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# BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

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A MANCHESTER PROPHETESS AND FOUNDRRESS OF THE  
AMERICAN SECT OF THE SHAKERS.

BY

### WILLIAM E. A. AXON,

M.R.S.L., F.S.S.

MIEMBRO CORRESPONSAL DE LA SOCIEDAD DE CIENCIAS FÍSICAS  
Y NATURALES DE CARÁCAS.



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*Miembro Corresponsal de la Sociedad de Ciencias físicas y naturales de  
Carúacas.*

(READ 10TH DECEMBER, 1874.)

THE Shakers, whose communistic villages are amongst the curiosities of America, owe their origin to a Manchester woman. Prophets are proverbially unhonoured in their own country. The smoky air of Manchester stifled the religious genius of Ann Lee; the boundless freedom of the New World was needed for its luxuriant growth. On the 29th of February, 1736, the family of John Lee, a blacksmith, living in Toad Lane (a name since euphemized into Todd Street), was increased by the advent of a little stranger, to whom the name of Ann was given.\*

From the fact that she was privately "christened" when six years old, we may perhaps infer that some serious illness threatened her young life. According to Shaker biography,

\* Mr. John Owen has kindly given me the following extracts from the Register of Baptisms at the Cathedral:—1734, April 16, Nancy, d. of John Lees; 1735, Jan. 11, Peter, son of John Lee; 1737, June 12, Betty, d. of John Lee; 1737, Aug. 21, Joseph, s. to John Lees; 1738, April 16, Thomas, s. to John Lees; 1741, May 10, Katherine, d. to John Leigh; 1741, June, Joseph, s. of John Lees, blacksmith; 1742, April 4, William, s. of John Lees; 1742, June 1, ANNE, d. of John Lee, was privately baptized; 1742, Feb. 13, Mary, d. of John Lees, taylor; 1743, Sept. 29, Sara, d. of John and Sarah Lee; 1743, Oct. 9, WILLIAM, s. of John Lees, blacksmith; 1746, May 4, Alice, d. of John Lees; 1749, March 26, George, s. of John Lees, blacksmith. Like the family records of more aristocratic houses, it is difficult to sort out the different branches of the Lees, but the prophetess and her brother are clearly distinguishable.

Ann's parents were hardworking, God fearing folk, who brought up their five sons and three daughters in the best way they could as far as their light allowed them. Another statement would make it appear that the family were better connected than might have been supposed from their poor estate. One of her uncles is said by Brown to have been a sheriff of London and an alderman of "Algate Ward." The same writer states, inaccurately, that General Charles Lee was also her father's brother.

The schoolmaster was not abroad, and children were packed off into the fields or the workroom instead of being sent to master the mysteries of the "three R's." So Ann, we are told, was first employed in a cotton factory, then became a cutter of hatter's fur, and afterwards a cook in the Manchester Infirmary, "where she was distinguished for her neatness, "faithfulness, prudence, and good economy." Her ways were not those of other children, she lacked their keen joyfulness, she was "serious and thoughtful," inclined to religious meditations, and "often favoured with heavenly visions." In 1758 she became a member of a sect called Shakers, who were "under the ministration of Jane and James Wardley, "formerly of the Quaker order," but who had left that body about 1747.

The Manchester Shakers appear to have been a remnant of the "French Prophets," who came into England about 1706. Charles Owen, in a work printed in 1712, alludes to the secret meetings of some "prophets" in Manchester, and to some providential check which they received. In their fits of religious enthusiasm, when the Spirit entered into them, they were seized with violent tremblings, and their contortions gained them the nickname of Shakers. Wardley was a tailor, who removed from Bolton to Cannon Street, where he lived with John Townley a well-to-do bricklayer. Jane Wardley, in the Shaker belief, was "evidently the spirit of John the

“Baptist, or Elias, operating in the female line, to re-prepare the way for the second appearing of Christ, in the order of the female.” The testimony of this woman and her followers, according to what they saw by vision and revelation from God was—“that the second appearing of Christ was at hand, and that the Church was rising in her full and transcendent glory, which would effect the final downfall of antichrist.” Another of the Shakers was John Kattis, who was considered by them to be a good scholar. He did not long retain his faith.\*

