Home; The Mother; The Inspector, or, How to get rid of Bad Smells; Children Going to School; A Day in the Country; Lost and Found; The Use of Pure Water; The Value of Good Food; Something Homely: Never Despair (household verses on health and happiness); The Sick Child's Cry (verse); Sanitary Defects and Medical Short-Comings; How do People hasten Death? Household Troubles and Trials, How to Meet Them; Woman's Work in Sanitary Reform.

though of course regarding them both as involving fundamental error, was nevertheless so impressed with the importance of the main purpose of each, that he liberally patronized them. But the means at his control were not adequate to the accomplishment of his own scheme of infant education at New Lanark, nor did the circumstances favour it; and, besides all this, a new position of his business affairs was at hand, which greatly modified all his relations and interests.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONDITION OF AFFAIRS AT NEW LANARK—DISSATISFACTION OF THE PROPRIETORS—MR. OWEN PURCHASES THEIR INTEREST—HIS SUCCESSFUL MANAGEMENT—ANOTHER COPARTNERSHIP—ITS UNFORTUNATE RESULTS—AN INTERESTING SKETCH OF THE DIFFICULTY—ILLUSTRATIVE OF HIS CHARACTER—NEW PARTNERS—WILLIAM ALLEN—JOSEPH FOX—PRINCIPLES TO BE REGARDED IN MANAGING THE POPULATION.

IT would seem that the co-proprietors of the mills had left their management to Mr. Owen so entirely that it is not certain whether they were advised of his generous conduct towards the mill-hands during the suspension of work to which we have just referred. The time had now come, however, when his schemes assumed an importance and involved an outlay that made it necessary to consult them. The leading partners repaired to New Lanark, examined the works and the condition of the people, heard Mr. Owen's statement and an exposition of his plans, expressed their satisfaction, and proposed to report to the other partners and then determine how far they could sanction his views. Their approbation of his course was expressed by the gift of a valuable piece of plate,

with a complimentary inscription upon it, which he flattered himself was the precursor of a compliance with all his wishes. But some of the principal parties in interest, being still distrustful, paid a second visit, and made a more minute inquiry into the proposed reforms. Mr. Owen's report of the result of the interview is not very creditable to the logical acumen of his associates. They admitted (he says) the truth of "each of his propositions, separately; but, as they led to conclusions contrary to their education, habits and practices, they must in the aggregate be erroneous," and, therefore, could not be adopted.

With characteristic promptness, he replied that if he was to continue to act as managing partner he must be governed by the principles and practices he had explained to them, and, if they were not satisfied, he would name a sum which he would give or take for the property, and thus amicably end all differences of opinion. They listened to his proposition, and asked him to fix the sum; and he named four hundred and twenty thousand dollars. After a brief consultation, they accepted his offer, and he thus became sole proprietor of the New Lanark Mills.

The skill and economy with which he had managed the business during the period of their joint proprietorship appears from the fact that, after paying all expenses and dividing five per cent upon the

capital, the clear yearly profits were thirty thousand dollars.

No sooner was this partnership dissolved than another was formed, into which, we might suppose, he would be careful to admit only those who would sympathize in his views and co-operate in carrying them out. But it unfortunately happened that, after a brief period of prosperity, during which Mr. Owen commenced the erection of his long-contemplated school-buildings, two of the new partners conceived a prejudice against him, which ripened into a determined hostility to all his movements and ended in a formal notice not to proceed with his projected improvements. They could not have touched him in a more sensitive spot; and he at once resigned his position as manager, and of course his salary, and the partners took possession of books, funds, &c.; and so radical was the alienation that, although he had by far the largest interest in the mills, they withheld from him any share of the receipts, and obliged him, as he assures us, to obtain his daily family supplies on credit. Of course a dissolution of the partnership became necessary, and Mr. Owen was disposed to adopt the same course he did before, —name a sum which he would give or take; but this was declined, and a sale at public auction was the only alternative. The incidents connected with this transaction are so singular, and so strikingly illustrative of some of the peculiarities of Mr. Owen's character, as to justify some detail.

If his own statement may be credited, the most disingenuous and unjust means were employed to bring the property and its late manager into disrepute. He was represented as a visionary, full of impracticable and expensive schemes, chiefly in the matter of education and wages; and the property was declared to be so greatly deteriorated under his management that they would be glad to get two hundred thousand dollars for what had cost them originally four hundred and twenty thousand. The wide circulation of these reports by interested parties was well fitted to deter purchasers of the property, as well as to prejudice Mr. Owen's private reputation. As the case stands on his private record, there was certainly a manifestation of gross malevolence; but we have only one side of the story.

Meanwhile, and before the time fixed for the sale, the buoyant and indefatigable object of these ungenerous machinations had occasion to go to London to oversee the publication of "Four Essays" he had written "on the formation of character;"* and, being also much interested in several matters of public interest then under discussion for the amelioration of pauperism and the education and elevation of its children, his partners would naturally suppose that he was busying himself with these

* The design and character of these essays will be stated in another connection.

interests, which were much to his taste,—whereas in fact he was negotiating with capitalists to aid in the purchase of the New Lanark estate.

With his repeated experiences for a guide, he now "sought to associate with himself men superior to selfish views," who would not regard the *percentage* of profits as the only criterion of success. That they should receive a fair return for their investments all would admit; but that with this reasonable purpose there should be combined a regard to the welfare and improvement of the operatives and their families was the chief end which Mr. Owen professed to have in view in the selection of his new partners.

In explanation of his theory, he published a pamphlet for private circulation among the wealthy and benevolent people of London, in which he gave a succinct account of his proceedings at New Lanark, setting forth his plans for promoting the comfort, respectability and education of the labouring people and their families. It was a shrewd move, and fully answered the purpose for which it was made. The attention of men of means was attracted to what seemed to be a successful philanthropic enterprise; and several expressed their readiness to join in the purchase of the property at a fair price.

The mills had now been in the market for some months, and the time of sale drew near. No suspicion seems to have been entertained of Mr. Owen's design to be a bidder. On the contrary, so strong

was the faith of the old partners in a successful termination of their plan to obtain the property on their own terms, that (as Mr. Owen tells us) a large party of their friends were invited to dine with them after the sale should have taken place, and share in the congratulations which the auspicious event would of course call forth.

Upon his return to Glasgow to attend the sale, Mr. Owen was accompanied by three of the gentlemen who had become interested in his projects and were disposed to join him. They did not make themselves nor their purpose known, however; nor until the morning of the sale did Mr. Owen meet his old partners to arrange the conditions and terms, and especially to determine at what price the property should be put up below which no bid should be accepted. They proposed two hundred thousand dollars,—the value to which, they alleged, the property had been reduced by Mr. Owen's mad schemes. He at once asked them if they would take three hundred thousand for it,—which they declined. He then fixed that as the minimum price at the sale, to which they were of course obliged to assent; and it was also agreed that no bid should be accepted of less than five hundred dollars advance upon that which preceded.

In the mean while, the London gentlemen had accepted Mr. Owen's estimate—which was six hundred thousand dollars—as a fair price for the property, and authorized him to bid up to that sum.

Mr. Owen employed an agent to attend the sale, instructing him to bid no more than five hundred dollars at a time, and to suspend his bids at six hundred thousand until he received additional instructions.

Much interest was felt in the disposal of the property, especially in Glasgow, where Mr. Owen was well known and much esteemed; and an unusually large number attended the sale. The auctioneer stated that three hundred thousand dollars was the price at which the property was held; and Mr. Owen's agent at once bid three hundred thousand and five hundred. The partners took a long leap, and offered three hundred and five thousand and five hundred; whereupon Mr. Owen's agent bid his five hundred advance. And thus they proceeded, with bids of five hundred on one side and five thousand on the other, till they reached the sum originally paid,—four hundred and twenty thousand dollars. The partners, after consultation, reduced their scale of bids, first to twenty-five hundred, and then to five hundred, and so continued till five hundred and fifty thousand was reached, and Mr. Owen's agent added his uniform bid of five hundred.

At this stage of the proceeding, the partners appealed to their rival bidder to desist from such a ruinous competition; but they did not know the man with whom they were contending, if they supposed he would yield at such a juncture. Excited

by what they regarded as sheer obstinacy, they renewed the bidding with such spirit that the sum of five hundred and seventy thousand dollars was soon named, when Mr. Owen's agent coolly repeated his monotonous bid of five hundred advance. The old partners were now silent. The auctioneer's mallet fell, and New Lanark became the property of Mr. Owen and his new-made friends at five hundred and seventy thousand and five hundred dollars.

Among these friends were men eminent not only for their wealth, but for their benevolence and earnestness in the promotion of human interests. How far they were cognizant of Mr. Owen's peculiar views does not appear. One of them, John Walker, who became interested in the new purchase to the amount of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, had read his essays, in which his theories are opened at considerable length; and it is presumed he saw, or thought he saw, in them evidence of a mind bent upon devices for the improvement and elevation of the humbler ranks of society, and, overlooking the idiosyncrasies which are betrayed on every page, put faith in the general purpose at which the author evidently aimed.

The capital stock of the new concern was divided into thirteen shares of fifty thousand dollars each. Of these Mr. Owen retained five, and the remaining eight were divided among five individuals. Of one or two of the parties in this new arrangement it is necessary to our purpose that we should give the reader some

further knowledge than that of the mere name. It will help us to understand more fully the character and temper of Mr. Owen, and will serve also to illustrate the influence of principles in moulding the judgments of men and directing their activities.

It will be observed that Mr. Owen's avowed object in organizing a new company was to secure partners with ample means, who could co-operate in efficient measures "for the improvement of the condition of the poor and working classes, and who would not exact more labour than a fair equivalent for the wages paid." There was abundant evidence of Mr. Owen's capacity to manage the business and to make it profitable, and also of his desire and ability to better materially the condition and prospects of the work-people.

As the principles and views of those who were induced by these plausible considerations to embark in the new enterprise were in process of time brought into direct antagonism with Mr. Owen's theories, we may introduce them to the reader; and no one is better entitled to be mentioned first than that truly Christian philanthropist and philosopher, William Allen, of Plough Court, London.

He was born only a few months earlier than Owen, and enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a godly training. His childhood (singularly different from Mr. Owen's) seems to have been very docile and obedient; and he gave early indications of a taste for science. At fourteen years of age, he constructed

a rude telescope, from materials that cost thirty cents, which was sufficiently powerful to discern the satellites of Jupiter. For some years after leaving school, his father (who was engaged in the manufacture of silk) employed him in his business; but the occupation was uncongenial to his taste, and he only waited for a favourable opportunity to leave it. His inclination and capacity having become known to the proprietor of an extensive chemical house in London, he was offered a place in his employment, which he eagerly accepted, and was intrusted at once with very responsible duties. These he discharged with such fidelity and success as to rise in confidence, and finally to become the proprietor of the far-famed establishment.

From a very early period of his life he was thoughtful of his obligations as a creature of God and a subject of His moral government. From his eighteenth year we have a continuous record of the religious exercises of his mind. And these, when connected with his diligence in business, his fervency of spirit, and his exemplary benevolence, constitute the most satisfactory evidence of his Christian character.

William Allen was not behind Mr. Owen in befriending Joseph Lancaster, regarding the *scriptural basis* of his system as its chief attraction and value. He refers to the impression made on him by beholding one thousand children collected from the streets, where they were subject to mutual corruption, and

reduced to habits of order and subordination, while at the same time they were "learning the great truths of the gospel."

When Lancaster's affairs were to all appearance inextricably involved, and his creditors were vehemently urging their claims, Joseph Fox, another of Mr. Owen's new partners, gave his thoughts and means for Lancaster's relief. To this end, he sold stocks to the amount of ten thousand dollars to meet the most pressing demands, and became personally responsible for twenty thousand more! This timely and princely generosity saved Lancaster; and soon afterwards six trustees were appointed (including William Allen and Joseph Fox), who, by subscriptions and a temporary loan, provided for the satisfaction of all the claims. These negotiations, and the oversight of Lancaster's affairs, involved an amount of patient labour rarely endured as an office of friendship.

It was in December, 1814, that the proposal was made to William Allen to join in the purchase of the New Lanark Mills. The reports of the social improvements which were effected there had reached his ears. The good order, thrift and contentment which were said to prevail there certainly afforded strong evidence that such improvements are practicable; and, in order that they might be carried on to perfection, he was anxious that Robert Owen should be one of the partners. Having brought the establishment to such a prosperous

condition by his energy and good management, it was natural that he should be expected to remain in connection with it under any circumstances; but William Allen's chief motive for embarking with him was that "he might help to keep up this most interesting establishment for preserving the morals and promoting the health and happiness of the work-people." Perhaps he attributed a larger share of the apparent beneficial results to Mr. Owen than he could justly claim.

For, as we have already seen, while the mills were in the possession of Mr. Dale, the people were well supplied with Bibles and other books, and with ample means of secular and religious instruction. The success of the hygienic arrangements also was seen in the very low ratio of mortality in a population usually unhealthy; and the efficiency of moral influences was attested by the absence of any occasion for judicial punishment from 1785 to 1797. There can be no question that the influence of these measures was felt through all Mr. Owen's time, and indeed had the chief part in giving to the whole moral aspect of New Lanark its attractive complexion. When William Allen was there, as late as 1822, the people of the place, without any exception, not only possessed the Bible, but consulted it, many of them daily and diligently; and religious books were common in almost every family. When it is considered that New Lanark and the experiment there were, from first to last, Mr. Owen's

standing references for the soundness of his theories and the practicability of his schemes of social reform, these wholesome influences, which his "sincerely religious" father-in-law introduced into the fabric of society before Mr. Owen's work began, become of no little significance. Nevertheless, it was doubtless the supposed agency of Mr. Owen in the improved condition of things that induced William Allen to desire his continuance in the concern. Had he entertained the remotest suspicion that the system of discipline and instruction to be pursued was to be founded on the abnegation of "all existing religions," or that Mr. Owen's mind was impregnated with such views, he would have shrunk from the connection as from the bite of a scorpion. To show this, it is only necessary to say that the articles of the new copartnership distinctly provided "for the religious education of all the children of labourers employed in the mills;" and it was expressly stated that nothing should be introduced tending to the disparagement of the Christian religion or the authority of Holy Scripture.

CHAPTER VII.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MR. OWEN AND HIS PARTNERS — THEIR VIEWS MADE KNOWN TO THE OPERATIVES — DR. GRISCOM'S VISIT TO NEW LANARK, AND HIS IMPRESSIONS — DR. McNAB'S VIEWS *per contra* — NEW MEASURES INAUGURATED AT THE MILLS BY THE LONDON PARTNERS — JEREMY BENTHAM — HIS HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY — SINGULAR INCIDENT IN HIS LIFE — HIS FIRST INTERVIEW WITH MR. OWEN.

IN the autumn of 1814, William Allen spent some weeks at New Lanark, and before he left was joined by Mr. Fox. A survey of the works satisfied them that the manufacturing arrangements were all that could be desired; but Mr. Owen then avowed opinions which they could not sanction. In their final interview the two Friends strenuously insisted upon the use of the Scriptures in the schools, and, indeed, made it a *sine qua non* of their concurrence with his business plans; and he finally yielded.

A year later, William Allen, in a friendly letter to Mr. Owen, gives him full credit for his benevolence in seeking to ameliorate the physical condition of the labouring classes, but pointedly condemns his erratic opinions. He shows how groundless and fallacious are his views of the influence of re-

ligion, and, in a very simple and plain way, vindicates Christianity and maintains its divine authority. In promoting the comfort of the workmen and their families, in removing as far as possible temptations to vice, cultivating habits of economy, encouraging proper provision, by savings-banks, &c., for future exigencies, in establishing habits of morality and virtue among the children, and in persuading all to adopt the system of religion which their consciences approved, they were agreed. "These," said he, "are the objects which brought us into the concern; and we have no specific or satisfactory information as to the progress made in many of them."

It is presumed that Mr. Owen's reply satisfied the minds of the distrustful partners, as we hear no further from William Allen till the spring of 1818, when he made a visit to New Lanark, principally to ascertain whether any attempt was made to impair the faith of the people in divine revelation. The incidents of this visit throw much light on the condition of affairs. It was, among other things, stated that Mr. Owen had been asked to favour the establishment of a Bible Society in the village, which he declined to do; but it was organized, notwithstanding, by the people themselves, and Mrs. Owen became a subscriber. Inquiry was made of the clergymen in the vicinity, whose testimony was divided as to the absence of any open hostility to the principles of the Christian

faith. The general superintendent of the business was a decidedly religious man; and the opinion was confidently expressed that Mr. Owen's principles had taken no root among the people.

On one occasion, when the London partners were about to return home, the operatives requested an opportunity to present an address to them,—which was cheerfully granted. A large crowd assembled. Mr. Owen was present. After the address had been read, William Allen replied, in very gentle but decided terms, expressing the wish of the proprietors that the children of the village should be trained up in the knowledge of and reverence for the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and that their tender minds should be carefully imbued with the great truths of the religion revealed to mankind in them.*

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* The scene must have been very impressive. The address was doubtless intended quite as much to assure the proprietors of the strong attachment felt by the work-people to Mr. Owen as to express their gratitude to them for their liberality. And nothing could have been more antagonistic to Mr. Owen's known views and principles than those which William Allen on that occasion avowed. Indeed, although the language is courteous and the drift of the address altogether natural and appropriate, it was obviously designed to counteract what the proprietors regarded as pernicious in Mr. Owen's theories. To cite but a single paragraph:—

"Since religion is the only foundation of our happiness here and our hope for eternity, we are anxious that it should form a prominent part in the education of your children. We are not desirous to see you proselyted to this or that form of religion,

The next year (1819)—the same year in which William Allen travelled through Greece and the Ionian Islands, diffusing a knowledge of the system of public schools which was inaugurated by Joseph Lancaster—an American traveller† had the curiosity to visit New Lanark. He was struck with the candour and openness of Mr. Owen, but regarded his scheme as altogether visionary. He gave him credit for much "practical talent and unaffected benevolence," though they were united to the "cold speculations of a stubborn skepticism."

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but we are anxious to see your children brought up sincere Christians. The London proprietors who are now present with you, as well as our friend John Walker, now upon the continent, though firm believers in the Christian religion and the truths of divine revelation as contained in the Holy Scriptures, and as applied by the Spirit of God in the secret of the heart, themselves differ as to some less important particulars. Joseph Forster and myself are members of the Society of Friends; Michael Gibbs is a member of the Established Church of England, but we all agree with the Church of Scotland in the main truths of religion. We believe that the true Church of Christ consists of members of all visible Churches, who, in the sincerity of their hearts, are endeavouring to know and to perform the will of God, who are faithful to what is manifested to them to be their duty. These will be finally accepted, whatever denomination they may have borne among men, and will, in a glorified state, form part of that company which no man can number, gathered from every nation, kindred, tongue and people, which the evangelist John, in the visions of God, saw surrounding the throne and uniting in the universal hallelujah."—*Life of William Allen*, vol. i. p. 261.

† Dr. John Griscom, of New York.

He admits, as we all do, that his experiment, imperfect as it was, illustrates—what no one doubts—the vast influence which a more enlightened philanthropy might exert on the destinies and happiness of mankind. That it was very imperfect, and that its rosy exterior covered some grave deformities, we are not without evidence. It was singular that the very day the traveller to whom we refer was there, and was in company with Mr. Owen, two of the boys fell into a dispute, which ended in blows! Mr. Owen said it was the first blow which had been struck on those premises for years,—meaning, doubtless, within his sight or knowledge. Upon visiting the music-room, where he expected to hear a hymn, the stranger was surprised by a silly love-ditty, with a chorus,—

"And will you love me, deary," &c.,

while half a dozen little fellows were "piping notes that were by no means harmonious." In the dancing-room he saw some with shoes and some barefoot. "The dancing-master was the painter and glazier of the village, who, after handling the brush all day, took up the fiddle at night." These notices are not so inconsistent with the general and more favourable reports made by other visitors as to impair their credibility; but they are shades which are needful to give a true effect to the picture.

Another visitor, but one of very different cha-

racter, was at New Lanark about this time,—Dr. Henry Gray McNab, honorary physician to his Royal Highness the Duke of Kent. He appears to have been possessed of views quite in unison with Mr. Owen's. It was not to religion that Mr. Owen objected, the doctor assures us, but to the pretended faith of hypocrites, or of the sects that are deluded by their imaginations. When the Christian ranks are freed from these errors, he will appear in them! What idea Dr. McNab intends to convey by the phrase "Christian ranks," we are not aware; but if he means such as believe in Jesus Christ as he is revealed in the gospel, we apprehend a grave change must have passed over him before he could have been at ease in such company. The strong probability is that he used the term at random, or with an utterly false view of its meaning. We venture to say that there is not a principle maintained by Mr. Owen which any considerable number of men, Christians or infidels, will say is philosophically sound, which is not, specifically or by necessary implication, inculcated in the New Testament,—the grand text-book of the "Christian ranks."

Upon William Allen's visit to New Lanark in 1822, he became satisfied that a revision of the system of education there was indispensable; and he determined to withdraw from the concern unless it was conducted on the footing prescribed by the articles,—in other words, unless it was placed under

the management and control of the London partners. To this Mr. Owen reluctantly consented. That some change was needed may be inferred from the remark of one of the partners, who accompanied William Allen, that he regarded this visit as of more importance than that which resulted in their purchase of the works ten years before.

In a correspondence which took place immediately upon William Allen's return to London, he expresses to Mr. Owen his strong sympathy with the benevolent part of his character, "but regards their principles as so diametrically opposite that it was quite plain to his mind that they must part." He also reports the concurrence of the other London partners in the demand that the educational work should be conducted upon the principles required by the articles of agreement.

Early in 1824, four of the five London partners visited New Lanark, resolved to enforce the regulations respecting the Christian nurture of the children. They found the general condition of affairs quite to their mind, but "a great want of subordination and of proper instruction in the schools." They had engaged a well-trained master to accompany them, whom they forthwith installed, and, after a public meeting with the work-people, which was very satisfactory, they returned to London. Mr. Owen was at this time deeply interested in another project, which had been inaugurated at Motherwell,

and urged William Allen to cast in his lot with them; but the good man was not disposed to enlarge his experience in that direction. Under the new arrangement the schools were much improved; and it was not till after the lapse of ten years from that time that William Allen disposed of his interest and withdrew from the proprietorship of New Lanark. He had now become deeply engaged in a most extensive, benevolent and successful enterprise of his own, in behalf of the children of the labouring-classes in a district of England, and has left, in his schools at Lynnfield, an imperishable monument of his zeal, judgment and liberality. A planet and a comet are not more dissimilar in their orbits, courses, and the phenomena which attend them, than were these two philanthropists in their motives, aims, and measures.

In this brief sketch of William Allen, we have preferred to follow out to the end his connection with the New Lanark interest, as his firm and consistent line of conduct could not well be otherwise exhibited. We have incidentally introduced Joseph Fox.

A very different man from either is revealed to us in the person of another of the partners, Jeremy Bentham, the salient points of whose character it is quite to our purpose to notice. It will confirm the principle that a well-balanced mind is indispensable to that comprehension of the interests and relations of society without which attempts to era-

dicate, or even alleviate, its evils, are likely to be neither judicious nor successful.

Jeremy Bentham was born in 1748, and was, of course, Owen's senior by more than twenty years. His infancy was more remarkable than Mr. Owen's. When he was three years old, he amused himself with (and, as his friends affirm, actually read) Rapin's History of England. At seven, it is said, he read Telemachus in French. At thirteen, he entered the University at Oxford, and before he was of age (1768) cast his vote in a Parliamentary election for that university.

When it became necessary, under the rules of the university, that he should put his signature to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, he felt as if it was his duty to examine them, as Mr. Owen did "the religious works of all parties." Some of the articles seemed to him to be meaningless, and others "but too plainly irreconcilable with either reason or Scripture." Upon repairing to an officer of the university whose duty it was "to remove all such scruples," the answer he obtained was, in substance, that "it was not for unimproved youths to presume to set up their private judgment against a public one formed by some of the holiest as well as the best and wisest men that ever lived." He signed the Articles; but the impression made by this injudicious and uncourteous treatment of his scruples was most unhappy.

A very trivial and singular incident occurred

while he was at Oxford, which gave a complexion to the whole of the young man's subsequent life. In the vicinity of the college was an unpretending place of resort, called Harper's Coffee-House, deriving all its support from the students of Queen's College. Attached to the coffee-house was a small circulating library, which was at anybody's service for twenty-five cents a quarter. By this fee the proprietor was enabled to furnish the room with two or three newspapers, one or two magazines, and now and then a newly-published pamphlet. As young Bentham was beguiling an hour in this place, he took up a pamphlet then just added to the scanty stock of the coffee-house, and, in hastily glancing over its pages, his eye rested on the following principle, signalized by italics:—"The only reasonable and proper object of government is to produce the greatest happiness of the greatest number." At the sight of it, he says, "I cried out in an inward ecstasy." This was the germ of what has been since known as the school of utilitarianism.

On entering upon the profession of law, under the most flattering auspices, he was disgusted with what seemed to him a gross injustice authorized by the practice of the courts,—viz.: charging fees for services not actually rendered, such as three attendances on a suit when only one was really given. He thought it would be more to his taste to endeavour to put an end to such evils than to countenance or profit by them; and he at once abandoned the profession.

Before he was thirty, he published a political pamphlet in which he maintained that *utility* is the test and measure of all virtue, and that "the obligation to minister to the general happiness is paramount to and includes every other." Soon afterwards he travelled extensively on the continent, where his opinions (like Mr. Owen's) were received with more favour than in his own country.

Bentham's diligence and industry were above all praise. Though his constitution was far from robust, he was accustomed, through a period of fifty years, to devote seldom less than eight, often ten, and occasionally twelve hours of the twenty-four, to hard study. He systematically arranged the employment of his time both for labour and repose, and regarded the loss of even a minute as a calamity. His vigour seemed to increase with advancing years; and at eighty-four he showed no more of the infirmities of age than most men at sixty. He lived to be eighty-five, and retained much of the freshness and elasticity of early youth to the very last; nor did the serenity and cheerfulness of his mind desert him. He bequeathed his body for the purposes of anatomical science; and, in a lecture pronounced over his remains, it was said of him that throughout his whole long life he never purchased a single gratification at the expense of pain in another. But, well merited as this negative eulogy may be (and it is certainly a very enviable one), it leaves a frightful void in the review of the life. A man distinguished

as Bentham was by natural endowments, supplied with all desirable means of usefulness, and so situated as to command extraordinary influence over the minds of others, should have left the world far better for his having lived in it. And the cause of failure in his case (as in Mr. Owen's) is obvious. He launched out on the dangerous sea of a "speculative philosophy." He was "indisposed to study carefully and candidly the opinions of others, who equally with himself had devoted their lives to the investigation of truth and arrived at conclusions widely different from his own. But he surrounded himself with those who already sympathized with his views, and thus excluded even the sparks of light that friction might produce. He failed to apprehend the thoughts of others, and was inclined to condemn generally-received opinions for the sole reason that they were generally received. The power of mastering the ideas of others is characteristic of a great mind not less than that of striking out new ideas of its own. . . . Without this power" (and Owen lacked it even more than Bentham), "a man, however original, will waste much of his energy in making discoveries that others have made long before he was born. His theories will probably be wanting in comprehensiveness,—a fault which no pains-taking or acuteness can ever remedy."

It is quite amusing to read Mr. Owen's views of Bentham's philosophy. He speaks of him as having spent a long life in "an endeavour to

amend laws based on a fundamental *error*, without ever having discovered that error!" Strange that it should not occur to him to inquire whether his own life was not spent in counteracting laws based on a fundamental *truth*, without his ever discovering that truth. That life (although one of incessant, well-intended industry) was occupied in exposing and attempting to remedy the evils incident to a system which he found existing when he came into the world. He busied himself with the conventional laws of society and the superficial evils that they fail to control, while he remained in voluntary (not to say wilful) ignorance of the fundamental and immutable laws which are supreme alike in the natural and moral world. He threw away the only key to the most intricate problems in the conditions and relations of mankind, and discarded the only infallible remedy for social evils.

It is not unusual to observe persons, whose education has been faulty and imperfect, displaying upon some occasions and in reference to particular pursuits a thoughtful interest and energy, which, though perhaps exceeding the emergency, produces all the results and secures the praise of high practical skill, or even wisdom, as the case may be; while at other times, when different qualities of mind or heart are required by the occasion, they speedily betray the original defect of their training, by striking incapacity and absence of self-

management, or ignorance of right method. Among the peculiarities commonly arising from this cause are the direction of the affections to improper objects, the perversion of the moral instincts, wild schemes of life and theories of society, unfounded and fanciful opinions on things indifferent, and a superfluous excitement in their propagation and defence.*

When Mr. Owen had "agreed to accept" Mr. Bentham as one of the New Lanark firm, an interview between the *pseudo* philosophers was arranged with as much parade as if they had been the autocrats of hemispheres. The sublime personal contact was to take place just midway upon the flight of stairs leading to Mr. Bentham's "hermit-like retreat." Mr. Owen assures us that, when they met, Mr. Bentham's whole frame was agitated with the excitement, and he hastily said, "Well! well! It is all over! We are introduced! Come into my study." And he appeared to be relieved of an arduous and formidable undertaking.

If such men as Messrs. Owen and Bentham and their disciples deserve the credit of having "vulgar prejudices, so they must be content to incur the imputation of falling into the neighbouring vices of seeking distinction by singularity, of clinging to

* Essay on the Office of the Intellect in Religion. By Rev. W. E. Scudamore, late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge. London, 1849, p. 59.

opinions because they are obnoxious, of wantonly wounding the most respectable feelings of mankind, and of considering themselves as a choice few, who, by an initiation into the most secret mysteries of philosophy, are entitled to look down with pity, if not with contempt, on the profane multitude. Viewed with aversion or dread by the public, they became more bound to each other and to their master, while they are provoked into the use of language which still more exasperates opposition to them."

"A hermit in the greatest of cities, seeing only his disciples, and indignant that systems of government which he believed to be perfect are disregarded at once by the many and powerful, Mr. Bentham" (like Mr. Owen) "was at length betrayed into the most unphilosophical hypothesis that the ruling bodies who guide the community had conspired to stifle and defeat his discoveries. He is too little acquainted with doubts to believe the honest doubts of others."*

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* Progress of Ethical Philosophy, by Sir J. McIntosh

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. OWEN AND THE LONDON PARTNERS AT NEW LANARK — THEIR RECEPTION — MR. OWEN'S DOMESTIC ESTABLISHMENT — HE ACCOMPANIES JOSEPH LANCASTER TO GLASGOW, AND INTRODUCES HIM IN A SPEECH — WHAT PROMPTED HIM TO PREPARE HIS FOUR ESSAYS — THEIR DRIFT — THE EFFECT OF THEIR PUBLICATION — HIS EFFORTS IN BEHALF OF FACTORY-CHILDREN — SIR ROBERT PEEL — DISGUST OF MR. OWEN.

WE now return to Glasgow,—which we left at the close of the exciting scene in the auction-room,—and we find that the necessary papers to complete the transfer of the property to the new proprietors have been executed, and Mr. Owen has proposed to such of the London partners as were present an excursion to the mills. No public conveyance being then in use upon the road, they hired a coach-and-four, and took the journey of thirty miles. As they drew near to New Lanark, a large concourse of people (having been advised of their arrival) came out to meet them. They proceeded without ceremony to detach the horses, and, in spite of the remonstrances of the occupants, to most of whom such demonstrations were quite distasteful, drew the carriage forward with great

rapidity, the crowd increasing as they advanced. Upon their arrival in the immediate vicinity of the mills, the expressions of joy on every side at the return of the "old manager" (Mr. Owen tells us) were unbounded, so that the strangers who accompanied him, and were at first alarmed by such extravagant exhibitions of popular feeling, were greatly pleased to find their chief partner was held in such high esteem.

Upon settling up the old concern, it was found that during the four years of its existence they had realized (in addition to five per cent. on the capital invested) a clear net profit of two hundred thousand dollars a year, of which Mr. Owen's share was nearly ninety thousand, in addition to his stated salary of five thousand. He needed a liberal income; for his domestic establishment was large and expensive. His family increased rapidly; and his house became the home of Mrs. Owen's four sisters. To provide accommodations for them, he rented a spacious mansion, known as the Braxfield House, not more than the fourth of a mile from the mills. Mr. Owen kept a carriage and horses for his own family, and another for the Misses Dale, who also had their separate servants, —a very imposing establishment, certainly, but not to be avoided by the mere passive victim of "conditions and circumstances."

Mr. Owen took a very generous interest in the education and setting-out in life of his sisters-in-

law. He travelled with them, sought the best schools for them, and sympathized with them in every thing except their religious views. Two of them married clergymen of the Established Church of England, whose mission (as Mr. Owen very truly says) was totally different from his; and his intercourse with them and their families was on this account much restricted. This circumstance he laments, and takes occasion to make religion itself chiefly responsible for the uncharitableness and heart-burnings which its professors too frequently manifest. Nay, more: he expresses his conviction that where instruction from infancy in any religion results in a conscientious belief in it, it produces imbecility of mind; and, in the fervour of his zeal, he avows his readiness to sacrifice even his life if he could thereby terminate the existence of all the religions of the earth! He complains that he encountered their influence in whatever direction he went, and found himself constantly "checked and obstructed" by them "in his straightforward and honest progress."

To confirm and strengthen his antagonism to this universal impediment to reform, he consulted a professed convert from the Brahminical or Mohammedan faith to Hindoo Deism.* After a free inter-

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* Rammohun Roy was born in 1780, and was educated under Mohammedan and Brahmin masters. He became a proficient in Hindoo literature, and published several works,

change of opinions with this person, who stated that he had long studied and accurately knew all the religions of the East and West that had retained a place in society, Mr. Owen inquired if he knew one in which the priest did not say, "Believe as I tell you to believe, and disbelieve what I tell you to disbelieve, and you will go to heaven when you die; but if you do not, you will be everlastingly punished." The Hindoo hesitated for some time, and then said, "I have recurred to all the religions I know; and I must admit that what you have said is the substance of each of them!"

In 1812, Joseph Lancaster, at Mr. Owen's solicitation, came to Glasgow. The welfare of the multitudes of poor children who were there and elsewhere employed in manufacturing establishments excited public interest; and, as Mr. Lancaster's scheme was designed to furnish the means of instruction to large numbers at a very cheap rate, his arrival was greeted with much favour, and a public dinner was given him, at which Mr. Owen presided and made a speech. In this speech he took the sensible ground that the "primary source of all the good and evil, the misery and happiness, that exist in the world, *so far at least as depends on*

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some of which aimed to overthrow the grosser superstitions and idolatries of the Hindoos, and especially the burning of widows. He regarded the Bible and the Koran as standing on the same level as authority in matters of faith, and preferred the Hindoo Vedas to either.

our operations, is *education*,"—of course taking the term in its broadest sense. This position he illustrated by supposing a group of English children to be placed, while in infancy, among a group of savages, or supposing infants to be brought from a heathen country to England and trained there. No one doubts that as they grow up they will conform, in a great degree, in condition and habits, to those around them, though hereditary dispositions will doubtless show themselves for two or three generations. Upon a survey of human nature, Mr. Owen found the universal tendency to be towards wrong;* but he failed to recognize the great truth that to reverse this tendency a renovated nature is indispensable. He fell into the mistake which errorists of an earlier age committed, and which the greatest of all Teachers reproved when he said, "Not that which goeth *into* the mouth defileth a man; but *out of* the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man." No one doubts that a vine planted in the rich soil of a garden,

* "We ought not to forget that there is an incessant and ever-flowing current of human affairs towards the worst, consisting of *all* the follies, *all* the vices, *all* the negligences, *all* the indolences and supinenesses, of mankind, which is only controlled and kept from sweeping all before it by the exertions which some persons constantly, and others by fits, put forth in the direction of good and worthy objects."—*John Stuart Mill, on Representative Government.*

carefully guarded and trained by skilful hands, will be a thousand times more likely to come to fruitful maturity than if put out upon the open moor. "The close and minute observation" which Mr. Owen says he had directed to the subject revealed to him—what thousands have seen and said every day from Solomon's time until now—that "the characters of children in almost every family are materially influenced through life by those with whom they early associate, and particularly by servants. These impress their sentiments and opinions upon the young mind at a time when an impression is made which is scarcely ever afterwards wholly effaced." Throughout the whole speech there was a studious avoidance of all his radical and subversive opinions; and he even went so far as to recognize the hand of God's providence in creating such an extraordinary man as Joseph Lancaster to meet the extraordinary exigencies of society at that day. The general favour with which his speech, and also his friend Lancaster, were received, induced him, as he tells us, to prepare the famous "Four Essays on the Formation of the Human Character, or, A New View of Society,"—to which we have previously referred,—the publication of which brought the author and his opinions into much notoriety. In these essays Mr. Owen elaborates his favourite theory, and throws into new and bolder relief his conception of the radical defect of the whole social fabric, and

propounds with stronger confidence his sovereign remedy. His efforts to propagate his views evidently increased his conviction of their incontrovertible soundness. Children, collectively, can be trained to acquire any character whatever; and the opinion that people form their own characters is the source of all social disorder and suffering. It is, in his view, the "hydra of human calamity." To it he traces not only *all* individual unhappiness and all social vices and corruptions, but all the errors and abuses of political governments. By the theory underlying these essays, the author makes a man no more responsible for his character or disposition or habits than he is for his existence or height or complexion. If he should go into an orchard or a forest, and observe some trees towering proudly towards the clouds, and others dwarfed or stunted, or if he should find some with trunks even and smooth from root to top, while others are deformed with knots and warts, he would not think of taking off his hat as a token of respect to the one, while he looked with disappointment or scorn upon the other. What sensible carpenter would pet a plane or a saw that works well, or break another in pieces because it does not? Yet Mr. Owen's theory regards the principles and practices of parents, teachers and governors, in the management of those under their authority, as equally irrational and absurd with such acts in the orchard or the shop. To award praise or blame on

account of their actions, to his eye, is like abusing a cow because she has a crumpled horn, or eulogizing a blade of wheat because it is an inch or two taller than its neighbours.

As soon as we begin to look upon all people and all their actions, as just what they are because they could not possibly be otherwise, there will, of course, be no place for law or its sanctions; and when these are dispensed with, does any rule of right and wrong remain? It is not charity that leads us to look without moral disapprobation upon a vicious animal that breaks through a fence to reach a field that has fresher or more abundant grass. We do not inflict blows on a stick of timber that has become rotten, or by its weakness gives way, and so reduces a bridge or a dwelling-house to ruins. Nor should we, on Mr. Owen's theory, look upon a thief or man-slayer with any other feeling than that of regret that "circumstances," or untoward influences, which he could neither avoid nor resist, happened just then to give his energies a direction towards sacrificing the life or property of another. And it is pertinent to observe that, while we relieve the individual actor of responsibility because he is "what God or nature" (which Mr. Owen uses as convertible terms) "and society made him," we cannot fix it on "God or nature and society;" for, so far as the subject is unfolded by his theory, they also are what they are by the same stern law of circumstances that pervades all

spheres of active, intelligent life. If no responsibility for his acts attaches to him as an individual, the associating with himself another individual, or any number of other individuals, equally irresponsible as himself, would not increase or modify his or their relations and obligations. Nor can there be any period in his life at which a responsibility attaches which did not before exist, as in no event can he ever be other than what arbitrary circumstances make him!

Moreover, were Mr. Owen's theory admitted, that idleness, poverty and crime all proceed from ignorance, and that any community may be so trained by degrees as to become exempt from these evils and their concomitants, we should be no nearer such an elysium than we are now, unless perfect training-instruments are provided. Children might be removed from ignorant and vicious parents (if it were thought wise violently to dissolve this first natural tie); but where are the skilful, unselfish, impartial, judicious, faultless trainers? How shall we guard them from the passion, injustice and neglect of their care-takers, or from the subtle and unsuspected influence of evil associations which besets the little creatures before they are out of the creeping stage of their growth? As we follow Mr. Owen in his laborious and well-meant efforts to carry out his schemes of social reform, we shall have occasion to see more distinctly the pertinency of these inquiries.

The publication of the essays, as we have said, introduced the author to public attention; and, if his ardent temperament has not led him into an exaggerated statement of the favour with which they were received in high places, we are not surprised that his hope of becoming the grand reformer of the race was greatly strengthened. We can conceive, however, that Mr. Owen's character and position in the business world would lead such personages as the dignitaries of Church and State to listen respectfully to what he might have to say on such important topics; and although they might regard his theories and opinions as altogether crude and visionary, still curiosity, if not courtesy, might prompt them to encourage their full development.

It is to be borne in mind that we have only Mr. Owen's report of his interviews with these civil and ecclesiastical functionaries; and, without at all impeaching his veracity, we may presume that *their* report of them might be of quite a different complexion. Indeed, the very extravagance of some of his expressions would lead us to make large allowances. As, for example, in his report of the interview with Mr. Vansittart (Lord Bexley), he tells us that some question was asked by his lordship, so unimportant as to have escaped his memory, to which he made a reply so prompt and full that "his lordship blushed like a sensitive maiden, on account of his previous want of knowledge of the subject."

Having introduced the leaven of his essays into

the social mass, he left it to do its work, while he directed his attention and efforts to a particular class of sufferers,—the young children in the cotton-mills, not of New Lanark only, but throughout the kingdom.

It is interesting and instructive to note the successive stages in the progress of any important reform in the customs or institutions of society; and in this, which sought the relief and protection of young children from the grasp of avarice, there is a marvellous illustration of the tenacity with which men cling to abuses, and of the patience and courage required to bring about their correction.

The introduction of Arkwright's machinery of course threw out of employment multitudes of home manufacturers; and the mills, being erected on water courses for the sake of the motive power, became new centres of labouring people. The activity of children made them preferable to adults in tending the spindles, and the parish work-houses were soon drained of this portion of their inmates. They were fed and clothed by the master or overseer, who lodged them in rude buildings, called "apprentice-houses," and whose pecuniary interest prompted him to extort as much labour from them as he could, while he kept the cost of their maintenance at the lowest figure. It was not long before the machinery was kept running night and day; and as the beds which the day-hands left in the morning were at once occupied by the night-hands who were then

dismissed, it became a saying that the "apprentice-house beds never get cold." A more cruel speculation in human flesh and blood is scarcely to be conceived. The authorities of the parish turned the children adrift, with little thought or care whither they were going or what treatment awaited them. They were received as so much muscular power to be converted into £ *s. d.*; and it is said that an agreement is on record between the authorities of a parish and a Lancashire manufacturer, stipulating that *with every twenty children of ordinary wit he should take one idiot!*

As early as 1802, measures were adopted to mitigate the gigantic evil of over-work. And now the introduction of steam as the motive power, led to the erection of mills far from water-courses, in or near populous towns, and the hands were soon supplied from families in the neighbourhood, and the workhouse children were no longer wanted. But the iron hand was not withdrawn. Children from six to nine years of age were still worked from thirteen to fifteen hours a day; and it was not until 1819 that a law was passed limiting the hours of labour to twelve for all persons between nine and sixteen; and six years later the term was extended to eighteen, and the labour on Saturdays restricted to nine hours. The most shameful cruelties still prevailed, however; and a bill was introduced into Parliament, in 1831, by Mr. Saddler (whose residence at Leeds in the midst of the operative classes had given him the opportunity

to witness their oppression), reducing the term of daily labour to ten hours.

Mr. Saddler's noble effort failed. In the next Parliament, Lord Ashley, afterwards Lord Shaftesbury, undertook to prosecute the work which Mr. Saddler began, and introduced a bill containing still more liberal provisions. But it was postponed from one session to another; and two years after, during the debates on the subject, Mr. Brotherton, a member from a manufacturing district, earnestly advocated the humane policy, stating that he had himself worked in a factory twelve or fifteen hours a day, till he was sixteen, and had personally undergone the privations which factory-children endure, and could not but express his deep sympathy in efforts for their relief. It is difficult to believe that for ten long years the British Parliament refused to yield to a policy so wise and so humane as that which Lord Ashley and his compeers urged.*

The history of the effort shows what qualities are demanded in a reformer of public abuses, and how much more is accomplished by a judicious, steadfast, consistent policy than by the fitful, inflated and incoherent efforts of misdirected zeal.

* At the Social Science Congress at Edinburgh, as lately as October, 1863, a paper was read revealing terrible facts in regard to the amount of labour still exacted from children in Nottinghamshire: four sisters—two, four, six and eight years—were set to lace-picking in the factories: seven was the common age of going into a mill.

It was in view of the crying abuses to which we have referred, and to further his remedial scheme, that Mr. Owen called a meeting of persons engaged in this branch of industry, to whom he presented an outline of a bill to be submitted to Parliament, providing, in substance,—(1) That no children under twelve years of age should be employed in mills; (2) that the working-time, including an hour and a half for dinner and recreation, should not exceed twelve hours; and (3) that, after a limited period, no child shall be admitted until he or she has learned to read, to write a legible hand, and to understand the first four rules of arithmetic,—and girls, in addition, to have been taught to sew their own garments: the expense of such education being defrayed from the national treasury.

Had it been the chief purpose of the meeting to provide means of ameliorating the condition of working children, it would, perhaps, have excited more interest; but previously to submitting this part of his plan Mr. Owen introduced and discussed the question of repealing the tax upon raw cotton, which he regarded as very impolitic and oppressive. He maintained that a branch of industry which gave employment to three millions of people, and drew with it an expenditure of three hundred millions of dollars for their wages and support, should be favoured and not burdened, —though he did not disguise or blink the fact that

the main pillar and prop of the political greatness and prosperity of the country was a manufacture which (as then carried on) was destructive of the health, morals and social comfort of the mass of the people who were engaged in it. The proposition to take measures for the repeal of the tax was adopted unanimously and by acclamation; but that which looked to the relief of the poor suffering children was not even seconded!

Undiscouraged by such a repulse from those on whose concurrence he had confidently relied, Owen forthwith repaired to London, and addressed himself to leading members of Parliament. Several conferences took place; and when, at length, the provisions of a bill had been agreed upon, Sir Robert Peel of that day was selected to carry it through. He was himself engaged extensively in manufacturing, and was supposed to concur in the general views of Mr. Owen on this subject. What degree of confidence Sir Robert felt in his schemes of reform is not to be determined by Mr. Owen's account of the matter. Sir Robert doubtless saw that the mover of the measure had great influence over large classes of men, and that it was of no little importance to cultivate their good will, or at least not to alienate them by any want of courtesy towards their leader.*

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* Some thirty or forty years afterwards, a brief memoir of Sir Robert Peel appeared in an English magazine, in which an incidental allusion is made to his connection with Mr. Owen.