Four years after joining this society, which numbered about thirty people, Ann Lee was married. The entry in the Cathedral registry is “1762, Jan. 5, Abraham Standerin, blacksmith, and Ann Lees, married.” James Shepherd and Thomas Hulme, signed as witnesses, but both bride and bridegroom affixed their marks, being unable to write. There is a pencil note in a copy of one of Robert Owen’s publications in the Manchester Free Library, which states that she lived in Church Street, where Phillips’ warehouse now stands. The press mark of this tract is 17316 (63E. 127). The Shaker books, however, state, that after the marriage the young couple lived in the house of the bride’s father in Toad Lane, during the time they remained in England. The Shaker biography gives the husband’s name as Stanley, and states that four children were born unto them, who all died in infancy. To one of these the following entry from the Cathedral Burial Registry no doubt refers: “1766, Oct. 7, Elizabeth, daughter of Abraham Standley.” At the birth of her last child, forceps had to be used, and after the delivery, she lay for several hours apparently dead.† Her husband, it is said, was a drunkard, and treated her unkindly.

In 1766 the Shaker society was joined by John Hocknell,

\* Brown, p. 312.

† *Ibid.*, p. 312.

brother of Mrs. Townley, in whose house Jane Wardley lived. Hocknell was a substantial farmer near Meretown in Cheshire, and being zealous for the new faith, he gathered some of the poorer members into his own house, and there supported them. His wife, Hannah, not relishing this large accession of prophets, complained to her kindred (the Dickins family), and her three brothers sought the assistance of a magistrate, and "had John put into prison at Middlewich, four miles from his own house." He escaped from tribulation without any danger, and was rewarded by the conversion of his wife, who "became a member of society and continued through all the increase of the work, till she departed this life, in America, sound in the faith of the Gospel, A.D. 1797."\* They used frequently to meet "at John Partington's in Mayor-town [Meretown], as they passed and repassed from Manchester to John Hocknell's."

The small band of believers were looking for the Second Advent, and there seems to have been an impression amongst them that the Messiah would appear in the form of a woman. It had been said of old that the Lord would shake not the earth only, but also heaven. "The effects of Christ's first appearing," says the Shaker *Testimony*, "were far from fulfilling those promises in their full extent, for in reality that heaven which was to be shaken, had not yet been built, neither did the appearing of Christ in the form of a man fulfil the desire of all nations. But a second appearing was to be manifested in woman, which completed the desire of all nations, by the revelation of the Mother Spirit in Christ, an emanation from the eternal Mother." Creed these people do not appear to have had, simply a strong conviction that the great day of the Lord was at hand, and that he would reveal himself in the flesh and lead his people to that peace which he had promised them of old.

\* *Testimony*, p. 616.

Amongst this band of simple enthusiasts, the ignorant blacksmith's daughter began to exert a powerful influence. She is described as being of medium height and well-proportioned. Her fair complexion was lit up by blue eyes, and set off by brown chesnut hair, whilst her mild countenance wore an aspect habitually grave. Altogether a solemn-looking, lowly-born, "fair saint." Wifely and motherly cares did not fill up the measure of her life, and the loss of her children may have intensified the morbid enthusiasm to which at all ages she would seem to have been subjected. She was a "seeker after salvation," and, passing through a period of mental struggles, doubts, and perplexities, she "was born into the spiritual kingdom." This new stage of her intellectual history was marked by the evolution of the doctrine, that complete celibacy was the true order of the world and essential to individual salvation. She considered it her duty to cry down the "fleshly lusts which war against the soul," and, according to the Shaker book, was imprisoned in consequence. Although the increase of the population was considered a matter of importance, it is scarcely likely that the constables of Manchester would put the mother of four children into jail for preaching celibacy, and accordingly we find it stated further on that the charge against them was that of sabbath-breaking. There can be no doubt that the dancing, shouting, shaking, "speaking with new tongues," and all the other wild evidences of religious fervour exhibited by Ann and her fellow-believers, would be exceedingly distasteful to her neighbours and lead to occasional displays of brutal intolerance.

It may not unnaturally be asked why, if Ann Lee was the woman chosen to proclaim the gospel of celibacy, she should herself have entered into the bonds of matrimony. She became a Shaker in 1758, and a wife in 1762. Clearly she was then unconscious of her great mission. This is confessed,

for we are told that, although "from her childhood she had "great light and conviction of the sinfulness and depravity "of human nature," yet, "not having attained that knowledge "of God, which she early desired . . . she, being "prevailed upon by the earnest solicitations of her relations "and acquaintances, yielded reluctantly, was married, and "had four children, all of whom died in infancy." The cause of her marriage, it will be seen, was that which has deluged the world with mediocre poetry—the solicitation of her friends.

The date of her first imprisonment is said to have been the year 1770,\* and, whilst "in bonds," her soul was gladdened by seeing "Jesus Christ in open vision, who revealed "to her the most astonishing views of Divine manifestations "of truth, in which she had a perfect and clear view of the "mystery and iniquity, the root and foundation of all human "depravity, and of the very act of transgression committed "by Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden." From this time her followers gave her the name of "Mother Ann," and looked upon her as the female complement of the risen Christ; or, to quote the exact words of Shakers—"from the light and "power of God, which attended her ministry, and the certain "power of salvation transmitted to those who received her "testimony, she was received and acknowledged as the first "Mother, or spiritual Parent in the line of the female, and "the second Heir in the covenant of life, according to the "present display of the gospel."†

If the Shakers endured much cruelty from zealous Sabbatarians, it must be admitted that they were not eager to avoid giving offence. Thus the *Manchester Mercury* of July 20th,

\* Brown says, that in 1771 she became head of the Society, who joined with her in a "testimony against the lust of the flesh;" she was taken from a meeting and placed in a dungeon, next day sent to Bedlam, but after some weeks discharged.—(p. 312.)

† *Testimony*, p. 620.



1773, tells us :—" Saturday last ended the Quarter Sessions, " when John Townley, John Jackson, Betty Lees, and Ann " Lees (Shakers), for going into Christ Church, in Manchester, " and there wilfully and contemptuously, in the time of Divine " service, disturbing the congregation then assembled at " morning prayers in the said church, were severally fined " £20 each." Very probably non-payment of this fine would be the cause of one of Mother Ann's imprisonments. On one occasion, according to Elder Evans and other Shaker writers, " she was dragged out of the meeting by a mob, and " cast into a prison in Manchester. They put her in a cell " so small that she could not straighten herself, and with the " design of starving her to death, kept her there fourteen " days without food ; nor was the door opened during all that " time. She had nothing to eat or drink, except some wine " and milk mixed, put into the bowl of a tobacco-pipe, and " conveyed to her, by inserting the stem through the keyhole, " once every twenty-four hours. This was done by James " Whittaker, when a boy, whom Mother Ann brought up." This is a marvellous narrative, and our Shaker friends must excuse our incredulity. It was never either law or custom to starve people to death for Sabbath-breaking. The nearest parallel we can find is that of the Puritan who—

" Hanged his cat on the Monday,  
For killing a mouse upon Sunday."

Again, a cell with a keyhole looking into the street, is not a likely arrangement. In point of fact, in " The Dungeons," which served as a jail, before the erection of the New Bailey, the prisoners were not on the ground-floor at all, but a story higher, and it was a common thing for their friends to pass food through the window gratings to the caged birds inside. This arrangement is shown in the engraving which appears in Proctor's *Memorials of Manchester Streets*, p. 13. It is

copied from a drawing by Thomas Barritt, and represents the House of Correction as it was about 1776. The approximate date of Mother Ann's first imprisonment is given as 1770. This semi-miracle is as an example of the law of development in theological matters. It is not always one has a chance of assisting at the birth of a myth.

At another time she was rescued from the raging multitude by a "nobleman," who, living at some distance, "was remarkably wrought upon in his mind" to go to a certain place, which he did, riding "as if it had been to save his own life." According to Elder Evans, the mob once took her before four clergymen and charged her with blasphemy, but she spoke before them "for four hours of the wonderful works of God," and "they testified that she had spoken in seventy-two different tongues." Without wishing to disparage the linguistic powers of the English clergy of a hundred years ago, it may be remarked that an average of eighteen languages is rather too liberal an allowance for four people. The mob, we are further told, took Ann and three of her followers into a valley outside the town, with the intention of stoning them to death; they threw the stones, but did not succeed in hitting the "fair saint," and fell to quarrelling amongst themselves, so she escaped. According to Dr. Dwight she claimed the title of Ann *the Word*. He adds, that she was confined in a madhouse. The Shaker biography represents her as having been a cook at the Manchester Infirmary, and as this was at that time also a Lunatic Hospital, both statements may be correct. "For two years previous to their leaving England, persecution entirely ceased," says Elder Evans. We have seen that they were in trouble in July, 1773, and "on the 19th of May, 1774, Mother Ann, Abraham Stanley (her husband), William Lee, James Whittaker, John Hocknell, Richard Hocknell, James Shepherd [perhaps the witness of the