The measure thus auspiciously inaugurated was not to have so smooth a course to the royal signature as Mr. Owen anticipated. For four successive sessions it was under discussion. The obstacles and delays were attributed by Mr. Owen to the influence of Sir Robert Peel and his brother manufacturers; and when at last it was carried, it had undergone such mutations and mutilations as to make it of no avail for the objects he had in view!

The varied fortune which attended this project while it was pending in Parliament opened to Mr. Owen a new phase of the selfishness and perverseness of his fellow-men. He was thoroughly disgusted, and does not seem willing to allow them even the apology of the irresistible compulsion of "circumstances."

The writer (the Dean of York) asserted that Sir Robert declined to receive Mr. Owen, or to co-operate with him, on the ground of his avowed hostility to "all religions." Mr. Owen replied that he was not aware of having received any uncivil treatment at the hands of Sir Robert,—which was undoubtedly true; for there is a civil way of dispensing with unwelcome company.

CHAPTER IX.

A PUBLIC CRISIS—MR. OWEN IN LONDON—IS APPOINTED ON AN IMPORTANT COMMITTEE—MAKES A REPORT, WHICH IS NOT APPROVED—SUSPECTS A CONSPIRACY—THE EARNESTNESS OF HIS CONVICTIONS—CALLS A PUBLIC MEETING—PREPARATORY MEASURES—INTERVIEW WITH LORD LIVERPOOL—AN EXTRAORDINARY SCENE—AN UNEXPECTED RESULT—ANOTHER PUBLIC MEETING, AND ANOTHER FAILURE.

WHATEVER distrust we feel of Mr. Owen's maxims and theories, we cannot deny him the credit of discerning with considerable accuracy the proximate causes of many social evils. The period at which we have arrived in our sketch brought with it new and critical conditions. The effects of the peace of 1815 began to be severely felt. The demand for men and supplies to sustain a protracted war not only raised the price of labour and materials, but stimulated inventive minds to discover mechanical and chemical agents to do what was supposed to require human hands and brains. When peace returned, labour became a drug. Multitudes could find no employment. Farmers and manufacturers, for whose productions there had been a brisk demand, now found themselves without a market. The artificial state of

society created by war must, of course, give place to the natural order of things; and this involved a derangement of almost every interest and pursuit of the country, and threatened great and general distress.

Under these circumstances, a public meeting was held in London, at which Mr. Owen was present and made a characteristic speech. A committee was appointed, of which the Archbishop of Canterbury was chairman and Mr. Owen a member; and at their first meeting he was requested to prepare a report embracing the causes of the existing distress and pointing out the proper remedy. He could not have asked a more favourable opportunity to propagate his peculiar views. But he soon fell into the notion that a powerful party was arrayed against him, whose hearts were unsusceptible of sympathy with the oppressed classes, and who were disposed to enrich themselves while "the weakest and best of the poor were starved, and the rest driven to theft and murder, and the poor females to prostitution." He conceived that the large fortunes which the war had afforded an opportunity to amass were in the hands of ignorant persons, who were incompetent to use wealth wisely, and who, instead of employing it in reorganizing society "upon the basis of common sense," made it the means of enslaving those whose industry had produced it.

The attempt to improve the condition of the masses by any temporary expedients or partial

measures seemed to Mr. Owen quite out of the question. Nothing would answer the end, as he saw it, but a complete subversion of the existing order of things. Among his associates on the committee were some of the most eminent political-economists of that day; and, had he been so disposed, it was in his power to enlist the public sentiment and the legislation of the country in favour of judicious relief measures. But, unhappily, he was so closely wedded to his theories, and so confident that nothing would remedy existing evils but a "scientific arrangement of the people, united in properly constructed villages of unity and co-operation," that he could not favour what he called "half measures."

The opinions of those whom the public regarded as wise and safe men, and the lessons derived from the experience of many ages, were more than a match for Mr. Owen; and, upon presenting to the committee the report which he had prepared, and explaining the views advanced in it, he was very courteously informed that they were not prepared to adopt, nor even to discuss, plans involving such extensive and radical changes in the structure of society, and that he had better submit his views to a parliamentary committee then having under consideration sundry amendments to the poor-laws.

To a man of ordinary sensitiveness, such a repulse, however softened by bland compliments, would have been very unpalatable and disheartening. But Owen was made of different metal. He

regarded the rejection of his report as a new evidence of the depth of human folly and the strength of human prejudice. He was fully persuaded that man's nature is radically good and pure, and that if it could only be protected from all perverting and misleading influences, and properly trained and educated from birth, "the whole race would become good, wise, healthy and happy." It was only to enlarge the borders of his New Lanark community to the extent of the habitable globe, and the "glorious result" would be accomplished.

With a new blaze of enthusiasm, he determined to bring it about, though it should involve a sacrifice of fortune, fame, and even life itself.

The publication of the "Four Essays on the Formation of Character" had naturally engendered strong opposition to their author, if not grave doubts of his sanity. Such a bold challenge of the opinions and experience of past ages, and so peremptory an exclusion of divine wisdom from any share in the debate, would of course be regarded with distrust; and Owen probably did not exaggerate the opposition which was felt and expressed to his views by the religious community generally, as well as by what he calls "the most bigoted and professedly religious of all sects."

It was just at this juncture that our earnest reformer discovered a deep-laid conspiracy. The poor-law committee, to which he and his report had been (as he thought) rather unceremoniously consigned,

consisting of forty members (the present Lord Brougham being one), was in session; and Mr. Owen had offered to them not his report only, but himself also, for examination as a witness. A day was assigned for him to be heard; and he presented himself with a budget of papers and documents, prepared to defend his theories at all hazards. His apprehensions were soon awakened by observing various members of the committee engaged in an under-tone conversation. Soon he was requested to withdraw for a little time, and when his presence was desired again they would notify him. No other witness was to be examined, and Mr. Owen was surprised at the delay to recall him; but the session passed, and he was informed, as he tells us, that it was occupied in discussing the question whether he should be examined at all. The next morning he was punctually in waiting; and another day's discussion ended in a resolution not to hear him! Regarding this action of the committee as conclusive evidence of a conspiracy to "depress the poor out of existence," and also of their fear that his views, if known, would defeat their object, he first availed himself of the public press to promulgate them, and then called a public meeting in London, on the 14th of August then ensuing, for their consideration.

It would be difficult to refer to an instance in the recorded vagaries of the human mind which presents a more interesting psychological phenomenon

than that which Mr. Owen's own account of himself at this period furnishes. To many it may seem as impertinent to preserve a record of the freaks of such a fancy as of those which are rarely known outside of the wards of a lunatic-hospital. But hosts of men are to-day entertaining theories of social reform as dreamy and incoherent as were Mr. Owen's. "His career is one the repetition of which we have seen, and are seeing, and shall see, as years roll on and experiences accumulate, without any special wonder."* His enterprise, social position and wealth enabled him to survive the disasters in which his vain philosophy involved him; but, unhappily, most of those who follow the *ignis-fatuus* risk their all in the pursuit, and their utter ruin is simultaneous with their disappointment. Anxious to better their circumstances if possible, unaware of the tendency of the opinions which are imposed upon their credulity, and flushed with the hope of reaping where they have not sown, they blindly follow a blind leader; and their inevitable landing-place is the ditch.

There is one law pervading the universe. It operates not more immediately to direct the stars in their courses than to guide the drop of water that trickles down the window-pane. It is seen no more clearly in the cyclone that it awakens to break ships of war into fragments than in the little whirl which

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* London Athenæum, May, 1860.

it makes in a nest of dry leaves at the foot of the forest tree. It is as unyielding in the kingdom of providence as in the kingdom of nature; and the attempt to overcome the inequalities of the social condition of man by human decree or legislation is as preposterous as to endeavor to make all stalks of a wheat-field of the same height, or all branches of a tree of the same length. That society is out of joint is as plain as that the surface of the earth is uneven; and wherever we see suffering we may be assured there has been a violation of law.

A friend of ours was much perplexed about his watch. It would keep time accurately for a few days, and stop. Skilful hands examined it, and could not detect the cause. It was taken apart, and re-examined more critically, and the cause of the derangement was detected,—a most minute curvature of one tooth of a wheel! Inequality in the allotments of life would not be removed by agrarianism. The unhappiness produced by improvident or ill-matched marriages would not be lessened by substituting free love. Shameful oppression and abuses of power, and a consequent legion of social wrongs, are incident to the present condition of mankind. They are no more incompatible, however, with the existence of a perfect social law than are hurricanes and earthquakes with the existence of a perfect natural law. True Christian philosophy teaches us to alleviate "the ills that flesh is heir to," in all practicable ways; but that is an atheistic philosophy which

teaches us that these evils are fortuitous and subject to human control.

Mr. Owen had not the shadow of doubt that he was the chosen instrument of delivering the whole world of mankind from the darkness and delusion which had prevailed in all past ages, and of introducing an era of universal peace, virtue and happiness. If he could but succeed in his plans, our whole race would be transformed into incarnate angels, and the earth, relieved of the primeval curse of the apostasy, would become a garden of Eden, from which all distinctions of class, condition and character would be excluded and a perfect social condition permanently established. In the way of this stupendous achievement stood the colossal prejudices of by-gone ages, the deep-rooted associations with things as they are, the clamorous opposition of the ambitious and selfish, and—more and worse than all—*religion*, that mysterious bond which almost every rational being in the universe feels and, in some form, respects. Among all the deceived and degraded dwellers upon earth there was one man, and only one, who possessed the secret of universal emancipation. Single-handed he was to wage war against the existing order of things. To his excited imagination, all the ignorance, oppression, cruelty, selfishness, and fanaticism in the world were embodied in a giant spirit of darkness, which it was his mission to encounter, overcome and destroy; and this eventful conflict was to take place in the

city of London,—the metropolis of the world,—on that same fourteenth day of August, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventeen.

The notices of the meeting were widely circulated; and their peculiar phraseology would naturally excite public attention. The object was said to be "to consider a plan to relieve the country from the present distress, to re-moralize the lower orders, reduce the poor man's rate, and gradually abolish pauperism, with all its degrading and injurious consequences." The leading papers of the city devoted a large space to a preparatory exposition of his views, commended them to public confidence and support, and pledged for them and for his efforts the reverence of future ages and for himself a niche among the chief benefactors of the human race.

At the appointed time, thousands were assembled at the City of London Tavern, to listen to the words of the great reformer; and thousands who wanted to listen could find no place to sit or stand. Mr. Owen made his speech, in which he expressed the surprise and mortification he felt when, after thirty years of labour and patient inquiry, he had been unable to find any government, community or individual in the wide world who could suggest any effectual method of relieving the distresses of society, or could even comprehend the subject. And he appealed to the people whether, with the perfect knowledge of a practical mode of making everybody industrious, intelligent, healthy, vir-

tuous and happy, it would not be criminal in him to hold his peace;—whether he could innocently allow the world to revolve another century under this thick cloud of ignorance and error, when the power to dissipate it at once was within reach.

Of course there could be but one answer to such an appeal; and all Mr. Owen asked was the appointment of a national committee, who should carefully investigate the whole subject and report at a future meeting. A motion to adjourn one week prevailed; and the assembly dispersed, not without some disorder.

A full report of the proceedings appeared in the newspapers of the following day. Of these Mr. Owen had thirty thousand extra copies printed at his own expense, which he forwarded by post in every direction. So sudden an accumulation of mail-matter (as Mr. Owen affirms) occasioned a delay of twenty minutes in the departure of all the mail-coaches in the kingdom. This unusual event, coupled with the wide publication of his opinions, he assures us, seriously alarmed the government.

He now regarded himself as the most distinguished and popular, if not the most important, person on the stage of being. To quiet the supposed apprehensions of the government, Mr. Owen, a day or two before the adjourned meeting, waited on Lord Liverpool, the principal minister of state. The incidents of the reception and interview are related with amusing minuteness, for the purpose

(as he says) of showing the effect of his extraordinary popularity upon the government, which might now regard itself as at his mercy. He was received with great deference by his lordship's private secretary, who stood while Mr. Owen himself was seated. His lordship came in his own person from his private room, and asked him to walk in. "With considerable diffidence and agitation in his manner, he said, 'Mr. Owen, what is your wish?' with a tone of voice and an expression of countenance as much as to say, 'Your wishes shall be gratified.'" Surely this golden opportunity will be improved to secure the largest influence of the government in behalf of his vast philanthropic schemes.

No wonder that his lordship was "relieved from an apparent great anxiety" when Mr. Owen replied that all he wished was that his lordship and other members of the Cabinet would allow their names to be used on the committee of investigation which he should propose at the adjourned meeting. "Any use you please, short of implicating the government," was his lordship's gracious reply.

And now the grand *dénouement* was at hand. The ultimate destiny of the human family was to be determined by the proceedings at the City of London Tavern. "A new mind and new habits were to be given to all of human kind," and Robert Owen was to confer the boon. The great obstacle was RELIGION. He had been vehemently urged to declare his religious views. He was aware of the

"deep-seated prejudices of all people in favour of their respective religions, and that millions would die sooner than abandon them; and yet their abandonment was essential to man's attaining the rank of a rational and happy being." As he could not untie this complicated knot, he resolutely determined to cut it. His purpose was formed before he saw Lord Liverpool, but a disclosure of it would probably have given a very different turn to the interview. The certainty that no one was prepared to comprehend his motives, opinions or acts, and that his proposed course, if known, would be earnestly resisted, induced him, as he says, to conceal it. To heighten his excitement, the conductors of the public journals applied to him for advance copies of what he should say; and he made an arrangement with them to supply copies, upon application, when he should be exactly midway in his speech.

At this juncture we behold Mr. Owen in a position which, had it not been entirely unreal, would excite our profound admiration. He has persuaded himself that whatever he shall say at this public meeting will be circulated over the whole civilized world. He has become perfectly satisfied that unless the prevailing religions of the earth can be utterly abolished there is no hope for man's release from the bondage of ignorance and misery. He has not a doubt that the only person living who can by any possibility accomplish this

gigantic task is—himself; and, staking fortune, character and life upon the issue, he resolves that at a particular stage in his address he will boldly "denounce and reject all the religions of the world."

The hour for the meeting has come. That he might not involve anybody else in the oppressive responsibilities of the contemplated act, he goes thither alone. Though, as he says, "by far the most popular individual in the civilized world," one sentence, which he had determined to utter, would destroy that popularity,—yet at the same time it would apply the axe to the root of all false religions, and "prepare the world for the reign of charity in accordance with the natural laws of humanity."

In the commencement of his speech he reviewed several plans for the improvement and employment of the poor, giving the preference to that suggested by one John Bellers a century before,—viz.: the establishment of agricultural communities, in which joint labour shall enure to the labourer's benefit, individual interests being merged in the general welfare.*

* One of the chief arguments by which he vindicated this preference was that it obviated some of the most painful consequences of the dissolution of natural ties by death, and provided a much larger stock of sympathy for bereaved sufferers! In the present condition of society, he alleged, when the conjugal or parental relation is dissolved, all is wreck and desolation; but "in the happy villages of unity, when disease or death assails its victim, every aid is near; all the assistance

After exhibiting a glowing picture of the "villages of unity," as they were called, and the privileges and immunities of those who inhabit them, Mr. Owen supposes the inquiry to be made by some one of his eager listeners, "If such wonderful advantages are to be derived from such a simple combination, why has it been delayed to this late period of the world? Why have countless millions

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that skill, kindness and affection can invent is at hand. When death attacks him, he submits to a conqueror who he knew from childhood was irresistible, and whom for a moment he never feared. He is gone; but the survivors are not unprepared for this natural event. They have, it is true, lost *one* endeared and beloved object; but they have consolation in the certain knowledge that within their own immediate circle they have many others remaining, and around them, on all sides, are thousands on thousands in intimate and close union, ready and willing to offer them aid and consolation. No evil can result whatever, beyond the loss of one dear friend or object from among thousands who remain, dear to us as ourselves. Here may it be truly said, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' "

We have given this passage entire, that we might do no injustice to its author; but what a confutation of all his reasoning, and what a finishing stroke to all his theories, are supplied by the six monosyllables which he omits, but which in the text follow that sublime exulting exclamation of the apostle!—"THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN." No scheme for the alleviation of human suffering can have permanent value or existence which does not recognize in its full force and meaning this authoritative declaration; nor can any adequate consolation be proffered to the bereaved ones of the earth, apart from the glorious doctrine of life and immortality brought to light in the gospel.

of the human race, through successive generations, been left to bear the burden of ignorance, superstition and mental degradation, when so slight a modification of the social state would not only have afforded relief from existing ills, but would have at once elevated the whole race to the very highest measure of virtue and happiness?"

Very adroitly was the way thus prepared for the grand announcement. "My friends," exclaimed the orator, "a more important question has never been put to the sons of men. Who *can* answer it? Who *dare* answer it, but with his life in his hand, —a ready and willing victim to truth and to the emancipation of the world from its long bondage of dissension, error, crime and misery? Behold the victim! On this day, at this hour, even now, shall these bonds be burst asunder, never more to reunite while the world shall last. Whatever may be the consequences, I will now perform my duty to you and to the world. Then I tell you that hitherto you have been prevented from even knowing what happiness really is, solely in consequence of the gross errors (here," says Mr. Owen, "the meeting became excited to the highest pitch of expectation as to what was to follow) that have been combined with the fundamental notions of every religion that has hitherto been taught to man!"

The deed was done! The orator paused to see what would follow such an "unexpected and un-

heard-of denouncement of all existing religions." His "own expectation was that he should be torn in pieces." But "all seemed thunder-struck and confounded." "The utmost mental confusion seemed to pervade the meeting." At length "half a dozen clergymen recovered sufficiently to give a few hisses, which they deemed it incumbent on them to do on account of their profession."

The address being finished, considerable confusion followed; and when at last the resolution was submitted for the appointment of a committee of investigation, it was thought best, "for the sake of peace," to declare it negatived. Happily, however, Mr. Owen was perfectly satisfied, and retired with the full conviction that with his single hand he had that day given a death-blow to bigotry and superstition and all false religions, and that the reign of truth, charity and wisdom, then and there commenced, would extend over the human race, and end only with time itself.

The bold avowal which Mr. Owen had made of his opposition to all existing religions (now and then qualified by the adjective "false") would, of course, be received with decided disapprobation by many who had regarded with favour and interest his efforts for the alleviation of social evils. But his morbid imagination at once saw "all the religions of the country" in arms against him, and resorting to machinations, secret and open, to vilify his name and destroy his influence.

Having, as he says, in the most public manner, at mid-day, denounced all the religions of the world now taught, as being the origin of all crime and the obstacle to all permanent, substantial improvement, he took it for granted that the "whole power of the religious world would be aroused to stay his course, and, if possible, destroy him." But his apprehensions were altogether groundless. The religious—like the secular—world listened to his harangue, gave him credit for sincerity and patient pains-taking, and dismissed him. When he returned from London to New Lanark, the Free Masons' Lodge presented him an address,—which must have struck him as singularly inopportune in some of its sentiments. In it they say, "We are grateful for the means which have been provided for the education of our children, being sensible of the benefit of an education founded on *Christian* principles, which, from long experience and observation, we *know assuredly* to be the only preventive against the corruption of human nature and the contagion of bad example. We declare ourselves the devoted friends of the principles of Christianity, in the *faith* and practice of which we, as well as our children, hope to live and die."*

Two years afterwards (June, 1819) another meeting was held in London, to consider and report on Mr. Owen's plan of providing for the poor,—at

* London Evangelical Magazine, Dec. 1817, p. 496, with *italics* as quoted.

which his Royal Highness the Duke of Kent presided. And at a subsequent meeting (July 26) a committee was appointed to investigate his project and report upon it. This committee concurred in the view that the employment of the poor in agricultural pursuits would be likely to promote industrious habits, and would afford means of relieving the young from the evils that prevailed in parochial work-houses. This, it will be perceived, is a very modest, definite, practical inquiry, on which Mr. Owen's sober judgment would be entitled to consideration; and hence we are not surprised that this highly respectable committee recommended a scheme, by way of experiment, which it was stipulated should not involve the outlay of more than five hundred thousand dollars, to be borrowed for the purpose at five per cent., and should provide for one thousand individuals.

Finding that the faith of the public did not prompt the liberal subscriptions that were anticipated, the committee, on the twenty-third of the same month, issued an address embracing further details of the plan, replying to sundry objections which had been urged to Mr. Owen's views, and commending the experiment warmly, as harmless if it should fail, and as fraught with vast benefits to the country if it should succeed. But it was in vain. When the committee reassembled, on the first of the ensuing December, the subscriptions were found to amount to less than one-tenth of

the sum required; and they resigned their trust. What impulses the inquiry may have given to public or private efforts for the amendment of the English pauper-system, or for the alleviation of evils under it, may not be apparent. But we apprehend that whatever improvement has taken place since 1819 has been in a different direction, and by totally different means, from any suggested by Mr. Owen, and that the terrible concussion of August 21 was not very sensibly felt beyond the spacious hall in which it occurred.

It would seem to be very clear that some law is in force among men which is not materially affected by the devices or debates of philanthropists and legislators, and that this law Mr. Owen's schemes did not recognize. His buoyant spirit was not to be discouraged, however, by defeat nor daunted by difficulties; and, in this emergency, he determined to try his fortune on foreign shores. Before we accompany him upon this new expedition, we must return for a few moments to New Lanark, where he had what he regarded as great success in illustrating the influence of early education in moulding our physical and moral character and habits.

CHAPTER X.

MR. OWEN'S LABOURS FOR THE CHILDREN OF NEW LANARK — HIS ASSISTANTS — HIS PLAN OF INSTRUCTION — VISITORS TO NEW LANARK, AND THEIR IMPRESSIONS — BEGINNING OF INFANT-SCHOOLS IN LONDON—THE REAL EXTENT OF MR. OWEN'S AGENCY IN THE INFANT-SCHOOL SYSTEM — WILDERSPIN TAKES IT UP—PASTOR OBERLIN BEFORE EITHER.

THE infant-school system was introduced at New Lanark in 1816. The age at which the training process commenced was one year, or, at longest, as soon as the subject could walk. That it might not be regarded as a charity school, the parents were charged six cents a month. The annual expenses of the school averaged about ten dollars for each pupil; but Mr. Owen very wisely considered that this large balance was more than made up in the salutary influence of the school upon the families represented in it. In the instruction of the infants, familiar conversation was, of course, the chief medium employed, and sensible objects, or models representing them, were freely used. At two years old, they were taught dancing and singing, and their parents were encouraged to come to the school and witness their attainments,—

which was another sagacious measure. Other schools were established for the older children, who at twelve years of age were allowed to enter upon any of the mechanical trades connected with the establishment, such as founders, forgers, turners, machinists, &c.

In the selection of teachers for his infant-school he passed by all professional educators, who were generally wedded to their own system, and sought those who were patient and loving towards children, and at the same time tractable themselves, and, especially, willing to follow the directions of their employer. These qualities he found combined in a poor, simple-hearted man, named James Buchanan, who could scarcely read, write or spell; but his love for little children, and his inexhaustible patience, seemed to qualify him peculiarly for their teacher; and the other grace—docility—he had acquired under the training of Mrs. Buchanan, to whose will it was for his interest to be perfectly submissive. To act the part of a nurse to this infant group (all under six years of age), he selected Molly Young, one of the mill-girls, seventeen years old, who had much better natural powers of mind than the principal of the school.