"marriage], Mary Partington, and Nancy Lee, embarked for "America." The captain was annoyed at their queer religious exercises and threatened to throw some of them overboard, but a storm springing up, the Shakers assured the seamen that they would not be wrecked although the ship had sprung a leak. They landed at New York, August 6th, 1774. The departure of the young prophetess led to the collapse of the Shakers in Manchester. James and Jane Wardley left the house of their benefactor Townley, and soon found a resting place in the almshouse, where they died; and the other members of the society "who remained in England, "being without lead, or protection, generally lost their power, "and fell into the common course and practice of the world."\*

The object of this Shaker emigration is by no means clear. They did not at once form themselves into a colony, but divided in search of employment. Abraham Stanley not being a convert to the celibate creed, soon "married" another woman. It is grievous to learn that Abraham never was accounted entirely orthodox. His was a very difficult part to play. The husband of a celibate prophetess would need more discretion than one could expect from a blacksmith who could not write his own name. He must have had some faith in her, or would scarcely have crossed the water along with her other disciples. He appears to have maintained an outward conformity to the new faith, and the final cause of his backsliding was a severe sickness, which he suffered in 1775. Through this illness, we are told, Mother Ann nursed him with every possible care. Whilst convalescent, and before strong enough to return to work, he began to frequent public houses, and there made shipwreck of his faith, in the manner already indicated.†

Shortly after Mother Ann removed to Albany, and thence

\* *Testimony*, p. 621.

† *Ibid.*, p. 624.

to the place then called Neuskenna,\* but now known as Watervliet. Here the scattered believers united, and a "religious revival" having commenced at Lebanon, N.Y., in 1780, the Shakers increased in number, but were greatly persecuted on account of their testimony against war and oath-taking. A number of them, including Mother Ann, were arrested at Albany. They would not take the oath, because "the Spirit of Christ, which they had within them, both disposed and enabled them to keep every just law, without any external obligation."† Their imprisonment was not of a very harsh nature, for their disciples were allowed access to them, and also permitted to minister "freely to their necessities." Through the prison gratings the captive prophets sometimes preached to listening crowds. The problem of disposing of their prisoners seems to have puzzled those who had placed them in jail. Mother Ann and Mary Partington were separated from the rest, and conveyed to the prison at Poughkeepsie. It is said, by Shaker writers, that the intention was to place her on board a vessel which was loading with supplies for the British army, then at New York. This is to say at least very improbable.‡

At last the treatment of these strange people was reported to the governor, George Clinton, and as there seemed to be no probability that the strong argument of a prison house would overcome their repugnance to bearing arms and taking oaths, he ordered the release of all those who were in bonds at Albany. Upon their release, about the 20th of December, they represented to him the case of Mother Ann, whose freedom took place about the end of the year. Their general opposition was mistaken for a special aversion to the war of the revolution, and their refusal to take oaths was construed

\* This spot they are said to have selected by the advice of some Quakers in New York, to whom they applied for counsel.—*Brown*, p. 315.

† *Testimony*, p. 625.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 626.

into a feeling in favour of the British arms; so that the alleged motive for their imprisonment at Albany was that of high treason in communicating with the British lines. There was no evidence in support of this charge, and hence her release by Governor Clinton.\* Twenty years after this event the Governor visited the settlement at New Lebanon, and expressed to the believers there his satisfaction at having released their spiritual Mother from durance vile.†

In 1781, Mother Ann and the elders went forth upon a missionary tour, visiting the believers wherever they were known, and preaching their peculiar doctrines wherever an opportunity occurred. They gained a number of converts at Harvard, Massachusetts, amongst the "Shadrach Irelands," so named from Shadrach Ireland, their leader. These renounced their wives; but as soon as they became perfectly free from sin, they might "marry spiritual wives, from whom "were to proceed holy children, which were to constitute the "New Jerusalem or Millenium." He had put away his own and taken a spiritual wife. He said he should not die; or if he did, he would rise again on the third day. He did die, but he did not rise again on the third day. "In these journeys," says the Shaker *Testimony*, "they were much persecuted and "abused by the wicked opposers of the truth," being sometimes whipped out of the towns.

What the world thought of this mission will be seen from the statements made to Dr. Dwight:—"In this excursion, "she is said to have collected from her followers all their "plate, ear-rings, and other ornaments which were formed of "silver, gold, or gems." Dr. Dwight further says: "This "woman has laboured under very serious imputations. In a "book, published by Mr. Rathbone, he mentions that he "found her, and one of these elders in very suspicious

\* Drake's *American Biog.*, Art. LEE.