The instructions given to this brace of new educators were—so far as they went—very natural and sensible. They were to avoid beating the children,*

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* A FLOGGING SCHOOLMASTER IN THE OLD DAYS.—"The Museum," writing of a well-known schoolmaster mentioned in

or threatening them, or using any abusive terms, but were to treat them in a uniformly kind and gentle manner. At the same time, they were to inculcate upon them mutual good will, giving the older ones a sort of guardianship over the younger, and urging all to seek each other's happiness. We need not say that there was nothing new in all this. The same principles are, and always have been, substantially recognized by all Christian teachers; and thousands and millions of children before and since Mr. Owen's day, if asked what would make a family or a community happy, would promptly reply, "The doing to others as we would have others do to us."

In the school-room no teaching from or with books was to be tolerated. Natural objects from the garden, fields, woods and caves were to be explained; curiosity was to be excited and gratified, and every thing to have the character and effect of amusement. Ample provision was made for out-

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Southey's "*Life of Dr. Bell*," says, "He dominated over a school for fifty-one years, and was reckoned, from recorded observations, to have given nine hundred and eleven thousand five hundred canings, one hundred and twenty-four thousand floggings, two hundred and nine thousand custodies, one hundred and thirty-six thousand tips with the ruler, ten thousand two hundred boxes on the ears, twenty-two thousand seven hundred tasks by heart, seven hundred stands upon peas, six hundred kneels on a sharp edge, five hundred fool's caps, seventeen hundred holds of rods; and over his grave were placed these words of Martial:—'Ferulæ tristes, sceptra pædagogorum, cessant.'"

of-door exercise, and in foul weather a spacious, well-ventilated apartment, with ceilings sixteen feet high, was at their service. In addition to lessons in music and dancing, both sexes were drilled by competent teachers in the military exercise, being formed into proper divisions and supplied with drum and fife. So proficient were they —both boys and girls—in marching and evolutions that, we are told, army officers who witnessed them were filled with admiration!

The peculiarities of Mr. Owen's system, both in the manufacturing and educational departments at New Lanark, had excited considerable public attention, and many strangers were attracted thither. And when they "saw seventy couples of little children standing up together in the dancing-room, surrounded by many strangers, yet with the utmost ease and natural grace going through all the dances of Europe with so little direction that the presence of a master was not suspected," they could not fail to be impressed with the universally acknowledged truth that a child can be made almost any thing we please—but a saint. When we know what wonderful achievements are made in the training of horses, dogs and birds, we are prepared to see rational creatures, taken in their infancy, moulded into almost any habits of body and mind that a skilful educator may desire.

There can be no doubt that Mr. Owen's arrangements were admirably adapted to accomplish the

end he had in view. Many sensible methods of instruction were introduced. The most scrupulous regard was paid to the physical and intellectual development of the infant pupil, and no pains were spared to give the educational machinery at New Lanark the precedence of all similar institutions in the known world. The distinguished persons from various countries who visited it, received impressions varying according to their respective views of the moral nature and destiny of the interesting subjects of its influence.

Among these were two intelligent, well-disposed clergymen. Of the impressions of one of them (whose name is not disclosed) Mr. Owen has given us a report. After "a full and patient examination, he said, 'I came here a skeptic in your views; but what I have witnessed to-day is altogether a new human nature to me. . . . Nothing short of ocular demonstration could have removed my skepticism and have left the delightful impression which I have received.'" The other writer was the Rev. Legh Richmond, known throughout Christendom as the author of "The Young Cottager" and "The Dairyman's Daughter," and of whose intimacy and sympathy with the poor none could doubt after reading these admirable memoirs. In the course of a tour through Scotland, about the period at which we have arrived in Mr. Owen's life, he visited New Lanark; and the following entries in

his daily journal are sufficiently indicative of his impressions:—

"1820, *July* 22.—Breakfasted at Lanark. Went to see New Lanark and the Clyde Falls. Mr. Owen accompanied us. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the scene. Saw the whole of the mills and of the machinery. Dined and had much conversation with Mr. Owen on all his plans. *They want a religious basis.* . . . *July* 24.—Breakfasted with Mr. Owen. Conversed again on his new plan. Went to the school. Saw the children go through all their various classes. The dancing may be very pretty for children, but unquestionably leads to much evil among the adults. Many things are very interesting here, but require close investigation. Read, as I travelled, in Mr. Owen's manuscript, some clever ideas of economical arrangement; but it must fail as it now stands. *There is no Christ in his scheme; and it cannot prosper.*"*

Which of these two clerical visitors formed the most correct judgment in the premises there can now be little doubt.

The report of what had been accomplished at New Lanark in the training of infants, induced some benevolent gentlemen in London to attempt a similar experiment there; and, to make sure of success, they prevailed on Mr. Owen to let them have his principal teacher, James Buchanan. The school was opened in 1819, under the most auspicious circumstances. But the simple-hearted weaver of New Lanark was strangely metamor-

* Grimshaw's Life of Richmond, Am. edit. 1829, pp. 250–51.

phosed by his removal; for when Mr. Owen visited London, and called at the Westminster School, he was shocked to see his old teacher, "with his strong love for children and his inexhaustible patience," slinking away to another part of the room, while Mrs. Buchanan, with an uplifted whip, was keeping her husband and the group of little ones around her in complete and equal subjection. So that it seemed needful, if his machinery was to be employed away from New Lanark and its peculiar population, that the "inventor" should go with it, and not only set it up, but superintend its movements.

A mere glance at the history of this branch of Mr. Owen's labours will suffice to show its full value.

Were any intelligent person asked by what process a community might attain the highest degree of happiness and prosperity of which it is capable, he would probably reply, "By excluding from it, as far as practicable, selfishness, pride, covetousness, idleness, intemperance and other base and hurtful passions, and cultivating the virtues and graces of benevolence, humility, industry, sobriety and mutual good will." If it were further demanded how the exclusion of the former and the prevalence of the latter can be most certainly secured, it would doubtless be answered, "By placing children, from their birth, in conditions most favourable to the repression of vicious inclinations, while every facility and encouragement is given to the healthful

unfolding of their physical, moral and spiritual capacities." An enterprising Scotch cotton-spinner had the sagacity to appreciate (perhaps in an unusual degree) the importance of early and appropriate education as the means of remedying some of the evils which prevailed in the neighbourhoods around him. His position and circumstances gave him a rare opportunity to try experiments in a large population, composed chiefly of his own work-people and dependents, who were, of course, under his complete control. As his economical measures had been the means of advancing their temporal interests and comforts, they were not slow to fall in with his views respecting the care of their children. The surplus profits derived from the mills supplied ample means to conduct the experiment, and no pains or expense were spared to insure its success. So far as he gave time and thought to this humane purpose rather than to schemes of self-aggrandizement, it is eminently creditable to his head and heart. And though his foundation was utterly defective, and in all respects insufficient for the structure he hoped and attempted to build upon it, there was much to commend in his spirit and to admire in his achievements. But there was nothing new or original in all this. The wisest of men propounded a principle ages ago which covers Mr. Owen's whole ground; and his success (whatever it was) only adds a new page to the volume of testimony which all generations have

supplied, that if a child is trained up in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it. If he had but recognized one other principle, derived from the same royal and divine source,—viz.: that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,"—he would have avoided many grave errors, lived to better purpose, and saved his memory from reproach.

There were, however, good results from Mr. Owen's infant-department. It drew the attention of influential persons to the practicability of training a large company of young children. It served to demonstrate (what no one ever doubted) that a vast proportion of the woes that afflict society would be averted if parents were wise and faithful, and if children were habitually obedient to their care-takers and teachers and gentle in their deportment towards each other. There was, however, a deeper problem, which it did not reach. The external form of the tree, of course, followed the bent of the twig; but if it is in its very nature "corrupt," how shall it be made to produce "good fruit"? The trunk is straight, because the sapling was cautiously protected; but the product may be "the apples of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah."

The failure of the Westminster experiment did not discourage further attempts in the same direction. Among the occasional visitors to Buchanan's school-room was Samuel Wilderspin. He had seen enough of the infant-school theory in those visits to

be enamoured of it. He saw the appropriateness of the German term applied to such schools,*—viz.: "Little Children's-Preservative Institution;" and, under the patronage of some members of the Society of Friends (among whom were Messrs. Allen and Foster,† who were not strangers to the work at New Lanark), he opened a school of the same character in another section of London. A paragraph in Mr. Owen's autobiography leads us to infer, however, that Wilderspin's system differed essentially from that adopted at New Lanark,—although he acknowledged his obligation to Mr. Owen for many valuable hints. "Mr. Wilderspin," says Mr. Owen, "became an apt disciple of the spirit and practice of the system so far as the outward and material mode was concerned;" but he had "no powers of mind to comprehend the first step towards forming a rational character and a rational system of society." And he kindly abstained from advancing him to any higher knowledge, as it would unfit him to act under his new patrons, whom he describes as "nominally pious and righteous overmuch."

While we are not disposed to detract from Mr. Owen's just credit in the matter of infant-schools, we are not willing that he should claim more. No one can read his own history of the establishment

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* Klein-Kinder-Bewahr-Anstatt.

† Dr. Pole says that Lord Brougham and Z. Macaulay and Thomas Babington were concerned in establishing the Westminster Infant-School.—*Edinb. Rev.* vol. xxxviii. p. 440.

at New Lanark without receiving the impression that he regarded himself, and would fain have others regard him, as the *founder of infant-schools*. In his autobiography he terms himself "the inventor" of infant-schools.*

He tells us that, in his search for the sources of the "evil conditions" in which his work-people were involved, he ascertained that they were chiefly due to the injurious home-influences to which the young children were exposed both from the ignorance and the neglect of their parents; and these considerations "created in him the first thoughts respecting the necessity of an infant-school, to be based on the true principle of forming character from the earliest period at which the infants could leave their parents."†

In order to fortify this position, there is preserved in the Appendix to Mr. Owen's Life what is

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* Wilson's edit., London, 1857, p. 241.

As an example of the flippancy with which achievements of national importance were attributed to Mr. Owen by his overweening admirers, to the credit of which he was not entitled, we may cite the following:—"Mr. Owen, to whom the world is indebted for the discovery of infant-schools! Mr. Owen, to whom Europe owes a lasting debt of gratitude for the impulse that he has given to education, for his originating the British National System of Education! . . . Mr. Owen, who so effectually assisted in negotiating peace between England and America," &c.—*The Gordian Knot Untied, &c.* An answer to a work of Rev. W. J. Kidd. By Theodore Hall, Esq. Manchester: Heywood, Oldham & Co.

† Autobiography, vol. i. p. 83.

called the "Testimony of Lord Brougham and Mr. Wilderspin as to the *Origin* of Infant-Schools;" and it is so preserved because of "attempts frequently made to publish false statements respecting the *origin* of infant-schools." Lord Brougham, in the House of Lords (1835), referring to the Westminster School, said that "the *plan*, as well as the teachers, were borrowed from Mr. Owen's manufactory at New Lanark." This certainly proves nothing respecting the origin of infant-schools. It only shows the origin of one of them, which Mr. Owen repudiated as being not even an imitation of his own. Mr. Wilderspin does not profess to know with whom "the idea first originated;" though, "so far as he is informed, Mr. Owen was the first person who conceived a plan for educating infant children upon an extensive scale."* As to "the idea," it is well known that, some years before Mr. Owen was born, an humble Protestant minister in a mountainous district of France had observed with concern the same class of disadvantages to which the young children of his parish were subjected at home, and at once formed the plan of an infant-school. "Observation and experience had convinced him that even from the very cradle children

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* Dr. Pole says that seven years before that (say 1816) Owen began his school, and Fellenberg nine years before Owen (say 1807); but Fellenberg did not take so young children as from two to two and a half years old, as Owen did.—"*Observations relative to Infant-Schools*," &c. 8vo, 83 pp. Bristol, 1823.

are capable of being taught to distinguish between right and wrong, and of being trained to habits of subordination and industry;" and, in conjunction with his wife, Pastor Oberlin forthwith organized schools and engaged suitable persons to conduct them. Without capital or resources beyond the scanty remuneration of his pastoral labours, he procured spacious apartments in each district, and became personally responsible for rent and salaries. Instruction was mingled with amusement; and, whilst enough of discipline was introduced to instil habits of subjection, a degree of liberty was allowed which left the infant mind full power of expansion, while information was conveyed which might be turned to the most important use in after-life. Two women were employed in each school,—one to direct the handicraft of the pupils, and the other to instruct and entertain them. Those who were old enough were taught to knit, spin and sew, and, when weary, were entertained with coloured pictures of Scripture scenes. Geographical maps were explained to them, beginning with the immediate environs of their home,—the maps being engraved on wood for the purpose, by Pastor Oberlin's direction; and they were also taught to sing "sweet hymns." Every Sunday the children of each village were assembled, in rotation, to say the hymns and recite the religious lessons they had learned during the week.

No one can reflect upon this unvarnished account

of Pastor Oberlin's labours in the Ban de la Roche without being struck both with the similarity and difference between his plan and that adopted at New Lanark. The dancing and the military drill are wanting in Oberlin's scheme, and the moral and religious influence in Owen's. The good pastor's system embraced more than the cotton-spinner's; for he published appropriate books for the children, as they advanced in life, quite after the fashion of modern school libraries. He collected indigenous plants, with the qualities of which the little ones readily became familiar;* and he also prepared various elementary works on different branches of natural science, some of which he printed at his own expense, and put them in circulation on the plan of a little itinerant book-society, depositing them in the several villages three months at a time in rotation. This is one of the most definite (though by no means the only) pattern of a complete infant-school, that preceded Mr. Owen's enterprise by the space of nearly half a century. It is thus made clear that, whatever claim Mr. Owen may have to the gratitude of posterity, it must be in some other character than as the "founder" or "inventor" of infant-schools. And indeed it may be fairly questioned whether the necessity of such an institution even for the New Lanark infants was not suggested to him; for there

* An ancient model of modern "object-teaching."

is credible evidence that the wife of the clergyman of the place had expressed to him her wish that some means could be provided to take poor children out of the hands of their parents before their habits were formed under pernicious home-influences and from mingling with the idle and vicious around them. It was some time after this conference that the infant-school at New Lanark was opened.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. OWEN GOES ABROAD—HIS RECEPTION BY THE MAGNATES—HIS THEORIES NOT NEW THERE—ST. SIMONISM—SKETCH OF THE FOUNDER AND HIS SUCCESSORS—HE VISITS PESTALOZZI AND FELLENBERG—MEMORIALS TO CONGRESS OF SOVEREIGNS AT VIENNA—INTERVIEW WITH EMPEROR OF RUSSIA—RETURNS TO ENGLAND—FINDS THE CURRENT OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT STRONG AGAINST HIS VIEWS—HIS GRAND ERROR—SKETCH OF BELL AND LANCASTER AND THEIR SYSTEMS—LETTER TO ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY—BROACHES A NEW PLAN, WHICH IS NOT FAVOURABLY ENTERTAINED.

WE return to Mr. Owen's personal history. Having fearlessly proclaimed his conviction that all the theories of education and of social happiness and prosperity known in the past ages of the world were false and delusive, and having gratuitously offered a substitute which "would infallibly secure to our whole race the highest happiness of which human natures are capable, he could do no more." He now bent his steps towards the continent of Europe. With letters of introduction to men of position and influence in the various countries which he visited, the opportunity to propagate his views was most favourable. If his representations are to be received, he was not only

greeted with universal favour, but was admitted to the confidence of princes and nobles and ministers of state, and enjoyed the closest intimacy with the most distinguished scholars and philosophers of the age. A single sentence reveals the spirit of the whole history of his tour. "We four—La Place, Cuvier, Pictet and myself—met often. La Place and Cuvier were at the head of their respective sciences; Professor Pictet was at the head of the *savans* of Europe; and I was now considered by these men as the advanced mind in a practical knowledge of human nature."

But methods of social reform not unlike those advocated by Mr. Owen were not novelties in France. Indeed, in many of the cotemporaneous notices of Mr. Owen and his projects and productions, they are connected, not without reason, with the fundamental principles of St. Simonism. The analogy holds good mainly in the general purpose of putting society to rights irrespective of the unalterable laws of its organization. In this view, a brief notice of that system is not irrelevant to our present purpose.

Claude Henri, Count de St. Simon, died in 1825, at sixty-five years of age. Like Mr. Owen, his early life was "tinctured with a spirit of enthusiasm;" as an evidence of which, it is stated that he caused himself to be called every morning with the words, "Get up, count: you have great things to accomplish."

For some years he pursued a military career; but his whole fortune and the last half of his life were devoted to the propagation of what he called "the new Christianity," by which all antagonism of interest was to be done away; a universal brotherhood of peace established, and every individual and every pursuit to be holy. In the distribution of property the right of capacity was to be substituted for the right of inheritance; all property to become common at the death of the proprietor;* and all children to be educated in common.

Upon these principles, a sort of society was organized, under what were called "chief fathers;" but (as in Mr. Owen's case) schisms occurred, parties were organized with their respective leaders, and it was finally agreed, on all hands, that the new revelation was imperfect, and that man and woman together must form the true social individual; but on this principle, as one of the "chief fathers" maintained, the moral law can be revealed only by the co-operation of woman, and therefore he advised his followers to wait for the appearance of the female personage who should be called to complete the revelation.

The devotion of St. Simon's followers was unbounded. Reduced to extreme want by the exhaustion of his resources, and oppressed by disappoint-

* A leading principle of many systems of social reform which have loud and earnest supporters in the United States at this day.

ment and mortification, he attempted to destroy his own life. The ball only grazed his forehead; and hence his disciples inferred that his person was invested with a new divinity,—though it is said the wound resulted in the loss of one eye. He was thenceforth esteemed as a prophet of the law of love. "From his mutilated body," said they, "a hymn of love is poured forth; the new Christianity is inaugurated; the kingdom of light and love is established upon earth!" It is affirmed that several persons of distinction were his disciples.* At the death of St. Simon, one of the "chief fathers," named Enfantin, was constituted his successor, and was well fitted for the post. His father was a wealthy banker of the province of Dauphiné, where he was born in 1796. He was bred to the military service, and fought with great bravery against the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty. When peace came, he was variously employed; but in the Revolution of 1830 he became involved in political schemes which threw him into the company of a wealthy Portuguese Jew who was an enthusiastic admirer of St. Simon and his creed. No sooner was Enfantin installed as chief of the order than he issued a proclamation declaring property the synonym of robbery; all devises of real estate invalid, and marriage a "temporary arrangement." He esta-

* His Memoirs, in twenty volumes 8vo, are advertised for sale by a Philadelphia house in March, 1865!

blished a newspaper to propagate these doctrines, and some of the notable men of the day were contributors to it. His male disciples were clad in a peculiar, close-fitting dress, surmounted by a full white roundabout with short sleeves, and a student's red cap for the head. Around their necks they wore a symbolic chain collar of polished steel, on every link of which was inscribed the name of some dead brother of the order. The female converts were dressed in white, with violet scarfs.

There was no limit to the money that was placed at Enfantin's service. The number of his adherents in France was at one time forty thousand. But dissensions soon occurred. Women reproached him with propagating the most immoral sentiments. His system was stigmatized as organized adultery. But the zealot only became bolder and more reckless. He now declared himself "the living law and the Messiah." He attempted to organize a model community in the vicinity of Paris; and forty or fifty actually joined him. Its composition and customs are thus graphically described by a humourist of that day:—

"A learned lawyer skims our soup-pot and cuts up our spinach; a tender soprano saws and brings in our wood; a learned judge washes our shirts and starches our collars; a child of Apollo cleans our boots; a state counsellor brushes our clothes; a duke cultivates our onions and cabbages, and puts our chickens to roost," &c.

But the end of their folly was not long delayed.

Enfantin and his followers were arraigned for immorality, their community suppressed, and he and one or two of his "chiefs" sentenced to imprisonment. The sentence was not executed, however, and Enfantin left the country. He is represented to have been a man of noble appearance, captivating manners and great oratorical abilities. He died suddenly, in October, 1864; and, by his express direction, his body was buried without any religious ceremony. So ingloriously terminated the life of a man of rare natural gifts, liberal education and unusual opportunities of usefulness,—"spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit."

After six weeks' stay in Paris, Owen went to Switzerland, visited several institutions for the care of poor children, had interviews with Pestalozzi and Fellenberg, and tarried a few days at Frankfort, where the Germanic Diet was then sitting, thus giving him an opportunity to make several valuable acquaintances, as well as to indulge some of his peculiar propensities. He tells us of a great dinner, made for the purpose of drawing him into controversy with M. Gentz, a famous politician, and the champion of a different school of social reform. M. Gentz enjoyed "the full confidence of the leading despots of Europe," and was secretary of the congress of sovereigns then about to assemble at Aix-la-Chapelle. According to Mr. Owen's report, the wily secretary made no objection to his views. After he had opened to the company his scheme

for improving the condition of the race, and for so arranging the social machinery as to "saturate society at all times with wealth sufficient to amply supply the wants of all through life," M. Gentz was asked for his reply; and, to Mr. Owen's natural surprise, he said, "We know very well that what you say is true; but how could we govern the masses if they were wealthy, and so independent of us?" This extraordinary speech (if it was indeed ever made) determined our resolute reformer to make another onslaught upon the hoary prejudices of mankind, and to raise an enslaved race from the abyss of ignorance and wretchedness in which he had found it, or to perish gloriously in the attempt.

He had prepared two memorials, which he had designed to present to the congress of sovereigns; and, to test their probable effect, he tells us, he read them to the Russian ambassador. When he came to a paragraph representing "wealth, privileges and honours as the playthings of infants," his excellency "betrayed great surprise and emotion;" which led Mr. Owen to say, "I see you think these words too strong for sovereigns." "Oh, no," replied the ambassador: "that is the only way to make any impression on such a kind of fellows." Mr. Owen intimates a doubt whether, if he had been aware of our meaning of the term "fellows," he would have applied it to emperors, kings, &c. In this connection he refers to Madame de Kru-

dener (whose son was connected with the Russian embassy), describing her as "the spiritualist whom the emperor used to visit and consult through spiritual agencies."

Providing himself with a copy of his two memorials, Mr. Owen sought an opportunity to present them in person to the Emperor of Russia; but unfortunately, when the opportunity occurred, the royal apparel was destitute of any pockets or loose folds in which to place them. Evidently annoyed (not, as Mr. Owen flattered himself, by the offer of the packet, but by the absence of a pocket), the emperor replied,—

"I cannot receive it; I have no place to put it in. Who are you?"

A singular order of ideas, certainly. To the final question he replied,—

"Robert Owen."

"Come to me in the evening," said the emperor, and passed on.

"I did not like his manner of speaking to me, and did not go. . . . I never could refrain from firmly repelling in manner what I deemed unnecessary assumption in any one." How the emperor bore the consequences of his assumption we have no knowledge.

Having made satisfactory arrangements for the presentation of his memorial to the congress at a favourable time, Mr. Owen returned to his native land; and, though no definite advantage resulted

from the exhibition of his views to European potentates and philanthropists, he "found, several years afterwards," as he tells us, "that those two memorials made an extraordinary impression upon the minds of the sovereigns who were present."

In the mean while, it was to be expected that his own countrymen would have come to some conclusion respecting the soundness and practicability of the views which had now been extensively propagated, not only by the author's appeals through newspapers, pamphlets and speeches, but in five large editions of his "Four Essays." The reflecting portion of the community were certainly unprepared to adopt his plans for making a happy world. Those who acknowledged the existence and government of the Supreme Being and received Holy Scripture as of divine authority, saw plainly that, however benevolent might be the notions and however praiseworthy the efforts of the man, he utterly misapprehended the character of the materials which he proposed to mould; was blind to the fixed and beneficent laws of creation and providence, and totally ignorant of the spiritual nature and necessities of himself and his fellow-creatures. They also saw that the plausible aspect in which he presented his opinions, and the skilful intermingling of admitted truth and specious error, would seduce the indiscriminate and restless to embrace them; and that, so far as they prevailed, the effect would inevitably be, what their advocate avowed, the sub-

version of all existing institutions, and the abandonment of the only principles on which any social system could possibly exist.

It was not strange, therefore, that there came to be a powerful influence arrayed against him. Mr. Owen tells us that the term "infidel" was "the watchword of attack with all his opponents." After such an unqualified repudiation of all existing religions, and the ascription to them of the evils which afflict the world, he could scarcely be surprised that the disciples of those religions applied that term to him. That he was an unbeliever in the inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures and in the divine origin of Christianity will not be denied by his most enthusiastic admirers. If the association of the name of Jesus with the names of Brahma, Juggernaut, Mohammed, "Joe Smith" and "Mother Lee;" if the rejection of Christianity in common with all other religions, and the distinct avowal of man's irresponsibility for thoughts, words or actions, constitute an infidel, the term could not be more appropriately used than when applied to Robert Owen; and how he could consistently complain, or (if he was sincere) be otherwise than proud of it, is the true matter of surprise.

The people who regarded him as an infidel were not backward to acknowledge and applaud the ardour with which he embarked in the cause of education. His efforts in this behalf were not misplaced, nor did he exaggerate the importance of

making the most of the ductile period of infancy in the formation of character. His grand mistake was in rejecting the only authentic guide to a knowledge of the true nature and destiny of those who were to be educated. "Compassing himself about with sparks of his own kindling, he walked in their light." His educational project was in its theory and spirit as irrational as to have used the machinery of the New Lanark mills to produce from white-oak bark as fine a fabric as from the best sea-island cotton. His system of moral husbandry had no proper reference to seed or soil, however liberal the provision of implements. He attempted a process of intellectual and physical culture without any suitable reference to the moral and spiritual faculties and capacities,—which was as rational as to attempt to sustain animal life by inhalations of oxygen and nitrogen on alternate days, instead of atmospheric air, in which they are mysteriously combined. What God had joined together he ruthlessly put asunder. The same fatal error has crept into most of our modern schemes of public education; and time will inevitably show its disastrous fruits, if indeed they have not been already developed.

The decided opposition which his theories encountered led Mr. Owen to look about him for some stronghold in which he might intrench himself. Among the "antecedents," as he calls them, which he regarded as his "tower of strength, and

which enabled him, whenever he was attacked, to come off more than a victor," was a letter to his "friend" the Archbishop of Canterbury, which reveals a shade of character not without interest. To understand its object and bearing, we must advert for a moment to a matter which then absorbed a large share of public attention, and is by no means out of mind at the present day.

Two plans for the education of children in masses were in progress: one harmonizing with the principles of the Established Church, in which, concurrently with instruction in all good knowledge, the creed and catechisms of that church should be taught; the other discarded creeds and catechisms and all denominational books and teachings, but required instruction in such of the doctrines of Christianity as are received by the great body of its professors. Both systems contemplated cheap instruction for large bodies of children, and both adopted the "monitorial" method, as it was called. However strange it may seem, this method was derived from Oriental sources. A clergyman of the Establishment,—Rev. Andrew Bell,—employed as chaplain in the East India Company's service, became principal of the Madras Orphan Boys' Asylum, and found great difficulty in providing proper teachers. Observing the facility with which native children were taught in a Malabar school by writing in the sand, he returned home; had a board strewed with sand, and assigned to one of the most trusty

boys in the asylum-school the duty of teaching a small class in the alphabet. He succeeded much beyond his expectations. The plan of monitorial or mutual instruction was gradually enlarged and improved; and, upon his return home, Dr. Bell urged its adoption in the public schools of England.

The same radical principle was adopted by Joseph Lancaster,—to whom reference has been already made in another connection,—a member of the Society of Friends, born in 1771, who, before he was eighteen years old, had established a school for ninety poor and neglected children, which he sustained at his own expense. He commenced his public labours five or six years after Dr. Bell published his account of the Madras system. But his plan (as he maintained) was much in advance of Dr. Bell's, and was prosecuted with untiring energy. He was conscientiously opposed to the other plan, because, as he contended, it brought the schools of the country under ecclesiastical supervision. This was a necessary consequence under any national school system in a community where church and state have joint authority. Lancaster met with many discouragements, and became deeply involved in pecuniary obligations. He left England and repaired to this country, where he laboured with various success until his death in 1838. This brief reference will help us to understand better Mr. Owen's peculiar views of education. He generously contributed to the success of both Dr.

Bell and Joseph Lancaster, and, as we have seen, encouraged the latter to visit Scotland, and presided at the public dinner in Glasgow, where in a guarded and somewhat equivocal manner he advanced his peculiar doctrines about the primary source of all human woes. He, however, regarded both systems as very insignificant agents for his purpose, but hoped a beginning, though small, might lead to something of permanent benefit to society. Of the two he preferred Lancaster's, and aided his plans to the amount of five thousand dollars. He offered a like contribution in furtherance of Bell's system, if its friends would consent to renounce the exclusive religious feature; otherwise, he would give but half that sum. From Mr. Owen's account of the matter, it would seem that, after "a debate of two days," it was determined, by a "close vote" of the Commissioners of Education, that the condition was not admissible. He seems to have conceived that the debates which his offer occasioned resulted in some modification of the system; but it was not so. Both systems were doubtless distasteful to him, as both required Bible-instruction and attendance at some place of public religious worship; but, while Lancaster's prescribed no particular place of worship or form of doctrine, the pupils of Bell's school were required to attend on the services of the Established Church, and its creed and catechisms were embraced in the items of regular instruction. The present National

School Society, which was established October, 1811, adopts the principle of the latter system, and the British and Foreign School Society that of the former.

The parliamentary grant of one million pounds sterling to aid in the erection of churches afforded Mr. Owen an opportunity to manifest anew his zeal in the cause of popular education, and gave rise to the letter which he addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, in which he set forth a plan by which the interests of religion and education would both be advanced by the same expenditure. He submits to the archbishop that schools are equally necessary with churches as a foundation for the improvement of society, and in order of time should obviously come first; but, as the grant embraced only churches, he would have these so constructed as to answer both purposes. Having secured this liberal provision for the ecclesiastical and educational wants of the people, so far as "local habitations" are concerned, he gravely proposed that the schools should be conducted, not upon the exclusive principle to which the instruction in the ecclesiastical department very properly conforms, but upon a plan that should exclude "all disputed points which from their nature do not admit of proof." He maintained that to present such points to the mind "before the judgment is ripe and capable of forming a rational conclusion for itself is a gross violation of the liberty of con-

science." He would not propose to his grace any radical measures, such as the repeal of all laws for the maintenance of religion, and the conversion of all existing schemes of popular improvement into that which had been so much admired at New Lanark; but he fondly hoped that the Church of England would be foremost to adopt this liberal policy, reserving the inculcation of her peculiar doctrines for the pupils' maturer age and judgment; and he very earnestly contended that by such measures "she would disarm her enemies, withdraw the hostility of those who dissent from her, and obtain time gradually to reform herself as society advanced in knowledge." Mr. Owen's argument did not convince his "friend" the archbishop; and the plan of a union of schools and churches, on which he built so much hope, was not accomplished,—though the "inventor" assures us that "it produced a powerful effect on the public mind."

CHAPTER XII.

MR. OWEN'S COUNSEL SOUGHT IN AN EMERGENCY—HE PROPOSES HIS VILLAGE PLAN—VISIT OF DEPUTATION TO NEW LANARK, AND THEIR REPORT—THE SECRET OF THE SUCCESS THERE—MR. OWEN'S RELIGIOUS IDEAS—SEEKS A HEARING IN PARLIAMENT—INTERVIEW WITH A NOBLE LORD—FAILS IN GAINING HIS POINT—VISITS MR. COKE AT HOLKHAM—INCIDENTS OF THE VISIT—CANVASSES FOR A SEAT IN PARLIAMENT FROM LANARK, AND FAILS—TRIES A PETITION AGAIN, BUT IS REPUDIATED BY THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—PROPOSES A SCHEME OF RELIEF FOR PUBLIC DISTRESS—IS AGAIN DISAPPOINTED—MOTHERWELL—PASTOR FLIEDNER—JOHN FALK—MR. OWEN'S SCHEMES IN PARLIAMENT AGAIN—VISITS IRELAND—ABRAM COMBE—ORBISTON.

IN the summer of 1819, Mr. Owen was permitted to commend his theories to the guardians of the poor of the populous town of Leeds. He did not, however, propose the New Lanark establishment as an exact model. The village scheme was preferable. Nor would he employ the people in manufacturing, but in agriculture. And, instead of allowing each labourer to receive and expend his earnings, he would have all things common; and the buildings he would have arranged, not as at New Lanark, but in regular squares.

A highly respectable deputation was appointed to

visit New Lanark and report upon the measure of success that attended Mr. Owen's plan for "improving the character and condition of work-people under his direction." The deputation consisted of a "Dissenter," a "Churchman" and a "Wesleyan;" and they spent three or four days in the investigation. They were very favourably impressed with the condition of the people. The whole community, being dependent on and employed by one manufacturing company, directed by one mind, presented an unusually homogeneous character. The habits and manners of the children were all that could be desired; and the deputation express the wish "that the orphan children in the Leeds Workhouse had the same advantages of moral and religious instruction."

It could not be denied that the New Lanark youth —who had received the benefits of a good early training, and were then employed in the mills or at some mechanical business—were for the most part regular and diligent in business. The economical arrangements introduced by the manager could not fail to add much to the comfort and respectability of the people at large, and to these and the absence of places for the sale or use of intoxicating drinks, must be attributed the rare measure of cleanliness, health and quiet which was observed. Probably there was not then, as there is not now, any community in existence whose circumstances would be found sufficiently like those at New Lanark to make the same

methods of proceeding equally practicable or successful. The most that can justly be made of the experiment is that which the Leeds deputation made of it. If we can gather a somewhat homogeneous population of twenty-five hundred souls in a healthy spot; give them constant and agreeable employment; insure their comfort in outward circumstances; provide generously for the intellectual and physical education of their children; remove from them the ordinary temptations to vicious indulgence, and put over them a man of Robert Owen's temperament, on whose will and resources they depend for all they have or hope, we shall accomplish what would be in vain attempted in the ordinary conditions of mankind. For all admit that most of the evils that affect society would be mitigated, and many of them entirely eradicated, were it practicable to employ the same means everywhere and upon all classes and communities. Mr. Owen claims that the success of his colony on the Clyde was due to the exclusion of all religious belief; and he boldly challenges all people, of any and every religion, to produce an instance in which any of them have brought to pass such results. He might with equal propriety and force challenge men of any and all religions to produce cotton-yarn so finely spun as to take three hundred hanks to the pound, and thence argue that his theory of social happiness is incontrovertible. If Pastor Oberlin had enjoyed in the Ban de la Roche the means which Mr. Owen com-

manded to carry out his projects at New Lanark, does any sensible man suppose he would have been less successful? Yet Mr. Owen would persuade us that the secret of his success was the renunciation of that which constituted the pith and marrow of Oberlin's labours, and that if a Churchman, Catholic, Dissenter, Quaker, or a believer in any other religion, had attempted the same thing under the same auspices, the spell would have been dissolved!

From some unexplained cause, Mr. Owen's hostility to religion at this period of his life seems to have been greatly intensified. Whether it was disappointment at the limited extent to which his opinions had obtained favour, or vexation that his publications were discarded by respectable booksellers, or an irritability of temper engendered by such constant collision, we can only conjecture. His mind was ill fitted to regain its equipoise when once lost, and his opinions were too loose-jointed to afford him a resting-place when he retired from a conflict with those who opposed them.

Though he traced to religion all the miseries of the human race, he now distinctly repels the charge of infidelity, and recognizes a "Supreme creating Mind, Intelligence, Energy, directing all things within the universe to produce the best possible ultimate results that the eternal elements of the universe will admit." He acknowledges the "wondrous manner" in which this incomprehensible power had "directed all his" own "measures;" and yet he

would discard every known form by which intelligent creatures serve and glorify a being so beneficent and exalted.

It is noteworthy, in this connection, that Mr. Owen's happy faculty of making the most of such countenance as he received from persons of standing and influence, was especially useful where religious persons were concerned. When he says, "I had also with me Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Thornton, Mr. Charles Grant," &c., it would naturally lead us to infer that such eminent Christian philanthropists sympathise with his views. While there is no doubt that the notoriety he acquired, both as an energetic man of business and as a professed seeker of the public good, secured him an introduction to the leading men of his time, there is abundant evidence that the eyes of the wise and good among them were open to his errors and absurdities.

We sometimes meet with a group of incidents in Mr. Owen's autobiography that bring into one view his peculiar characteristics. Every omen seems favourable to his success: obstacles disappear, the incredulous are convinced, and his project is about to be presented for the national approbation. Yet he is not elated. He seems to regard it as a matter of course that those who see should believe. The crisis comes. He is defeated and chagrined, but still is buoyant and hopeful. Take for an example the attempt to get himself before Parliament.

Lord Lauderdale was, as he tells us, "one of the

most (if not the most) active and influential members of the House of Peers;" and to Mr. Owen his lordship was always "at home." If he was in bed, Mr. Owen was to be conducted to his bedroom, and in that recumbent posture his lordship "lay talking and listening" to his visitor. After this familiar intimacy had existed for some time, Lord Lauderdale asked him by what arrangements he proposed to give education to the poor and working classes. Fortunately, he had prepared an engraved picture of society as it would be when his scheme should be perfected, a glance at which would make the whole scheme intelligible to any unprejudiced mind. His lordship gazed upon this picture silently for some time, and then suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, I see it all! Nothing could be more complete for the poor and working classes. But what will become of us?" (meaning the aristocracy.*) If this implied apprehension were really felt, it was no more than consistent for Lord Lauderdale to oppose Mr. Owen's petition on the subject when it was presented in Parliament. When the question of its reception was under debate, his lordship (as Mr. Owen tells us) warned the house that, "if they countenanced such views, there was not a government in Europe that could stand against them."

* A singular coincidence (if nothing more) will be noticed between this remark of Lord Lauderdale's and that of the Secretary of the congress of sovereigns, whom Mr. Owen met at a public dinner at Aix-la-Chapelle.—Page 165.

In the Commons a similar petition was presented, under the most favourable circumstances; but a motion to receive it was lost in both houses.

Being thus foiled in his attempt to convince men that he could make them perfectly happy if they would only give him permission, Mr. Owen now contented himself with the high place he held in the estimation of the "more advanced and independent minds," and rested with complacency upon the "strong feeling of regard and approbation" which was entertained towards him "by women of superior attainments and goodness of disposition in every rank of life."

It was about this time that he was privileged to be one of the guests of the renowned Mr. Coke, of Holkham, at his annual sheep-shearing. This gave him a chance to mingle again with persons of distinction in the political and social world. Among those whose acquaintance he made at this time was the Hon. Richard Rush, then the Minister of the United States to the court of St. James. But it does not appear that he made any converts to his "new views." After a sumptuous entertainment, Mr. Owen exhibited to the company a painting, which he had had drawn on canvas, representing one of his proposed new villages, in which he designed to "train all, beginning with the lowest, for the rational or millennial state upon earth." While he was explaining the view, a nobleman standing near unfortunately asked on what scale

the painting was drawn. As, "in addition to large quantities of other wines and liquors, a pipe of port was drunk at dinner," it would not be surprising if his lordship was quizzing the reformer when he put such a simple question; but, however this may have been, no scale having been sent with the drawing, Mr. Owen was "puzzled for a reply;" and thus ended the exhibition. This unexpected catastrophe prompts him to suggest to inventors of any thing new, and especially inventors of any thing opposed to established notions, that they should be careful to prepare for every contingency.

To a man of Mr. Owen's temperament the flattering eulogies and plausible promises of patrons and placemen would not serve as a substitute for the actual adoption of his views. Firmly believing that if the power were given him he could, by a mere reconstruction of society (the constituents being just what they are and have been ever since the time of the apostasy), bring all conflicting elements into perfect harmony, and form the whole race into one vast, peaceful, loving fraternity, he was bound to give himself anew to the work.

Thus far, little progress had been made in gaining proselytes that were in circumstances to give him substantial aid; and he at length bethought himself of a seat in the House of Commons as a position in which he could speak and act to much greater advantage. He accordingly addressed a note to the electors of Lanark, Linlithgow, &c.,

soliciting their votes, and resting his claim chiefly on the fact that a crisis was impending which he had foreseen for years, and which he was fully prepared to meet. But it unfortunately turned out that four of the voters "on whose support he depended, by means of feasting, intoxication," and other excesses, had been won over to his opponent; and thus, though, as he assures us, he was "the popular candidate with twenty to one of the people," he was not returned to the coveted seat.

With a magical ingenuity to turn almost every untoward event to some favourable account, he soon satisfied himself that his success would not have been to the advantage of his great mission to the world.

Soon after this defeat, some of Mr. Owen's friends made a new effort to obtain parliamentary action upon his plan; and in the House of Commons a motion was made to appoint a committee to examine and report upon it. The Chancellor of the Exchequer took occasion to say, when the matter was in debate, that, while he might admire Mr. Owen's treatment of his work-people, and had no disposition to interfere with his religious opinions, he could not, "as a public officer, agree to grant public money to further a plan that had been introduced to the public by a speech in which all religions are pronounced false and all systems of government evil."

In 1819, much distress prevailed, in consequence

of some financial measure of the government,* which occasioned a surplus of labour, and, according to Mr. Owen's account, "thousands upon thousands of the working-classes were out of work and starving,"—an event which leads him to inveigh bitterly against "the artificial monetary system of gold and silver." Among other districts especially suffering from the times was the county of Lanark; and, as there appeared to be no such adversity under Mr. Owen's administration in the village of New Lanark, he was called upon to devise measures to secure a like exemption for the people of the county. In a very voluminous and elaborate address, presented at a public meeting May 1, 1820, he sets forth in detail his reorganizing scheme. Starting with the sensible position that in the existing condition of society there is no way of preventing such fluctuations in the demand for labour as had occasioned the distress which they sought to relieve, he insists that the natural standard of value is human labour. By reducing this principle to practice, by substituting the spade for the plough as an agricultural implement, and by a mechanical arrangement of the labouring population into villages of from two hundred to two thousand inhabitants, under suitable economical provisions respecting food, dress, education, &c., he

* Preparation to resume specie payments by the Bank of England.

promises to make the vicious virtuous, the idle industrious, and the pauper independent.

In a notice of this report by a leading contemporary review, the general spirit of which is decidedly friendly to Mr. Owen's motives and ends, the following synopsis is given of his system:—

"1. Man is not responsible for his circumstances, nor accountable for his actions. He is precisely what the circumstances in which he is placed, combined with his natural qualities, make him.

"All notions of reward and punishment are, therefore, founded on false principles.

"2. There is nothing evil in the constitution of men which is not the result of vicious forms of society. Correct these, and men may improve in knowledge and virtue without limit.

"3. All preferences for one's own interest, offspring, country, &c. are excrescences on the original nature of man.

"4. The division of labour is a source of sore evils, and should not be countenanced.

"5. Old landmarks and old habitations should be put away, and communities formed to occupy districts of country; and the product of labour should be for the common good,—the whole population eating together as one family, food being prepared at one cookery, all dressed alike, children all educated together, in two schools,—one for children from two to six, and the other from six to twelve.

"6. Affairs to be conducted by a committee."

The respectable committee to whom the report was referred for consideration evinced no little tact in disposing of it. Mr. Owen had very liberally offered to be at the expense of printing it,—thus giving the public an opportunity to decide upon its

merits without any expression of opinion from them; and, as the author admits that its "most prominent features are at variance with those principles which are sanctioned by the approbation of the most enlightened political economists of the age," their subjection to the ordeal of public discussion would secure the scrutiny which ought to precede its adoption or rejection. As to the new mode of husbandry, they thought a few experiments by practical agriculturists would soon test its merits. With a deserved compliment to the proprietors of the New Lanark Mills and their managing director, the committee suggest that the "internal regulations" of that establishment might be advantageously adopted, in various degrees, in most large manufactories, and would mitigate many of the abuses prevailing in them.

The report served to direct public attention anew to Mr. Owen's theories; and they were criticised with various degrees of severity.*

When the report was laid before a general meeting of the inhabitants, it was accompanied with a

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* Take the following as a specimen of their general tone:—"It is not by embarking in gigantic schemes, nor by contemplating violent changes, nor by meddling with the *forms* of society (those crystalline forms, the uniformity of which in all ages and countries demonstrates that they are regulated by affinities inherent in our nature, and, of course, beyond our control), nor by casting doubt on the pure principles of the Christian religion, that we can serve our country or our land."—*Blackwood*, April, 1821.

proposal from a respectable gentleman to lease, on certain conditions, from five to seven hundred acres of land, for the purpose of making a fair trial of Mr. Owen's plan. It was intimated that this would supersede the necessity of erecting a bridewell, or house of correction, for the county, as those who would be fit subjects for such an institution might be received at the proposed experimental establishment. With a coolness and patience which are truly admirable, Mr. Owen observed that to adapt such a plan to the purposes of a bridewell would require peculiar modifications, as such an institution should be used only for the reception of delinquents. The whole subject was then postponed for consideration at a future meeting, which, however, it is believed, was never held. Such was the fate of what Mr. Owen calls "the first publication ever given to the world which explained, even in outline, the circle of the practical science of society." With his characteristic buoyancy, he exults in the translation of his report into French and German; in a vote of thanks for it from the French Academy, and in the "great excitement" which it produced "throughout Europe."

It was the circulation of this report, he tells us, that awakened the "imaginative Fourier," who in vain attempts to "mix together old and new principles and practices" which are in their nature incompatible. And so closely was he beset by solicitations from various quarters to make an ex-

periment, that he finally asked for a subscription of seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling to defray the expenses. This was afterwards reduced to two hundred and fifty thousand. Finding no encouragement in this form, some of his disciples proposed to make the experiment at their own risk, under Mr. Owen's supervision; and a "community" (as it was called) was commenced at Motherwell, a few miles from New Lanark; but it proved unsuccessful.

It is interesting to notice, in this connection, an enterprise of a somewhat kindred character, commenced, just about the same time, in Kaiserswerth, in the kingdom of Prussia, by the good pastor Fliedner, recently deceased. It serves to show conclusively what methods of dealing with social evils are most likely to succeed, and how they should be pursued. With exemplary self-sacrifice, he embarked in efforts for the poor labourers in a velvet-manufactory, who were thrown upon the cold charities of the world by the failure of their employers. We mark the steady, unostentatious, quiet advance he made in providing for prisoners, orphans, lunatics, magdalens, infant-schools, Sunday-schools, hospitals for the sick, and training-schools for nurses and deaconesses to serve the hospitals and other houses of suffering. We follow the messengers of mercy who have gone forth from that foundation to the very ends of the earth (of whom Florence Nightingale was one); and then we

are prepared to judge whether the spirit of our holy religion does not bear fruit as pure, as praiseworthy and as permanent as a Christless philanthropy, however earnest and sincere. We may judge, in a word, whether the good pastor Fliedner, with the love of the Saviour as the motive-power, has not set in array far more practical and efficient agencies for the alleviation of human woe, for the elevation of human character and for the encouragement of human hopes, than our restless, enterprising social reformer, acting under the influence of a blind and irreligious sympathy, contending with evils inherent in the nature and condition of man, and which even the subversion of the present structure of society, could he have accomplished it, would only aggravate.