† *Testimony*, p. 626.

“ circumstances. She professed that she was inspired ; that she carried on a continual intercourse with the invisible world, and talked familiarly with angels. She predicted in the boldest terms, that the world would be destroyed at a given time : if I remember right, the year 1783. During the interval between the prophecy and its expected fulfilment, she directed them to cease from their common occupations. The direction was implicitly obeyed. As the earth, however, presented no appearance of dissolution, and the skies no signs of a conflagration, it was discovered that the prophecy had been miscalculated ; and her followers were ordered again to their employments. From that period they have been eminently industrious.”

Thomas Brown, who had been a member of their society, accuses Ann Lee of being peevish, and repeatedly getting intoxicated ; and brings the latter charge also against her brother William. He says, that before 1793, “ the men and women, on a variety of occasions, danced naked ;” and that twice, at least, Mother Ann, her brother, and James Whittaker, indulged in a free fight. It would be unfair to accept all the scandal which Brown chronicles. After repeated denials, however, he obtained an acknowledgment that naked dancing had been formerly practised.\* Flagellation was practised by the Shaker converts. A man whose daughter had thus been scourged, prosecuted the elder who had inflicted the punishment. Her sister was summoned as a witness. “ She went to Whittaker, and asked him what she should say.” He answered—“ Speak the truth, and spare the truth ; and take care not to bring the gospel into disrepute.” Accordingly she testified that her sister was not naked. She was justified in giving this testimony, because her sister had a fillet on her hair.

\* pp. 44, 173, 289.

Soon after the return from their journeyings in the eastern states, the little community lost one of its lights. We have seen that Mother Ann's husband refused to bear the Shaker cross, but her brother, William Lee, was a firm believer in his sister's mission. We are told that he was a gay young man, who had been an "officer" in the Oxford Blues. He carried to the grave the scars of wounds received in defending her, and in some respects resembled her, especially in having "visions." Like many other of the Lancashire artizans he had a good voice, which would be of service amongst those who "praise the Lord with dance and song." He died July 21st, 1784, aged forty-four years. Brown thus describes him (p. 323)—Elder William Lee seldom travelled to gain proselytes, being severe in his temper and harsh in his manners; his preaching was not fraught with that mildness and urbanity, which is necessary to draw the attention and win the affection of the hearers, and render a man beloved. It once happened, as he was speaking to a public congregation, one of the spectators, a young man, behaved with levity and disrespect; upon this, Lee took him by the throat and shook him, saying, "when I was in England, I was sergeant in the king's life-guard, and could then use my fists; but now, since I have received the gospel, I must patiently bear all abuse, and suffer my shins to be kicked by every little boy; but I will have you know that the power of God will defend our cause."

Her followers had proclaimed Mother Ann immortal, but to her also came the grim king. She died at Watervliet, on the 8th day of Sept., 1784, aged forty-eight years and six months. Whatever we may think of her peculiar religious theories, she certainly seems to have inculcated industry and benevolence by shrewd maxims, which were, however, little more than platitudes. Her piety, as shewn in the Shaker book, seems to have been eminently practical. "To a sister

"she said, 'Be faithful to keep the Gospel; *be neat and industrious*; keep your family's clothes clean and decent,' &c. Further, "Little children are innocent, and they should never be brought out of it. If brought up in simplicity they would receive good as easy as evil. Never speak to them in a passion; it will put devils into them. . . . *Do* all your work as though you had a thousand years to live, and as though you were going to die to-morrow."

On the death of Mother Ann the leadership devolved upon James Whittaker, who "was freely acknowledged by the whole society as their elder." Whittaker was born at Oldham, Feb. 28th, 1751, and is thought to have been a relative of Ann Lee, as his own mother bore the same name. His parents were members of the Shaker society under Jane and James Wardley, and he was brought up under the care of Mother Ann, and was the one who is said to have succoured her when in prison, in the manner already described. Father James, as he was styled, died at the early age of thirty-seven.

In 1786, Ann Lee, the niece of the foundress, abandoned the celibate order to marry Richard Hocknell, probably a son of John Hocknell, one of the original emigrant band. Partington also left the society, but was helped by it in his declining years, notwithstanding this backsliding.