But another, and perhaps a still more striking, contrast may be presented. There was a boy in Dantzic, three years old when Owen was born, the sympathies of whose life were drawn in the same direction. He was a wig-maker's son; and his childhood was the reverse of Owen's. He was a butt instead of a pet. But his gentle Moravian mother had read him stories out of the Bible, and the good Spirit of God had taught him the impurity and helplessness of his own moral nature. After "the teaching of years and of many sorrows," he at last cried, "*God be merciful to me, a sinner!*" and was caught to the Saviour's arms forever.*

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* Life, by W. F. Stevenson.

This was John Falk. In the social and political chaos that attended and followed the desolations of war and pestilence, he was brought into contact with children orphans by vagabondage and crime, wandering from one prison to another, never hearing a kind word, shunned and cast out by all. He did not frame any new theory to account for this. He pitied their forlorn condition, and set himself to work to improve it. "Perhaps it is not all their fault," he modestly said. Some thought he exaggerated their depraved condition; but it was seen and acknowledged that his work among them "was practical, sagacious and profoundly Christian,"—three characteristics eminently lacking in his cotemporary. He had to deal with a class of minds in which the faculties were dormant, or "worn down to a level with the body, only betraying itself in gleams of sharp animal cunning." But, by faith and love, he surmounted every obstacle. He collected the outcasts together. "He taught them himself; he lived with them and amongst them." He did not confine his teachings to useful knowledge: the main idea with him was, as he expressed it, "to teach them to see what a true godly life meant." To him prayer was as real a resource as an unlimited check upon the grand-ducal treasury. When he died, in 1826, he had three hundred children in his reformatory, sixty schoolmasters in training for reformatory service, and hundreds of young men and women apprenticed out to va-

rious industries, many of whom, now well off in the world, came to express their gratitude. Children bore him to the grave, singing Christian psalms. And the whole array of means and institutions for the reformation of vicious children, now so widely diffused, is only Falk's grand idea, modified by circumstances.

The public proceedings to which we have above referred could not fail to excite attention; and, in view of Mr. Owen's efforts to diffuse a knowledge of his opinions, in which he spared neither labour, time, nor money, we are not surprised that they should again find their way into the houses of Parliament. It was in the spring of 1821; and the subject in debate was a proposed modification of the revenue-laws with a view to the protection of the industrial interests of the country. In the course of the discussion, reference was made to "other schemes of more than Utopian absurdity. Among these," said the member, "is that of a Mr. Owen, the principal partner in a large cotton-factory in Scotland, who imagines that he has discovered an infallible mode of curing all the evils usually attendant on poverty. His trade for many years has been very prosperous: he has, accordingly, been able to afford liberal wages to his workmen; and by good economical arrangements, more especially by making those he employs live almost in common, and by freeing them in a great measure from the charge of superintending and educating their children, he has

enabled them to live in a degree of comfort superior to what is usually enjoyed by the labouring classes. He thinks that what he has accomplished there might be extended to the whole country and the whole world; and he has occupied himself, for some years, in propounding an unintelligible scheme for this purpose. In the rapture of his visionary schemes he altogether forgets that the population of New Lanark have constant and profitable occupation, and, therefore, any precedents drawn from it could apply only to cases where the persons to be delivered by his plans are previously removed from poverty itself, by advantages which large capitalists find in giving regular employment and liberal wages. He also forgets that the economical arrangements which could be introduced into a cotton-factory would be altogether inapplicable to a dispersed population employed in agriculture, commerce, or the mechanical arts."

Notwithstanding this decided expression of hostility to the measure, a definite motion was made (June 26) for the appointment of a committee to visit New Lanark and report upon the plan pursued there. Lord Londonderry opposed the motion. He could "see no good likely to be derived from dividing the country into parallelograms; and as for the people, they would all be reduced under such a system to mere automatons in society, fit for no purpose of existence except to labour under the superintendence of a species of civil drill-sergeant.

It might be applicable to the management of poor-houses, but never to freemen; and, ready as he ever felt himself to applaud a benevolent suggestion, he would not have Parliament dragged into any loose, absurd questions."

Mr. Canning said it "had been his purpose to absent himself from the discussion; but, having been induced by the urgency of Mr. Owen to promise that he would attend and be guided in his vote by what he might hear for or against the plan, he felt it necessary to say that, after the most impartial consideration of the subject, he was determined to vote against the motion. In his view, the general adoption of the plan would lead to the complete destruction of individuality, and to the amalgamation of the population into masses,—which is totally repugnant to the principles of human nature, and, above all, to the genius of the country. The inference that because such a plan had succeeded at New Lanark it would be successful upon a more extended scale, was perfectly fallacious. Individuals must be congregated together upon some known and intelligible principle, or the society they form will become the seat of the worst passions:" a remark the truth of which has been signally corroborated by the several abortive attempts since made to form such associations in various parts of the world. Mr. Canning added an observation, which he hoped would not be offensive to Mr. Owen, nor expose himself to the charge of bigotry

or cant; but "he thought that Parliament should pause before proceeding to set the first example of a community existing in Christendom in which there should be no religion."*

After the expression of these objections, which there was no attempt to refute, the member declined to press his motion.

While the preliminary measures for the experiment at Motherwell were in progress, Mr. Owen visited Ireland. He found no difficulty in introducing himself to the lord-lieutenant and other persons in authority; and, after traversing the country a few weeks, he communicated the results of his observations and reflections to a public meeting in Dublin, at which the lord-mayor presided. He described, in the most revolting terms, the poverty and misery which he had witnessed; and,

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* The "Westminster Review," in treating of the religious heresies of the working-classes, says, "It is a hard task to hold a secular society together. The elements of disunion are always numerous in it; and its members are particularly prone to take a part against their leaders, and set up opposition." . . .

Is not the true explanation of their fickleness to be found in the fact that human nature requires a religion of some kind, and withers when it is denied the support and nourishment of reverence for authority? And the inquiry may be pertinently added, whether this want of cohesion is not common to all classes of skeptics?

"There is no centre of attraction; there are no ties of brotherhood; zeal soon ends; and the society, which for a time promised to grow in numbers and strength, disintegrates, and loses visible existence."

putting these in contrast with the natural advantages which the country possessed for amply rewarding the labours of the people, he inferred the existence of some radical defect in the social system. If they would consent to organize society on his plan; cease to hold men responsible for character and conduct, which were not matters of choice, but of necessity; deliver them from bondage to any and all existing religions; place their families in comfortable circumstances, and surround their children with only such influences as will be favourable to virtuous and gentle deportment, the whole scene would be changed as if by magic. Allow him to introduce his parallelogram villages, his spade-husbandry, and his child-training process, and every token of poverty and discontent would disappear.

No very formal reply was made to these propositions, and the meeting was dissolved. Mr. Owen, however, was not satisfied with this opportunity of presenting his views, and he called a second and third meeting, at neither of which the lord-mayor presided. But his perseverance was not without its reward. A society was formed to promote his scheme. Several persons of distinction were its patrons, and a few donations and loan-subscriptions were made. On one of these occasions, Mr. Owen entertained his audience by exhibiting a set of cubes, representing the different grades of society; and also a series of slides, representing the faculties

of children as they are, and as they ought to be; but the impression made on the assembly was little more than that which a fly would make on a stereotype plate by walking leisurely over it.

We have no knowledge that the people of Ireland gained any substantial advantage from Mr. Owen's visit and labours. Certainly there were no permanent results.

Perhaps we shall have no fitter connection than this in which to refer, briefly, to an experiment made between the years 1822 and 1827 by a disciple and ardent admirer of Mr. Owen, and a firm believer in the practicability of his scheme. It may serve to show that the source of the failure of such schemes is not in the instrument.

Among the visitors to New Lanark in the fall of 1820 was Abram Combe, of Edinburgh,—then thirty-five years of age. His childhood was unhappy, and his training any thing but what it should have been. He early embraced the theory that selfishness was the supreme ruler over all men; and, if his judgment of himself was just, he must be regarded as a representative man of such a race. With no enviable social position, he visited Mr. Owen's establishment; listened, with natural interest, to his denunciations of the existing order of things, and his scheme for its reorganization; saw the comfort and contentment of the village in contrast with the wretchedness and restlessness of the squalid groups in the alleys of London and the

wynds of his own city, and forthwith enrolled himself among the manager's disciples. As an evidence of his faith, so soon as circumstances allowed, he set himself to organize a community substantially upon the same plan. A neighbouring tract of fine land, embracing about three hundred acres, and known as the Orbiston estate, was purchased by a company with a capital of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. It was situated on the Clyde, about nine miles from Glasgow, and was supposed to furnish accommodations for two hundred families. There was a sufficient fall of water for manufacturing purposes; and mills, workshops, and a dwelling-house an eighth of a mile in length and divided into apartments for the occupation of families, were erected. There was a spacious hall, intended for an eating-room, divided into recesses or stalls, with a table in each for eight persons. There were also a lecture-room, ball-room, drawing-room and library. The buildings were not commenced till the spring of 1825; and early in 1826 a few families were admitted, and by September of that year there were nearly three hundred tenants. The co-operative principle seemed to promise good results. An account was opened with each individual, crediting the value of his or her labour, and charging the cost of maintenance. But some members of the company were disposed to think that "communism" would be an improvement upon "co-operation;" and, during the absence of Mr. Combe,

they resolved to disregard his views, and make the change. No immediate mischief resulted from this measure; but, on the contrary, the communists were represented to be much improved in manners and morals. Within a year afterwards (August 27, 1827) Mr. Combe died; and at the end of the next three months most of the Orbiston community had left the premises, with but few weeks' notice, and were compelled to accept quarters wherever they could find them. Not long after, the crops, implements, furniture, &c. were sold, and the buildings, being, by their construction, useless for any other purpose, were levelled with the ground. Thus ended a scheme the failure of which its founder and principal proprietor regarded as impossible. With the zeal and enthusiasm which were so conspicuous in his prototype, Combe devoted his energies to the mitigation of acknowledged social evils. He would do good if he only knew how; but, like Owen, he went to his work in ignorance or with false views of the nature of the materials with which he had to do; and hence his signal defeat.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. OWEN VISITS THE UNITED STATES—PURCHASES A TRACT OF LAND—PROCLAIMS HIS THEORY IN THE HALLS OF CONGRESS—NEW HARMONY—ITS SOCIAL PECULIARITIES—MR. OWEN RETURNS TO ENGLAND—REVISITS THE UNITED STATES—HIS COLONY DISTURBED—A SECESSION—WILLIAM MACLURE—HIS COMMUNITY—ITS FAILURE—DISPOSAL OF MR. OWEN'S PROPERTY TO COMMUNISTIC SOCIETIES—THEIR FAILURE—A LATER SIMILAR EXPERIMENT IN NEW JERSEY, AND ITS RESULTS.

DURING the year 1824, Mr. Owen paid a visit to the United States, under the impression that his plans would be more likely to find favour where the institutions of society were less indurated by time or less restricted by conventional laws, and where land was less valuable. Soon after his arrival he purchased a tract of thirty thousand acres, lying about thirty miles from the mouth of the Wabash River. The land was previously owned, for eight or ten years, by a company of Germans, who immigrated under the leadership of George and Frederic Rapp, and were thence called Rappites. They gave the place the name of New Harmony. For a new settlement, it showed much enterprise and thrift. The dwelling-houses were comfortable; various manufacturing establishments

were in successful progress; and two large churches, and other public buildings, were erected. The soil was fertile, vineyards and orchards adorned the neighbouring hills, and wood and water were abundant. The original proprietors were induced to sell for the sake of withdrawing to a more secluded and healthier location; and they settled at Economy, eighteen miles below Pittsburg.

Before commencing operations upon his new purchase, Mr. Owen sought an opportunity to bring his views into more general notice; and to this end he obtained leave to occupy one of the halls of Congress for a public meeting, which was attended by many of the leading men of the country whom the session of Congress had drawn to Washington. In his address on this occasion, he proposed greatly to enlarge the liberty of the people, which he considered rather nominal than real; for while in a political sense, as in the choice of rulers, the enactment of laws, &c., they enjoyed great freedom, the "national mind" was yet under the tyranny of prejudice. He proposed to disenthral it, and introduce an order of things under which there should be no restraint save that of mutual love and good will. All sources of discontent, poverty, controversy, crime and misery should be dried up, and the inhabitants of the land compose one perfectly harmonious brotherhood.* One condition, how-

* Among the condensed expressions of his theory were the following:—

ever, was indispensable to this elysian state. The principles usually recognized in the pursuits of trade and commerce must be renounced as degrading and pernicious, and all inequalities of wealth and poverty must be abolished. He assured the people who listened to him, that if they would lay aside the crude and erroneous notions in which they had been trained, and adopt his system, there would be no more avarice nor ambition to be rich, no more vice and wretchedness among the poor. In other words, the whole human race, in its successive generations, has been under

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"Until human beings shall, without any inconvenience whatever, speak openly and frankly the genuine impression of their minds on all subjects, they must be considered in a state of mental bondage.

"This would remove all motive to deception or insincerity of any kind.

"This is a revolution from a system in which individual reward and punishment has been the universal practice, to one in which individual reward and punishment will be unpractised and unknown.

"Society may be easily arranged to exist without ignorance, or poverty, or vice, or crime, or misery.

"The cause of all past and present evil in society is the notion that there can be merit or demerit in any belief whatever.

"The constitution of our nature was formed by the power which originally gave it existence, to be influenced by the circumstances which should surround it.

"It is the science of circumstances by which, without any chance of failure, virtue, intelligence, affluence and happiness may be secured to every individual of the rising generation."

the influence of circumstances, and are now asked by our earnest reformer to accept his theory formed under the influence of circumstances.

In spite of the offensiveness of Mr. Owen's doctrines and pretensions to all sober and well-informed minds, we always find something to admire in the earnestness and single-mindedness with which he pursued his aims. A visit to an insane hospital is, in many respects, very painful: yet there is no more interesting school for the student of psychological phenomena. Among the patients we have often observed with surprise that one apparently supposes himself to have an advantage over another, and rather shuns association with him, or looks upon him with evident sympathy, as if himself were exempted from so dire a calamity. We have something analogous to this in connection with the two discourses delivered by Mr. Owen in the halls of Congress. A few months after their publication, a pamphlet review was published, under the title of an "Examination of the New System of Society by Robert Owen: showing its Incompetency to Reform Mankind."* In this review, which is very candid and temperate in its tone and spirit, the author attempts to prove the inadaptability of the new principle to the condition of the human mind; but he at the same time renounces the only guide to a safer and better theory, avowing himself at war with Christianity, if not with

* Published by John Mortimer: Philadelphia, 1826.

theism; for he says, "if Christianity gives Christians advantages over Jews, or Jews over Pagans or Gentile nations, I shall only say, 'Then I am not a Christian.'"

We do not find that the vivid picture of the projected reform of the social structure, which was exhibited at Washington, produced any lasting impression upon the "national mind;" and we must look for the orator's success in the more private sphere of the settlement at New Harmony. A "preliminary society," as it was termed, was to include persons with capital as well as those without it. The former would pay for their support in money, and the latter in labour. At the end of every year each family would be credited with the value of its contributions in either form, and charged with the cost of maintenance. After enjoying the privileges and benefits of this preparatory training for a season, they would be admitted to a society of a higher grade, in which there would be no distinction except that of age and experience. That they would seek admission to this advanced society there could be no doubt, as they would have the positive assurance of Mr. Owen himself that they would be exempt from the evils which the rest of mankind suffer. The number composing the new communities was not to exceed five hundred, including women and children. What the domestic arrangements were to be, further than that there would be a commonwealth, we are not informed.

To reduce these principles to practice in his new purchase was the task to which Mr. Owen now applied himself. His little town was soon stocked with inhabitants. The operations begun by the Rappites were carried forward by the new-comers, under the supervision of a managing committee of Mr. Owen's appointment. And so smoothly did the machinery run that he felt willing to leave it for a season and return to New Lanark, where he still had a large interest.

After six or eight months' absence, he returned, and found his colony making such good progress that, instead of waiting a couple of years, as he had intended, before he organized his "advanced society," he concluded to proceed at once to a full development. A convention of the colonists was held, and a constitution adopted, among the fundamental principles of which were the irresponsibility of men for their character or conduct, the equality of rights, and a community of property. This proved to be a premature measure. If his patience had held out a few months longer, as he had originally designed, he would have been saved much mortification and disappointment. He would have found that among his colonists there was such a diversity in temper, habits, education and purpose as to make their unity utterly impracticable. A more unpromising group for the trial of a new social experiment could scarcely have been collected. These obstacles to amalgamation were in-

creased by the free admission of outsiders to the settlement. Among those who took advantage of this liberty were itinerant preachers and teachers, whose conflicting doctrines led to sharp controversy, and, finally, to the secession of a portion of the colony. Under such circumstances, it is not strange that reports adverse to the interests and derogatory to the moral purity of the colonists should find currency; but this did not prevent the establishment of other communities in the vicinity, on substantially the same plan. Of one of these the founder or chief patron was Mr. William Maclure, a gentleman of large means, of a liberal spirit, and without a family. He had travelled much; and his scientific attainments were such as to induce the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences to select him for its President. Having become deeply interested in Pestalozzi's system, and finding the exalted place which education held in Mr. Owen's theory, he fell in with his general views, and, although then about sixty years of age, he removed, with a few associates, to the vicinity of New Harmony, taking with him his fine library, a valuable mineralogical cabinet, &c.

Mr. Maclure was a remarkable instance of devotion to his chosen studies. It would be difficult to name any one to match him in the indefatigable energy with which he pursued his investigations of the phenomena and laws of natural science, or the liberality with which he contributed to its advance-

ment. No privations or hardships deterred him from the accomplishment of his purposes, and no difficulties or obstacles could daunt his indomitable spirit. The end for which he lived seventy-six years, under God's protection and government, was attained. The gratitude which is due to the pioneer of American geology was felt and publicly expressed. Had the glory of the Creator and Redeemer of the world, instead of the interests of science, awakened his powers to one controlling purpose, it might have been thought of him, as it was of the great apostle of ancient days, that he was "beside himself," and that "much learning had made him mad." That a man of Mr. Maclure's intellectual habits and pursuits should have adopted Mr. Owen's system may be ascribed, perhaps, to the strong sympathy he felt with his views of the character and influence of "all the religions of the world."

The particular community to which Mr. Maclure attached himself was composed of children. He and his friends purchased a portion of the tract of thirty thousand acres, and provided suitable dwellings for the use of teachers and workmen, as well as for storing grain, and for stables, workshops, school-rooms, and accommodations for meetings, concerts, and various recreations. The arrangements for training and instructing this interesting family were ample; and there would seem to have been no obstacle in the way of a successful experiment, if there had been no radical defect of principle.

Besides the educational there were an agricultural and a manufacturing community in the same vicinity; but, after a brief existence, they were surrendered to trustees, of whom Mr. Owen was one. A vain effort was made to reorganize them. Jealousies, inequalities of capacity and industry, not less than diversities of habit and temper, were among the causes assigned for the failure.

While this experiment was in progress, it happened that the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, in a tour through the United States, called at New Harmony. He thought the attempt to mingle vagabonds and persons of refinement and education was not successful. The duke tells us that he was listening to a piece of music by a young lady, when it was announced that it was "her turn to milk the cows." She went out unwillingly, and some time after returned, having meanwhile been severely kicked by one of the animals, and very ill disposed towards the new social system. The marriage-bond he found was considered as only a temporary partnership.*

To avoid some of these hindrances to success, it was now proposed to form a community exclusively of those whose congeniality was insured by previous friendship. New Harmony itself had already discarded communism as an impracticability. The different trades were pursued inde-

* London Ch. Obs., January, 1829, p. 53.

pendently; the ordinary motives that prompt men to exertion were restored to their place; and the new association was to be restricted to persons who might be regarded as "choice spirits," excluding all idle, vicious, selfish, avaricious, contentious persons, —all, in a word, who would not seek the happiness of others with more earnestness than their own, or, rather, who would not find their own in promoting that of others. We apprehend that any intelligent Sunday-school child in Christendom could have referred the advocates of such a plan to a book much older than any of them, in which a still more exalted standard is presented for the government of human conduct, accompanied by an infinitely perfect living model, and by a sure promise of grace and wisdom to imitate it successfully.

A considerable portion of Mr. Owen's original purchase was leased, for ten thousand years, to several communistic societies, in sections of from five hundred to one thousand acres. They were to pay an annual rent of fifty cents per acre, on condition that whenever it should cease to be occupied by communists the landlord should have the right to reclaim it. These societies were constituted by the select body of friends, whose previous intimacy would be a guarantee that no root of bitterness should spring up to trouble them, while their congeniality and freedom from selfishness would insure the nearest possible approach to social perfection.

But, alas! into this garden the old serpent wrig-

gled himself before the promise of an Eden was fulfilled; the barriers to the intrusion of base passions availed nothing; and when Mr. Owen returned, after a brief absence, he was deeply mortified to find that this new and most auspicious experiment had utterly failed; and the conviction was now forced upon him that his vaunted system was inapplicable to men and women as they are. To succeed he must, as he plainly saw, begin the work before adverse influences are in operation. How far back this would carry him, an unbeliever in divine revelation must be puzzled to say. That Mr. Owen would not look in that direction for the solution of any problem is very obvious. He was asked, by a note put into his hands as he was about to deliver one of his lectures, whether his scheme would be practicable if the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contained a revelation of the mind and will of God; and, in reply, he distinctly avowed that he did not believe the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God, any more than any other book, or that the writers of these books were any more inspired than other writers of books. "The only difference," says a contemporary, "between Owen's system and Godwin's is that Owen would have goods and children, common, and Godwin would have goods, children and women common."*

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* London Evangelical Magazine, January, 1826.