Mother Ann prophesied that James Whittaker would succeed her in the ministry, but this seems hardly to have been the case. Father James no doubt influenced the society, but it was an American convert, Joseph Meacham, who became its leader, and organized it on that basis of community of labour and property which now forms its most distinguishing feature. "His gift of Divine revelation was deeper than that of any other person, excepting Mother Ann." It was he who introduced the greater part of the "spiritualist" portion of the Shaker creed and doctrine. Meacham was succeeded by a female, Lucy Wright, but we need not farther follow the



history of the sect. Its interest for us centres in its English origin.

In the New England travels of the celebrated Dr. Dwight, he gives an account of a visit, made in 1799, to the Shaker colony at New Lebanon:—"It consists," he says, "of a small number of houses, moderately well-built, and kept, both within and without doors, in a manner very creditable to the occupants. Everything about them was clean and tidy. Their church, a plain, but neat building, had a courtyard belonging to it, which was a remarkably 'smooth shaven green.' Two paths led to it from a neighbouring house, both paved with marble slabs. By these, I was informed, the men enter one end of the church, and the women the other."

Their claims to miraculous powers he justly ridicules. They told him that they had restored the broken limb of a youth who then lived at Enfield, but, on enquiry, he found that the use of the limb was lost and the patient's health ruined. The Shaker *Testimony* contains several cases in which believers had received "a gift of healing."\* It is not necessary to detail these cases. They are not of great importance, and if we consider the curative powers of the imagination when under the influence of superstitious excitement, it will be possible to account for at least some of them without accusing the elders of the church of intentional deception.

On being present at one of their meetings for worship, Dr. Dwight was told that both words and tune were inspired. The tune was *Nancy Dawson*; and the sounds "which they made, and which they called language could not be words, because they were not articulated. One of the women replied, 'How dost thee know but that we speak the

\* See pp. 414-426.

“ ‘Hotmatot language? The language of the Hotmatots is  
 “ ‘said to be made up of such words.’ ” He challenged them  
 to speak in Greek, Latin, or French, but they prudently kept  
 silent.

Brown speaks thus on this topic—“ Respecting such as  
 “ speak in an unknown tongue, they have strong faith  
 “ in this gift; and think a person greatly favoured who  
 “ has the gift of tongues; and at certain times, when the  
 “ mind is overloaded with a fiery, strong zeal, it must have  
 “ vent some way or other; their faith, or belief at the time  
 “ being in this gift, and a will strikes the mind according to  
 “ their faith; and then such break out in a fiery, energetick  
 “ manner, and speak they know not what, as I have done  
 “ several times. Part of what I spake at one time, was—  
 “ ‘Liero devo jirankemango, ad fileabano, duresm subramo,  
 “ ‘deviranto diacerimango, jaffa vah pe cu evanegalio; de vom  
 “ ‘grom seb crinom, as vare cremo domo.’ When a person  
 “ runs on in this manner of speaking for any length of time,  
 “ I now thought it probable that he would strike into different  
 “ languages, and give some words in each their right pro-  
 “ nunciation: as I have heard some men of learning, who  
 “ have been present, say, a few words were Hebrew, three or  
 “ four of Greek, and a few Latin.”\*

From 1785 until the close of the century, Shakerism exerted  
 very little propagandist influence; but in 1801 came the  
 Kentucky Revival, by which the infant church was consider-  
 ably enlarged. Since then its progress has steadily, if slowly,  
 increased, and at the present time is an object of great  
 curiosity to outsiders.

The census of the United States supplies some meagre  
 details respecting the Church organization of the Shakers.  
 In 1850 there were eleven churches, capable of accommodating

\* p. 297.

5,150 persons, and owning \$39,500 of property. In 1860 there were twelve churches, which would hold 5,200 persons; the property of the church was \$41,000. In 1870 there were eighteen distinct Shaker organizations, possessing eighteen church edifices, capable of seating 8,850 persons; the wealth of the church was \$86,900. These Shaker communities are found in Connecticut, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, New Hampshire, and Ohio.

The most important of the Shaker villages is that at New Lebanon. A few passages, condensed from the account of a visit to this place, which appeared in the *Graphic* of May 7th, 1870, may be permitted:—

It is a great mistake to suppose that, like Romish monks and nuns, they shut themselves completely out of the world, and are unwilling that "publicans and sinners" should penetrate to their retreats and observe their manner of life. No people, as we can personally testify, are more hospitable, or welcome outsiders with greater apparent pleasure. They will readily show you over their establishments; they will freely explain to you their rules and regulations, taking care to point out the reasons for them; and they will even admit you to their meetings and religious ceremonies. Of course the man of the world is inclined to ridicule the grotesque postures and movements which he sees in their chapels; but there is something so quaint, simple, and sincere in their devotions, that even if a sense of their propriety did not check the smile or sneer, a sense of respect for their earnestness would. At Mount Lebanon there are three separate societies within sight of each other: these are called the "North Family," "Church Family," and "Second Family." The word "family" betrays the chief social characteristic of the sect. Fancy a hundred men and women living together, enjoying all things, from the acres of the mutual estate, to the hats, thimbles, and books, in common; no one person owning a tittle of property himself, for his own particular use and enjoyment; each labouring for all the others, and for the common weal; working and taking pleasure in common, confessing to each other, worshipping together! Neither do the Shakers marry, nor are they given in marriage. They live a strictly celibate life. We are told of husbands and wives who have been converted to Shakerism, who have lived for years in close

married communion, and who, having entered the fold of "Believers," separate their bond, live apart each in the quarter of his or her sex, and, seeing each other every day, can only meet and converse as all the other brethren and sisters do.

Shakers are fully aware of their lowly commencement. "The first in America who received the testimony of the Gospel were satisfied that it was the truth of God against all sin, and that in faithful obedience thereunto, they should find that salvation and deliverance from the power of sin for which they sincerely panted. And being made partakers of the glorious liberty of the sons of God, it was a matter of no importance with them from whence the means of their deliverance came, whether from a stable in Bethlehem or from Toad Lane in Manchester."\*

From this humble origin has sprung one of the most interesting and peculiar of the phenomena of the New World. "By their works ye shall know them." The testimony of travellers is very strongly in favour of the Shakers. They are known as an honest and industrious people throughout the States. With an entire absence of those compelling forces which ensure a modicum of work and order in the outside world, the "Believers" have greatly surpassed in peace and industry those of the outside world. "Order, temperance, frugality, worship—these," says Mr. Hepworth Dixon, "are the Shaker things which strike upon your senses first; the peace and innocence of Eden, when contrasted with the wrack and riot of New York." They are capital agriculturalists, and have a reputation for thoroughness in all their industrial occupations. Every man has a trade; every man and woman works with his hands for the good of the community.

The doctrine of celibacy has already been mentioned. Elder Frederick, according to Mr. Dixon's report, says that

\* *Testimony*, p. 609.

“they do not hold that a celibate life is right in every place  
 “and in every society at all times; and they consider that  
 “for a male and female priesthood, such as they hold them-  
 “selves to be, as respects the world, this temptation is to  
 “be put away.”\* This is scarcely historically orthodox, or why should Ann Lee have raised her voice against the sexual law in the streets of Manchester? The Shakers, like the Quakers, have toned down. To-day they seek no converts, but wait for the Spirit of God to bring people into their fold. They are not the fiery missionaries of a century ago. They look now for increase to those cycles of religious enthusiasm which sweep over some portions of English and American society from time to time, and are known as revivals.

Their communistic views have also been named. Probationers are allowed to retain their private possessions, but the Covenanters have all things in common.

As might have been expected from their history, they firmly believe in the possibility of intercourse with the world of spirits. For them there is no death. The departed surround them in every action of life. They are living in resurrection order, the seen and the unseen in daily communion. Ann Lee is not dead, she has merely withdrawn behind a veil, and her followers can speak with her as when she inhabited a tabernacle of flesh.

There is a charm about these mysterious people, offspring though they are of ignorance, credulity, and enthusiasm. They have impressed many minds by their passionless existence, their abstinence and industry, and by their claims of being able to pierce that darkness which hides us from the loved and lost.

These feelings have been well expressed in some lines which appeared in the *Knickerbocker* years ago, and were suggested

\* *New America*, p. 302.

to their writer, Charlotte Cushman, by a visit to the settlement near Albany:—

Mysterious worshippers!  
 Are you indeed the things you seem to be,  
 Of earth—yet of its iron influence free—  
 From all that stirs  
 Our being's pulse, and gives to fleeting life  
 What well the Hun has termed "the rapture of the strife?"

Are the gay visions gone,  
 Those day-dreams of the mind, by fate there flung,  
 And the fair hopes to which the soul once clung,  
 And battled on;  
 Have ye outlived them?—all that must have sprung  
 And quicken'd into life, when ye were young?

Does memory never roam  
 To ties that, grown with years, ye idly sever,  
 To the old haunts that ye have left for ever—  
 Your early homes?  
 Your ancient creed, once faith's sustaining lever,  
 The love who erst prayed with you—now may never?