The comparatively recent attempts in the United States to frame a new social order were so short-lived as not to attract very general attention: yet so conspicuous were the failures as to deserve remembrance. One of them was tried in the southern section of New Jersey, near a place known as Tinton Falls. An eligible portion of land was purchased, well wooded and watered, buildings erected, and their doors opened to the seekers for true social happiness. It was called the *North American Phalanx*. Persons "desiring to aid in establishing the conditions of a new life, and believing association to be a means thereto," were to signify their wish, stating name, age, sex, health, preference of occupation, amount of capital, &c.; and, after a season of probation, they would be received as members. A visitor to the place in September, 1851, says, "No one could fail to be struck with the singular appearance of the people. We first observed two women, one in a 'bloomer' dress, and another with a newspaper, lounging about, and apparently as aimlessly as the inmates of a lunatic hospital, whom they much resembled in every particular. The main house—indeed, all the buildings—are constructed with very little regard to taste or convenience. The dining-hall is called 'The Great Joy,' this title being placed conspicuously on the wall. It is used for singing, dancing, eating, preaching. The working-people are divided into groups,—as, 'the washing group,' 'baking group,'

'ironing group,' &c. Each group has its chief, appointed once a year. Each workman is credited with his or her earnings, a nominal price being fixed upon labour, to be adjusted by the earnings of the year. The eating is all done in 'The Great Joy' hall. Tables are set out, each to be occupied by one family or man. The rooms are rented, and closely resemble the rooms of a college in size and general appearance. Bloomer dresses prevail. A lady of some wealth was there as a sojourner, and liked it much,—thinks the great advantage is absence of competition and cheapness of associated labour. Upon our remark, that competition has been the source of some of the most wonderful and useful achievements of science, she replied that it was the parent of ruin and misery. She then referred to the children, who were so happy, living like brothers and sisters,—such a thing as quarrelling or snapping never being seen or heard. We asked how she accounted for this difference between them and other children, to which she answered that it was 'owing to the absence of all restraint. In the world, the natural propensities were curbed, and this irritated and chafed the temper; but here there was a free development of natural propensities; and I am one of those,' she said, 'who believe children are born as good as good can be, and they are corrupted by evil example,' " &c. Mr. Owen was another.

"There was placed over the entrance to one of

the apartments a representation of the head of our Saviour. A man and woman, without any previous avowal of their intentions, pass under this, and, without any religious ceremony, are constituted man and wife. Indeed, there is no religious service of any kind provided for or contemplated. Dancing and music are in the ascendant. The schoolmaster is a Frenchman, and serves also in the capacity of doctor to the establishment."

The experiment (like all others of the kind) was of short continuance. The property was sold at auction; and the occupants dispersed, satisfied, as we should think they must be, that whatever theory of social reform men may devise, and however flattering may be the temporary success of schemes for the alleviation of specific evils, the grand central point from which all must spring, and to which all must converge, is the FAMILY. The state and the church are but the expansion of this original, divinely-constituted social organization, based on laws as unchangeable and irrevocable as the laws of creation, providence and grace.

The latest information we have from New Harmony—that once famous theatre of Mr. Owen's labours—is to the effect that their influence has entirely ceased to be felt there; and though there may be some one or two families, embracing not more than ten or twelve individuals, who are supposed to be disciples of Mr. Owen, they have no proprietorship in the soil, nor do they attempt to

propagate his views. The buildings are still there, but are put to a purpose quite different from that to which they were originally appropriated. The immense hall erected by the Rappites, and used by Mr. Owen for a theatre, is now a pork-house! Some of the most enterprising of Mr. Owen's followers remained in the vicinity, and are proprietors of highly-cultivated farms. Of his grandchildren, several are members of evangelical churches, and others attend Sunday-school and public worship.*

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* The following is extracted from a letter from a gentleman residing near New Harmony, written in reply to our inquiry as to the present condition of the place:—

". . . But little of the large estates of Owen remain in possession of any of his family. The town itself is going back, being far less flourishing than it was twenty years ago. It never had a *growth* of prosperity. There was capital expended foolishly in unproductive ways. The communists themselves brought money with them, and spent it most freely in an attempt to realize beautiful and profitable results. The best implements were purchased, the carefullest modes of culture sedulously pursued, and multiplied experiments tried, and the most costly stock—horses, sheep, cattle, &c.—bought up; but *they* lost all the time; their *labourers*, and SHARPERS who sold to them, became possessors of their money, and by degrees they found their money sinking to a *vanishing point:* their *immeasurably advanced* farming, as it seemed, was making them daily poorer, and had to be stopped. The sequel to this is evident. They began to sell off farms to whoever had the means to purchase; and many of these were advantaged by what the original proprietors had done, and most of the lands are now held by 'well-to-do' farmers.

". . . Of the *society* I know of no fitter term to apply to its course and end than to say it *disintegrated*,—literally fell to

pieces,—some families going here, and others there: so that there are now, perhaps, not a dozen families which belong to the *Owenite* settlers. When the California fever raged, a very large number of the men went out there to seek their fortunes. There was then more *breaking up* among them than at any other period.

"They have always endeavoured to give attention to education,—their common schools being better than the average in small settlements; and the people of New Harmony deserve credit for a larger average of intelligence than most towns similarly situated. But I have found that *skepticism*, or a *tendency* to skepticism, is still discernible in nearly all offshoots of the old stock.

"Evangelical religion is now greatly on the advance in the place. They have a good Methodist Church there, and also an Episcopalian Church. The once very common practice of *Sunday dancing*,* and of making the Sabbath a great day for amusement, is growing into discredit; and perhaps it will not suffer at all in comparison with many other little towns in our State, and particularly towns found upon the banks of our Western rivers.

"Of his *family*, Robert Dale Owen, as you know, is remarkable for his political career, his ministry to Naples, his spiritualistic work, 'Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World,' and by his late patriotic and emancipation appeals; David Dale Owen will ever be remembered for his 'Contributions to Geology;' and Richard Dale Owen is an officer in the United States Army. They are all earnest in their patriotism."

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* We are assured upon very good authority that our correspondent is misinformed upon this point, and also that the present population of New Harmony is not inferior in intelligence and respectability to any village in the entire Western country

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. OWEN PROPOSES TO INTRODUCE HIS SYSTEM INTO MEXICO—HIS RECEPTION AT THE MEXICAN CAPITAL—HIS SCHEME FRUSTRATED—RETURNS TO THE UNITED STATES—HAS A PEACE COMMISSION TO ENGLAND—LABOURS AT STOCKPORT—BECOMES A SUNDAY LECTURER—CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES—OTHER METHODS OF LESSENING SOCIAL BURDENS—LABOUR EXCHANGE—THE BAZAAR-MEETING AT BIRMINGHAM—FAILURE OF THE PLAN—MR. OWEN'S GENEROUS CONDUCT—HIS PREJUDICES AS A POLITICAL ECONOMIST—BEFRIENDS TRADES-UNIONS—HIS SINGULAR EQUANIMITY.

BUT new light seemed again to dawn on Mr. Owen's intricate path. The way was opened for the introduction of his system into a country in which his schemes would be likely to encounter less prejudice than among us. The Mexican Government had made a grant to certain parties of an immense tract of land, now included within the bounds of Texas; and it is said they applied to Mr. Owen, who had then returned to England, to aid them in forming a plan for colonizing it; and he, of course, recommended his own system, and drew up a memorial to the Mexican Government, setting forth its advantages, and promising, as usual, the regeneration of the race if it were adopted.

Furnished with letters of introduction to their chief authorities and others, Mr. Owen embarked in November, 1828, for the Mexican capital. On his arrival he was greeted with the hospitality of an English resident merchant, who was largely interested in the grant, and took a lively interest in all Mr. Owen's plans. He was soon admitted to an audience by the President of the republic, who had already been apprised of his project by letters from London; and, without any preliminaries, his excellency informed Mr. Owen that a grant of land one hundred and fifty miles broad, and stretching along the whole frontier between Mexico and the United States, was at his service for a full development of his social system. This princely offer was at once accepted; and the only inquiry was, how soon it could receive the necessary confirmation. He was assured that no needless delay should attend its passage through Congress, and, further, that the supposed obstacles which he feared might arise from the laws of the country on the subject of religion should be seasonably removed.

Under these high assurances, Mr. Owen returned to the United States to await the movements of the Mexican authorities; but, a revolution in the government occurring just at that juncture, the engagements with Mr. Owen, and all the bright new hopes he had built upon them, were swept into the vortex.

It is not a little surprising with what facility Mr. Owen, notwithstanding his erratic and visionary notions, made his way to the ear and confidence of men in power. It would be less surprising in our country, where there is very little official reserve or ceremony; but he was equally successful in the most aristocratic courts of Europe. While in Mexico, he had won the good will of Mr. Poinsett, the American minister at that court, and obtained flattering letters from him to our government, then administered by General Jackson. He seems, on one occasion, to have assumed the office of a sort of commissioner of peace between our country and Great Britain. What points required adjustment, or what methods were proposed to accomplish it, we are not informed. It would seem, however, that he succeeded in obtaining letters from Mr. Van Buren, then Secretary of State, to several foreign ambassadors; that he soon after sailed for England; that Lord Aberdeen, the Foreign Secretary, received him with favour; and, as Mr. Owen claims, negotiations were at once entered upon which "terminated in a settlement of all the national differences."

About this time there was a great strike in the populous manufacturing town of Stockport, which lasted nearly six months. Mr. Owen, who was regarded as the prophet of the particular form of socialism which was appropriate to the particular evil which strikes are organized to remedy, fre-

quently came down to confer with his numerous disciples, who, at different times, reared two edifices in which to propagate his method of cure.

Recently the working population of that same town have been no ordinary sufferers by the suspension of work in consequence of the Southern rebellion in the United States; and yet they have been patient when to be patient means something. No call was now made for empirical reformers. Crime is continually decreasing; and the influence of social philosophy has left scarcely a trace on the popular mind that it ever was broached there; and the two edifices raised to propagate it are converted to far different uses.

Mr. Owen had now attained an age at which, if ever, the mind acts with steady and wholesome vigour. Having failed in the schemes to which he had devoted the marrow of his manhood, we might suppose a calm review of his career would have led him to doubt the soundness of his theories. His fortune had been considerably reduced by the liberality of his contributions to various enterprises in which he had been more or less interested; and, though his faith in the perfectibility of the human race under his proposed arrangement was not impaired, he now contracted the scale of his efforts, and became a Sunday lecturer to working-men. That day was selected, as he said, for two reasons: first and chiefly, because it was a leisure day with labourers; and, secondly, because it afforded an op-

portunity to encounter and, if possible, overcome what he regarded as a prejudice highly injurious to the interests of mankind. The Lord's day being set apart for religious uses, the appropriation of any portion of it to mere secular purposes would excite opposition from religionists of every class; and to bring them into odious notoriety would, as he thought, promote human welfare. He commenced his lectures. The opposition which was made occasioned him some inconvenience; but he finally purchased a chapel, and pursued his plan undisturbed.

His attention was also given to a plan by which to make labour, or its product, an exchangeable commodity. To propagate his views, a weekly journal was established, called "THE CRISIS,"— a title indicating the near approach of some great epoch in human affairs. The engagement in this new scheme for remedying what he regarded as social evils was a tacit confession that the world was not prepared for the "communistic" system, with its endless parallelograms and slides. And, indeed, Mr. Owen and his followers were ready to admit that the passions and prejudices of men are too stubborn to yield to mechanical pressure. It was now proposed to organize co-operative societies, as they were called, and to open what were termed co-operative stores, from which the members could obtain the leading articles required for domestic purposes at wholesale prices. The saving thus effected, it was thought, might become a capital on

which to found communities after the Owen pattern. So far as such co-operation lessened the expense of living, checked the undue use of credit, and promoted economical habits, it was in a good degree beneficial. To what extent the system prevailed, or what occasioned its failure, we are not informed. That it did not begin to fulfil the expectations of its promoters is all that, for the present purpose, we need to know.*

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* In August, 1863, there were five hundred and twenty-one such co-operative societies in Great Britain, with ninety thousand four hundred and fifty-eight members, holding property to the value of nearly three millions of dollars. There had been paid for goods over ten millions of dollars, and more than eleven millions received. Of one of them it is said, "They weave their own stuffs, make their own shoes, sew their own garments, grind their own corn, and slaughter their own cattle. They buy the purest sugar and the best tea,"—and, of course, the men of whom they buy must be honest. In connection with some of these societies a well-stocked library and reading-room may be found, supplied with metropolitan and provincial newspapers, and with most of the magazines and reviews. "Here may be seen as many as fifty readers, chuckling over Thackeray or Dickens, musing over Wordsworth or Tennyson, or deep in the study" of some system of political economy. The free discussion of topics of public interest is encouraged, and opportunities enjoyed for friendly chat, or more formal debate, as may be desired. We can readily see in all this tokens of a wholesome advance in the means of moral and social improvement; but we do not recognize any important practical principle of the Owen school. A few thoughtful men resolve to co-operate; *i.e.* to club their money and services for mutual benefit. They subscribe a few pence per week, canvass their shopmates and neighbours, some of whom contribute, but

Almost simultaneously with the co-operative clubs there was started, under Mr. Owen's auspices, a scheme by which to supersede the use of the precious metals and bank-note currency.

A public meeting was held in the summer of 1832 at which it was resolved to form an associa-

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others shake their heads. Having secured a sufficient sum to authorize them to commence business, under the law for organizing industrial and provident societies, a shop is opened for the sale of food. Customers are ready from the families of the members. There is no good will to be bought, no money spent in flaming advertisements or plate-glass windows. With care and honesty, the business grows, and the profits also; and by-and-by a branch establishment is opened. After a while there is seen a plain, substantial central store, with rooms for meetings, recreation and instruction. Co-operation puts an end to puffing, huge sign-boards, and all the clap-trap for drawing custom, the expenses of which all fall, sooner or later, on the purchasers. The co-operative working-man trades on his own capital, with his own money, at his own store.

One of the most successful of these institutions commenced with forty working-men in Rochdale, who raised among themselves one hundred and twenty-five dollars. With this they purchased stock, which a neighbouring shopkeeper sneeringly said he could carry away in a wheelbarrow. Their weekly sales were soon counted by thousands of dollars; and out of the profits a dividend of five per cent. was made to the shareholders, besides a large sum devoted to a library and reading-room.

We are inclined to believe that a more generous encouragement of efforts among the laborious classes in our country to improve their temporal condition is very desirable. Our savings-institutions have been of incalculable advantage, and provident associations of various kinds have served a good purpose; but their influence is comparatively limited.

tion the object of which should be to "employ beneficially and educate usefully all who are unemployed and uneducated in the British Empire;" language which sufficiently denotes the paternity of the project. One of a series of measures proposed for adoption was that which we just now incidentally mentioned,—viz.: the establishment of a depot, in the nature of a bank, at which should be received clothing, provisions and other property, and also services of every description; all to be exchanged for an equivalent in labour. So that, when a man earned a dollar, he should receive what was termed a "labour-note," which was evidence that a dollar was due to him for labour, and that note should purchase a dollar's worth of whatever was for sale at the depot. But, as these notes would not pass in the business-world, another measure was proposed,—viz.: to establish a bank for the express purpose of converting these "labour-notes" into the currency of the country. The success of this complex proceeding, it was conceded, must "depend entirely upon the most pure faith and honour." How these rare qualities were to be engrafted on such a stock as *man*—writhing and groaning (as he was, in Mr. Owen's view) under the tyranny of religious bigotry and prejudice, and forced to be what he is without any agency or responsibility of his own—is not disclosed. To the projector's eye, the whole process was perfectly plain and easy; and he did not hesitate to predict

that it would supplant all other mediums of exchange, and revolutionize the business-usages of the world!

The experiment was made. The "Bazaar" was stocked with deposits of all kinds. "Labour-notes" were in brisk circulation. After a few months had elapsed, a large meeting was held at Birmingham, which Mr. Owen attended. There it was determined to enlarge the scale of operations, and have a central depot in London, with branches in all parts of Great Britain and Ireland. Just at this time the proprietor of "the Bazaar"—a professed disciple of Mr. Owen—submitted a claim for rent. Mr. Owen supposed the premises were free; and, rather than pay seven or eight thousand dollars (which was the sum demanded), he removed the depot temporarily to another part of the city. Before reopening it, however, it was determined to avoid the evils which had already become apparent in its management, and to admit none as members of the association without evidence of their good character; but in the course of less than six months the wheels were blocked again. The inefficiency or inexperience of the managers, the withholding of promised capital, and the frequent removals, were among the assigned causes; while the effect was to bring censure on Mr. Owen as the chief promoter of the scheme. Forgetting his large sacrifices of time and money to serve their interest, the working-men ungraciously discarded him, and de-

termined to take the institution into their own hands. Nor was this all. He had stipulated, when consenting to act as chief manager, that no expense or risk should devolve on him in any event. But it was found, on winding up the concern, that by the surreptitious removal of deposits, the losses incident to removal, and the depreciation of stock, there was a deficiency of upwards of twelve thousand dollars; and when it was represented to Mr. Owen that it was through confidence in him personally, as the prominent actor in the business, that many persons had been led to make deposits, whose distress and even ruin would ensue if the loss were not made up, he assumed and paid the whole amount! Such generous, honourable conduct makes us almost lose sight of his vanity and credulity.

It was not strange that Mr. Owen's warmest sympathies were excited in behalf of the "working-classes," as they were called. The associations of the most prosperous part of his life were with them. The rapid accumulation of wealth had enabled him to serve their interests at a time when the laws of society kept him at a respectful distance from the aristocracy. It is in this anomalous position that we find a key to many of the perplexing problems of his life. As his own wealth was, to a considerable extent, the result of industry or mechanical skill and application to business, he seemed to regard those who acquired it by inheritance, or commerce, or financiering skill, as iron-heeled op-

pressors. He termed them the "unproductive classes." And he now wrought himself up to the belief that it had become his mission to resist the obvious tendency of capital and machinery to crush the industrious or productive classes. It seemed to be quite out of his power to apprehend the relation of the different interests of society; nor was it his habit to look at the bearing of those inexorable laws under which deficiencies and redundancies are made mutually compensatory, and discords are wrought into perfect harmony. He might have learned, one would think, from the machinery which he was so skilful to improve and to employ, that a desired force is often produced by opposing agencies; but his mind worked like a steamship with only one available paddle-wheel, and round and round within the circle of his own dogmas and principles, he went again and again. All this was not solely the consequence of skeptical views; for he expressly recognizes a "supreme intelligence which directs all things within the universe to produce the best possible ultimate results." It was rather from the absence of that moral and intellectual equipoise which he lost at the outset of his career, and which is absolutely essential to a safe leader in public reforms of any kind.

To demonstrate the current of his sympathy, he joined himself to what were termed "Trades-Unions;" and when these were organized into the "National Consolidated Trades-Union," he was

placed at the apex, under the title of grand master, but soon found it an undesirable position, and left it.

In 1839, Mr. Owen was presented by the prime minister to the queen, then recently crowned, as the bearer of an address from the "Congress of the Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists;" which was pronounced an offence against public decency and national feeling.*

It may not be irrelevant in this connection to allude briefly to an event of considerable public interest at the time, and which exhibits in striking contrast the *real* and the *supposed* influence of Mr. Owen over those with whom he so warmly sympathized.

A combination of a certain class of labourers had been formed; and, to enforce a petition which had been presented to Parliament, a public procession was proposed, to which the government objected. It was a time of unusual excitement, and many circumstances conspired to make a rigid observance of law and order of the first necessity. Mr. Owen's connection with the "Trades-Union" party being well known, he volunteered to assure the authorities that if no steps were taken to prevent the procession from taking the route which had been interdicted, the public peace should not be disturbed. But it turned out that his authority to make such a stipulation was not recognized by

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* London Ch. Obs., Sept. 1839, p. 574.

the malcontents. They took their own way, and suffered for it. We can more easily account for Mr. Owen's overestimate of his influence than for the credulity of a shrewd minister of state in indorsing it.

One would think that his experiments—involving already, as some of his friends assert, an absolute loss to himself of two hundred thousand dollars—had so clearly shown the fallacy of his theories that Mr. Owen would modify, if he did not abandon, them. But, so far from this, their failure seems to have invigorated his confidence in them. He now regarded the world as a vast lunatic-asylum, the inmates of which it was his province to restore to reason. This universal lunacy he thought was abundantly proved "by the principles and practices of all nations, emanating from the lunatic idea that men form their own character or mind or conduct." Thus we have, in the old man of eighty, a recast, in a broader and deeper form, of a crude notion arrogantly conceived before he was fifteen!

No one can review Mr. Owen's career up to this point without being impressed with the singular equanimity and good humour with which he bore the rebuffs and provocations that he constantly encountered. It is quite possible that in that respect his theory of human irresponsibility may have been of great practical advantage to him. It may have led him to take in good part what to others would have been very offensive. As to

men of influence, his personal friends, who strenuously opposed his views, he regarded them as the victims of circumstances, entirely passive in the formation of their character, and, of course, not to be blamed for their ignorance or prejudice. And when the infirmities of age came upon him, he escaped the morose and censorious temper which old persons so often indulge. His benevolent wish was that "his fellow-creatures were in possession of half as much happiness" as fell to his lot.

CHAPTER XV.

LAST EFFORT TO GAIN PARLIAMENTARY FAVOUR—LORD BROUGHAM'S EULOGY—A NEW PERIODICAL—OFFERS HIMSELF FOR A SEAT IN PARLIAMENT—ATTENDS SEVERAL PUBLIC MEETINGS, AND ADDRESSES THEM—EMBRACES SPIRITUALISM—PUBLISHES HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY—CONGRESS OF ADVANCED MINDS—MR. OWEN OUT OF PLACE AT A MEETING FOR THE RELIEF OF CERTAIN CLASSES OF CHILDREN—RESORTS AGAIN TO THE PRESS—PROPOSES A CONGRESS OF ALL NATIONS—VISITS LIVERPOOL—ATTENDS A MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE—A TOUCHING SCENE—REVISITS HIS BIRTHPLACE—DEATH—FUNERAL.

ALTHOUGH he had passed into comparative obscurity, Mr. Owen was by no means inactive. A petition from him, setting forth, in stereotyped form, his theory of social evils and their remedy, and praying for the appointment of a committee to investigate the subject, was presented to the House of Lords, in the summer of 1851, by Lord Brougham, whose personal friendship prompted him to be very tolerant of his whims. Indeed, his lordship was quite in sympathy with one of the most radical tenets of Mr. Owen's faith.* In introducing Mr.

* It was a remark made by him in April, 1825, in his inaugural speech as Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow,—viz.:

Owen's petition, Lord Brougham is reported to have said that though the petitioner held peculiar opinions, he was a great public benefactor; *for* he was the founder of infant-schools.* If this was his only or principal claim to such a distinction, its invalidity has been already shown. One of the periodicals of the day alludes to the petition as evidence that Mr. Owen still lived, and refers in flattering terms to the success of the New Lanark experiment, and to the world's indebtedness to him for the system of infant training, while it pronounced all his other experiments failures. In replying to the article, Mr. Owen does not decline the eulogistic reference to himself, but denies that his plans have ever been fairly tried. The House of Lords, at Lord Brougham's request, allowed the petition to be read; but no committee was appointed. The same fate befell two or three other petitions which followed in rapid succession.

Two years later (1853), Mr. Owen commenced the publication of a new periodical, called the "*National Quarterly*," of the longevity of which we have no record. This periodical was fruitful of letters to persons of rank or high official position, apprising them of the uncertainty of his life,

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that man has no control over his belief,—that drew from the Rev. Dr. Wardlaw, a distinguished Scotch clergyman, two sermons to show that his lordship's doctrine inevitably subverts all moral responsibility.—*Lond. Evang. Mag.*, 1826, p. 17.

* Athenæum, July 19, 1857.

and of the danger that the "new world of goodness, wisdom and happiness" would never be found if he, the only human being possessed of the secret of organizing it, should die before the work was done.

His ambition to obtain a seat in Parliament was also kindled anew in his old age. In offering himself to the electors of a particular borough, in 1852, he claimed their suffrages because, among other things, he "had invented and introduced rational infant-schools." Three years later he made a general offer of himself to any county, city, or borough that would elect him, promising to use his best endeavours to change the practices of the civilized world, and introduce a system by which the perfect and permanent happiness of the human race should be secured. Whether the parties addressed were indifferent to the welfare of the world, or distrustful of Mr. Owen's scheme as having power to advance it, we are left to conjecture.

On New Year's Day, 1855, a "great meeting," summoned by Mr. Owen, and to be regarded as "the commencement of the true millennial state of human existence," was held in a public lecture-room in London. To give present effect to the measure, there were to be various scenic representations, one of which was designed to show what the world had been from the creation till that time, contrasted with what it would be if his views were adopted. This first glimpse of the new creation of

man, it is said, "first stunned and then electrified" the beholders; but we are not informed of any practical results.

On the first and fourteenth of May and on the thirtieth of July following, public meetings were held, at one of which he read the replies he would have made to questions that might have been put by a committee which Parliament might have appointed if his petition had been granted. When this fictitious examination was finished, the imaginary committee reported that Mr. Owen had made out his case,—obviated all objections and removed every difficulty. These public meetings were succeeded by the publication of the "*Millennial Gazette*," which was continued for three years.

At what period in Mr. Owen's career he became a spiritualist is not clear. No intimation is given in his autobiography of the time or means of his conversion. It is incidentally introduced in connection with a reference to the Duke of Kent's "departure into the sphere of spirits." He anticipates a possible objection to such a phrase, which he meets by asserting that he has the evidence of his senses "that spirits occupy space and communicate with their friends on earth in their natural character as when in full life, except that they are not visible." It was in 1849, thirty years after the duke's death, that his "good and kind and enlightened spirit took the first opportunity that a medium for such communications offered to commune with

him." "His whole spirit-proceeding with me," (says Mr. Owen) "has been most beautiful,—making his own appointments, meeting me on the day, hour and minute he named; and never in one instance (and these appointments were numerous as long as I had mediums near me on whom I could depend) has this spirit not been punctual to the minute he had named."*

Mr. Owen represents the incredulity of learned men on this subject as analogous to that which Galileo encountered when he propounded the theory of the earth's motion. He ascribes it to a want of moral courage that men do not openly avow the truth of which he is sure they must be convinced. How they can resist the evidence which has been so plainly exhibited to his senses, he cannot conceive.

Besides the visits of the duke's spirit,—which had been particularly welcome because of their sympathy in the flesh,—he had received a call from the spirits of Jefferson and Franklin; and, indeed, the three had paid him a joint visit, and made most important communications, which, however, he does not disclose. At one time, he assures us, the three came in company with the spirits of Channing, Chalmers, Shelley, Byron (a new association, certainly, for some of them), and in the same company were several of the old prophets and eight

* Autobiography, vol. i. p. 229.

of Mr. Owen's deceased relatives. It would be scarcely respectful to the reader to introduce such paragraphs were it not needful to a complete exhibition of the peculiarities of Mr. Owen's temperament and tendencies.* It may be that advancing years had somewhat impaired the vigour of his mind, and made him susceptible of delusions of which he would have been ashamed at an earlier period. But we are rather inclined to think that, as his active life waned, and his hold upon the popular sympathies became sensibly weaker, he instinctively groped for something more stable. His immaterial nature had been robbed of its appropriate aliment, and in its famished and desperate extremity it was prepared to accept whatever might bear the remotest resemblance to the craved supply.

In the fall of 1856, Mr. Owen completed a volume of his autobiography, which he published early in 1857. He prefixed to it a characteristic introduction, in which, under the form of a dialogue, he fashions the suggestions of an "Old Friend," and the queries of an inquirer, to suit his preconceived answer. A second volume appeared soon after, which was rather an appendix to the first than a continuation of it. Had both been

* "Beginning his career by flouting the Bible, he ends it by subscribing to all the supernatural pretensions which modern brain-sickness has conjured up: in a word, the young skeptic has become in old age a convert to spirit-rapping."—*Athenæum*, May, 1860.

suppressed, the world would have known less of his weaknesses, and perhaps have given him undue credit. When Napoleon Bonaparte was stationed at Valenciennes as a subordinate officer of an artillery-regiment, he wrote a prize dissertation on the question, "What are the principles and constitutions by which mankind can obtain the greatest amount of happiness?" The Academy of Lyons awarded the premium to the unknown author. The essay was not printed; but, after Napoleon became emperor, he mentioned the incident to one of his chief counsellors, who forthwith sought for the manuscript and brought it to him. He read a few pages of it, and then hastily committed it to the flames. He probably saw at a glance the crudeness of his early opinions. That the "principles and constitutions" he actually adopted did not secure to mankind a large measure of happiness, those who are familiar with the history of his times need not be told.

In May, 1857, there assembled at London what was called a "Congress of the Advanced Minds of the World," the sessions of which continued daily from the twelfth to the fifteenth day of the month. A full report of the transactions was published; but the minds of the outside world seem not to have been perceptibly advanced by them.

It was but a few days after the adjournment of this congress that a conference was held in London, under the auspices of the prince consort, for the

purpose of preventing the premature withdrawal of children from school. The cupidity of parents prompted them to put their children to labour as soon as they could earn any thing, to the detriment of both their physical and intellectual nature. The overweening self-conceit of Mr. Owen induced him to regard this movement as designed to counteract the influence of his "Congress of Advanced Minds;" and he was confirmed in this impression by their declining to invite his attendance and co-operation. He had been actively and prominently engaged (as all advanced minds and enlightened philanthropists well knew) in preparing the public mind for a radical change in the whole routine of education, and for the introduction of a system under which the whole race should attain to the highest measure of virtue and happiness. He had, moreover, "invented" infant-schools,—"the first practical step ever taken towards the introduction of a rational system for forming and governing the human race to lead it to the millennial state of existence upon earth." And here was a meeting of the professed friends of education, and yet he was not called to assist, nor was his name even mentioned in the whole proceedings, till near the close, when his attempt to acquaint them with "the most important discovery ever made by man to man" was foiled, and he was obliged to content himself with simply drawing from one of the members of the conference a testimony to the beautiful sight he had once beheld at

New Lanark! This repugnance to admit him to any part in their counsels or debates, Mr. Owen ascribed to "overwhelming fears:" so that perhaps the most successful appeal to the conference would have been less gratifying to his vanity than the thought that the "phalanx of learning, talents, station, and power present at the conference" stood in awe of "one unsupported old man."* There was not an absolute refusal to allow him to speak; and the presence of some of his personal friends, and the character of the members of the conference, as well as the generous sacrifices he had made to promote what he regarded as the only true system of education, would shield him from the slightest personal disrespect. A few sentences which he uttered were indistinctly heard, when a question of order was raised. Then a suggestion that the gentleman would have to take another opportunity, followed by a hasty adjournment, indicated but too plainly that the enthusiastic innovator was out of place.†

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* Autobiography, vol. i. p. 240.

† "While we are content that an amiable and benevolent man shall have friends in his old age to surround and to greet him, and to minister (conscientiously, it is to be hoped) to the veteran's fancy that the stream of his long life's efforts has not wholly lost itself in the sand, how can we avoid looking back to former epochs, former addresses, former experiments, to former investments of philanthropic hope and philanthropists' money, asking ourselves, the while, How much has been achieved? In such inevitable inquiry there is nothing of the

The press, however, was always an available instrument; and at the close of the year Mr. Owen addressed a characteristic letter "to the potentates of the earth," in which he reiterates some of the fundamental principles of his system, and proposes a congress of nations to be held in London at a day sufficiently distant to allow China, Japan and Burmah to be represented by delegates.

After this time, with the exception of a paper on "governing the human race without punishment," which was read before the "Society for the Promotion of Social Science," Mr. Owen withdrew from public observation. In October, 1858, he was tempted by the occurrence of the second meeting of the society just mentioned to attempt a journey to Liverpool, and no remonstrance of his friends was of any avail. Upon his arrival he was forced to take to his bed at once. But his restless desire to attend the meeting supplied an almost supernatural energy. He was so weak as to occupy two hours in dressing. He was then carried in a sedan-chair to the place of meeting, and a position on the platform was assigned to him. Lord Brougham, himself then fully fourscore, was pre-

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mocker; but the answer to our question should be deeply pondered by every one disposed to devote himself as singly and unselfishly as we believe Mr. Robert Owen has done to the service of humanity."—*London Athenæum's Review of Robert Owen's Address to the Human Race on his Eighty-Fourth Birthday*, July 15, 1854.

sent, took his old trembling friend—seven years his senior—by the arm, stepped forward a foot or two, and asked that he might be heard. The request was cheerfully granted. It could not be refused. But he was unable to complete the first sentence of his speech! His lordship finished it for him, clapped his hands in token of applause, as he would do to please a little child, and, turning to the attendants, told them to take him back to bed. A more touching and instructive scene is seldom witnessed. And here, if not before, the last of the band of sincere and steady friends were compelled to confess "that they saw the stream lose itself in the sand instead of swelling the ocean."*

After a fortnight's confinement, his strength returned so far as to allow him to journey to his birthplace, Newtown. He took lodgings at a hotel, but resolutely refused stimulants, which were ordered by the medical attendant, and which it was thought would have prolonged his life. He declined to see the rector of the church in the capacity of a clergyman, but suggested some plan for the regeneration of Newtown, and requested him to confer with the authorities about it. His strength gradually declined, and on the morning of November 17, 1858, he died. One of his sons held his hand, but could not tell the moment when he

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* Athenæum, May, 1860, p. 612.

ceased to breathe. About twenty minutes before his death, he distinctly said, "Relief has come."

After death his body was removed to the house where he was born, and thence to the ground in which his parents were buried. Business and amusement were suspended on the day of the funeral; all classes of the townspeople, and some friends from abroad, mingled in the procession; the beautiful and sublime service from the ritual of the Church of England was read, and the "dust returned to the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it."

CHAPTER XVI.

REVIEW.

NO one can review the brief sketch we have given of Robert Owen's aims and achievements without conceding to him many remarkable qualities. He must be ranked among what are called *self-made* men. Considering the singular disadvantages under which his early years were passed, we cannot but admire the energy and self-reliance with which he entered upon the active business of life. His very limited opportunities of education, and the heterogeneous influences to which he was subjected, were ill fitted to give a semblance of symmetry to his character; and hence the strange mixture of crudeness and generosity, of radicalism and philanthropy, which it exhibits. While his conceptions of social improvement were often good, and his devotion to them almost heroic, they rarely issued in any positive advantage to himself or others.

Large desires to do good to men are not unfrequently combined with weaknesses; but these weaknesses are rarely observed in those who have lofty

Christian aims and principles in predominance: or when they are, like the imperfections of a great painting, they are lost in our admiration of the design and general effect. What Robert Owen's spirit lacked was some "principle comprehensive enough, deep enough and high enough to include all departments of action and to inspire them with sacred energy. *Christianity alone supplies this.* This gives life, tone, relish and character. Without it the fibre is soft, the purpose vacillating, the whole existence abortive. Some men the moment you approach them offer no moral solidity to your touch. You saw some interesting quality, and thought you had a manhood there; but when you rested an ounce of strain upon it, it gave way. By such a one nothing is seized with a firm grasp, nor followed with a constant plan."

It has been well observed that "a healthy mind, in its sober reasonings upon problems of social economy, must always feel restrained from positive conclusions by the fear that he may not possess all the elements that are needful to solve them."

Mr. Owen's confidence that his "new views" were right, and that they would ultimately revolutionize the world, was not to be impaired by argument or weakened by opposition. It was to this earnest conviction that we must ascribe much of the apparent success that attended his efforts. Without fortune or influential friends, he made his way to

the favour, and even intimacy, of noblemen, statesmen, scholars and philosophers.

His ingenuity and extraordinary capacity for business obtained for him an enviable distinction among the leading manufacturers of Great Britain; and he not only amassed a large fortune, but brought into activity the capital of others. Few men have evinced more sagacity or shown more skill in the employment of resources than he. The simple statement made by his biographers, that he so managed the New Lanark mills as to realize from their product in four years an actual profit of seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and that he had the means to buy out his partners for five hundred and seventy thousand dollars, abundantly shows that he had not only rare energy, but singular economical and administrative qualities.

He appears to have had naturally winning manners and an uncommon power of conciliating the good will of others. We cannot otherwise account for the ease with which he ingratiated himself with persons of all classes and conditions, embracing the opposite extremes of society. There seemed to have been an enthusiasm and sincerity about him which readily won attention and disarmed prejudice; and the speciousness of his plans, coupled as they were with the encouragement of industry and thrift and the prospective alleviation of the acknowledged evils of idleness and poverty, forbade a repulse even from those who might regard him

as only an "amiable enthusiast." It is no wonder that, under the potent influence of an idiosyncrasy so marked and radical as his, he should regard all those who listened to his discourses and did not at once ridicule and denounce his "views," as in some sort sympathizers with them, if not actually embracing them. Add to this the frequent testimonials he received, and the deference paid to his opinions by men of note in his own country, and still more on the continent and in the United States, and we shall be at no loss to account for the strength of his convictions that he was the great apostle of the world's social reformation.

Those who think that the principles he advocated took root in the public mind, and that many of the improvements which have since been observed in the social condition of the same classes of the community are the fruit of his labours, admit that his own schemes failed, and that "if he had lived two centuries, scheming all the time at his own nimble rate, his enterprises could never have succeeded, because they were founded on an imperfect view of the human being for whose benefit he lived and would have died."

The Duke of Saxe-Weimar, who had much respect, and even admiration, for Mr. Owen, and to whose visit at New Harmony we have before referred, tarried there two weeks; and "the account he gives of the opinions and expectations then entertained by him are so precisely true in the

judgment of those who knew him, and who could appreciate his benevolent motives, as to stand for a general description of the state of his mind at all periods of his life."* "He looks to nothing else," says the duke, "than to renovate the world, to extirpate all evil, to banish all punishment, *to create like views and like wants*, and to guard against all conflicts and hostilities." And so he went on to the end. At every moment his plans were going to be tried in some country or other, which would bring over all other countries. Everybody who heard him with interest and treated him with respect was counted as a disciple; and those who openly opposed or even quizzed him were regarded with a good-natured smile, and spoken of as people who "had very good eyes, but who had accidentally wandered into a wood, where they could not see their way for the trees." He was the same placid, hopeful, happy man even down to old age, believing and expecting whatever he wished; always gentlemanly and courteous in his manners; always on the most endearing terms with his children, who loved to make him (as they said) "the very happiest old man in the world;" always a gentle bore in his dogmas and expectations; always palpably right in his descriptions of human misery; always thinking he had proved a thing when he had asserted it in the force of his own conviction;

* London Daily News.

and always really meaning something more rational than he had actually expressed. It was said, jestingly, that though "he *lived* in parallelograms he *argued* in circles;" but this is rather too favourable a description of one who did not argue at all, nor, indeed, know what an argument means. His mind never fairly met any other mind,—though towards the close of his life he had a strange idea that it did, and that, too, by means of spirit-mediums. Yet, in the very same breath in which he insisted upon the reality of his communications with departed spirits, he maintained that the new-found power was "all electricity."

There can be no doubt that the "new views" of society "were regarded with curiosity and interest by many persons of high standing and wide influence; but there is no instance disclosed in his autobiography, nor in any memoir or sketch of Mr. Owen that has fallen under our eye, in which a candid and studious examination of his system by any intelligent man or body of men resulted in an indorsement of it as philosophical or practicable." Perhaps he never went before Parliament with his schemes under more favourable circumstances than in 1819, when his especial friend (as he calls him), Sir William de Crespigny, moved for a select committee to inquire into his plans, and report. Lord Archibald Hamilton seconded the motion, and said that "he had formed the most favourable opinion of the salutary effects likely to result from

the extension of this plan; and the boldness and confidence with which a number of benevolent individuals had united in maintaining, with Mr. Owen, that the plan would prove infallibly certain in its results, had imposed upon a great portion of the community, and induced them to favour, without examination, one of the wildest and most unexampled pieces of empiricism that had sprung into existence since the South Sea bubble." In the course of the debate it was said that a "more fantastic scheme had not been conceived by the most renowned Arabian story-tellers in their most dreamy moods," and that "under the proposed system society would become one vast spinning-jenny."

Had not Mr. Owen been ignorant of almost every principle by which the affairs of men are governed, he could not have assumed that the greatest of all stimulants that influence the human mind—moral responsibility—could be taken away and yet men act just as they should. "It was natural," observed Lord Hamilton, "that a benevolent man like Mr. Owen" (a "simple-minded projector," as Lord Brougham styled him), "with only one idea in his head, should be an enthusiast in its favour, and should be blind to any consequences. But how such a fantastic scheme should have gained the approbation of the gentlemen of a wealthy and enlightened county,* and been seriously pressed on

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* The county of Lanark, from which the petition emanated.

the attention of Parliament, is one of the wonders of our time, which posterity will be slow to believe."*

In contemplating such a life as we have sketched, the absence of the needful counterpoise, of which we have spoken, is painfully apparent. It is impossible otherwise to account for his sympathy with such crudities and extravagancies as Mr. Owen entertained during the later years of his life. At the same time, we must admit that it was but the legitimate fruit of the presumption and arrogance of his childhood and youth. Had he accepted in a docile spirit the teachings of human experience, illustrating and corroborating, as they do, the divine oracles, he would have "walked in the light," and his life would have been a light to guide others. Thus, while we abstain from any harsh judgment of the motives which governed him, we may enter a caveat against the adoption of his principles.

This phenomenon of an unbalanced mind is by no means rare;† and its occurrence is often—per-

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* Edinburgh Annual Register, 1819, p. 241.

† Since these pages were written, a very respectable London publishing-house has given us a volume, entitled "*The Fractional Family: being the First Part of Spirit-Mathematics-Matter. By Arthur Young.*" "The fractional family means man, wife and children. The integral family means a few hundred of such fractions in combined action, which (according to the author) is the true system. Mr. Young is, then, a co-operationist, as was the late Robert Owen, whose name is associated with the parallelogram; but this was only because his associated families were to live in a large square of buildings.

haps generally—connected with benevolent dispositions: yet we cannot doubt that in many instances its consequences are seen in the most terrible crimes.

Mr. Owen was ambitious, and his ambition prompted him to seek what he regarded as the good of his fellow-men. No dishonourable action is recorded of him, and his private life was free from reproach. Yet, however ample the folds of our charity, a candid review of his career, upon his own showing, leaves no room to doubt that "a deceived heart turned him aside," and that his endowments and rare opportunities of usefulness were made unavailable for any great or permanent results by reason of the obliquity of his moral vision. There are certain substantial and cohesive properties essential to the symmetry and strength of human character which cannot exist without a recognition of the revealed will of God as a law of faith and duty, and an unquestioning submission to its authority.

Deduct from our estimate of his life and character whatever such as think least of him may

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Mr. Young regards mathematics as the connecting link of spirit and matter; and he informs us that the object of his book is to exhibit the passional soul-system of man as a trinity in unity of affection,—distributive and sensitive passional attractions in strict correspondence with the trinity in unity of spirit-mathematics-matter. Man rotates upon himself under the influence of the same S.-M.-M. forces which cause the planets to rotate on their axes."—*London Athenæum*, April 16, 1864.

demand, and there is enough left to give him a place among those who have aimed and striven to benefit their fellow-men. He would have done great good had he known how. Or add to such an estimate whatever his most ardent admirers may claim for him, and it will not raise him to the sphere of those who, in a humbler way, have actually accomplished much greater things for mankind.* Looking at the subject from a mere material standpoint, may we not say that the inventor of the telegraph, or even the sewing-machine, takes rank far above him as a benefactor of the race? Ideal benevolence makes more misery than it relieves.

Circumstances exert a prodigious power over human character and destiny; but they act upon our nature *as it is*, and in accordance with fixed and irreversible laws. Whoever seeks to control the ordinary influence of these circumstances to make it more favourable to our moral, intellectual or physical well-being, without recognizing our normal state as subjects of God's government and yet alienated from it, will be disappointed.

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* "So far as I can learn, not a direct trace of his handiwork remains in the community of New Lanark. His philanthropic and liberal plans, of course, left their impress on his times, and in this way may have had some influence; but all the projects he set on foot seem to have melted away. The 'mills' are now carried on just like other mills."—*Extract from a letter to the author, dated Edinburgh*, April 20, 1863.

Education, too, has a wonderful power to mould men; but it must have respect to the qualities it finds already existing, and must conform to the immutable laws to which our moral nature is subject, or it will fail of its end as signally as an attempt to train men to walk on their heads or breathe through their ears. There are processes of agriculture that are determined by the conditions of the soil and the nature of the desired crop, and every thing depends on the skill of the husbandman in their mutual adaptation; but back of those processes and this skill is hidden the productive energy, subject to laws which govern alike the soil, the seed and the sower. And so there are inclinations and tendencies in the hearts of all the children of men, existing antecedently to the exercise of the moral faculties (if not to birth itself), by which the skill of the most accomplished educators is baffled, and which only Omnipotence can control and make subservient to the good of man and the glory of God.

It is the unhappy tendency of our times to lose sight of the fixed, eternal principles on which the moral government of the world is administered, and to recognize, as safe guides in education and opinions, the crude maxims of visionary and self-conceited philosophers. It may be bootless to argue with the apostles of "Secularism,"* which

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* The better-looking title, which has been adopted for "what

has opened a way broad enough and a gate wide enough for the Atheist, the Pantheist, the Rationalist, and the man who denies human responsibility to God, all to pass unchallenged. It may be that, in some of its Protean forms, it will continue to delude and mislead the unwary and unreflecting. At all periods of the world the *rude material* of unbelief is a constant quantity. Its character may be affected by the presence or absence of outward checks, and such repressive influences as in ancient times were exercised by those civil and ecclesiastical polities which can never again be imposed on mankind. The spread of liberty, of action and thought, the enormous expansion of the sphere in which intellect ranges, and, above all, the approximation through the press* of

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is not so much a new phase of infidelity as a compound of its old systems."

* Upwards of eighty thousand copies of Combe's "Constitution of Man" were published in England; it had a wide circulation in our country, and was translated into various foreign languages. "By a liberal bequest, numerous cheap editions were diffused among the people and through schools. Nothing which a cheap press could do to leaven the masses with its principles has been left undone. This is the book to which multitudes of working-men in the old and new countries are indebted for the most popular objections to the doctrine of a divine Providence and of the efficacy of prayer." Fiction, in its most attractive forms, has been employed for the same end. And, above all, cheap periodicals, as the ordinary vehicles of information, have been too often used to loosen the bands of

man to man, and the contact of intellect with intellect, have only quickened and revealed what was before latent.*

The institutions of our country afford the widest scope to these quickening and revealing influences. They tolerate the largest liberty of thought, speech and act that is compatible with public safety and private rights. The barriers we have erected against the tide of immoral and skeptical seducements are very weak and low, and the propagators of error may ply their agencies without let or hindrance. Our systems of public education concern themselves chiefly with the brain, leaving the heart and conscience to be nurtured by other hands. Our Christianity is weakened by divisions and strifes; and the press is the servant alike of truth and error.

In these circumstances, it becomes such as distrust the theories of the modern school of philosophy to be on the alert. Wherever there is ignorance to be enlightened, errors to be exposed and corrected, or pernicious influences to be counteracted, there let there be posted an efficient and appropriate agency for the purpose. And we may take encouragement from the ephemeral existence of these unhappy delusions. The busy and exciting life over which we have glanced is an im-

society and to sap the only sure foundation of personal and public virtue.

* Garbett's "Modern Philosophical Infidelity."

pressive type of the character and doom of all systems of education and reform that derive not their authority from God, contemplate not His glory as their end, and rely not on His blessing for their success.

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