Has not ambition's pean  
 Some power within your hearts to wake anew  
 To deeds of higher emprise—worthier you,  
 Ye monkish men,  
 Than may be reaped from fields? Do ye not rue  
 The drone-like course of life ye now pursue?

The camp—the council—all  
 That woos the soldier to the field of fame—  
 That gives the sage his meed—the bard his name  
 And coronal—  
 Bidding a people's voice their praise proclaim;  
 Can ye forego the strife, nor own your shame?

Have ye forgot your youth,  
 When expectation soared on pinions high,  
 And hope shone out on boyhood's cloudless sky,  
 Seeming all truth—  
 When all looked fair to fancy's ardent eye,  
 And pleasure wore an air of sorcery?

You, too! What early blight  
 Has withered your fond hopes, that ye thus stand  
 A group of sisters, 'mong this monkish band?  
 Ye creatures bright!  
 Has sorrow scored your brows with demon hand,  
 Or o'er your hopes passed treachery's burning brand?

Ye would have graced right well  
 The bridal scene, the banquet, or the bowers  
 Where mirth and revelry usurp the hours—  
 Where, like a spell,  
 Beauty is sovereign—where man owns its powers,  
 And woman's tread is o'er a path of flowers.

Yet seem ye not as those  
 Within whose bosoms memories vigils keep:  
 Beneath your drooping lids no passions sleep;  
 And your pale brows  
 Bear not the tracery of emotion deep—  
 Ye seem too cold and passionless to weep!

## APPENDIX A.

## SHAKER BIBLIOGRAPHY.

The following works, with others, have been examined in the preparation of this notice :—

An Account of the people called Shakers : their Faith, Doctrines, and Practise exemplified in the life, conversations, and experience of the author, during the time he belonged to the society, to which is affixed a history of their rise and progress to the present day. By Thomas Brown, of Cornwall, Orange County, State of New York. "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good."—*Apostle Paul*. "An historian should not dare to tell a falsehood or leave a truth untold."—*Cicero*. Troy : Printed by Parker and Bliss. Sold at the Troy Book Store ; by Websters and Skinners, Albany ; and S. Wood, New York, 1812. 12mo.

New America. By William Hepworth Dixon. Eighth edition. Lond. 1869. Pp. xii, 448. 8vo.

Travels in New England and New York. By Timothy Dwight, S.T.D., LL.D., late President of Yale College. In four volumes. New Haven, 1822. 8vo. (See vol. iii, pp. 149—169.)

Tests of Divine Inspiration ; or the Rudimental Principles by which True and False Revelation in all Eras of the World can be unerringly discriminated. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."—Rev. xix, 10. By F. W. Evans. New Lebanon : published by the United Society called Shakers. 1853. 8vo. Pp. 127.

[NOTE.—Offered to the public as an explanation of the great enigma and paradox of the age—spiritual manifestations ; and also as a solution of what has often, and not inappropriately, been designated the "great problem of the age,"—a social organization that shall secure not merely "the greatest good to the greatest number," but also "the greatest good to the whole number of its members."] ]

Third Edition. Shakers' Compendium of the Origin, History, Principles, Rules and Regulations, Government and Doctrines of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing : with Biographies of Ann Lee, William Lee, Jas. Whittaker, J. Hocknell, J. Meacham, and Lucy Wright. By F. W. Evans. "O my soul, swallow down understanding, and devour wisdom ; for thou hast only time to live."—*Esdras*. New Lebanon, N. Y. : Auchampaugh Brothers. 1859. 12mo.

Autobiography of a Shaker, and Revelation of the Apocalypse, with an Appendix. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." Inquirers and Booksellers may apply to, or address, F. W. Evans, Mt. Lebanon, Col. Co., N. Y. June, 1869. 8vo. Pp. 162.

Religious Communism. A Lecture by F. W. Evans (Shakers) of Mount Lebanon, Columbia Co., New York, U.S.A., delivered in St. George's Hall, London, Sunday Evening, August 6th, 1871 ; with Introductory Remarks by the Chairman of the Meeting, Mr. Hepworth Dixon. Also some Account of the Extent of the Shaker Communities, and a Narrative of the Visit of Elder Evans to England. An Abstract of a Lecture by the Rev. J. M. Peebles, and his testimony in regard to the Shakers. London. 8vo. Pp. 32.

The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the late extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit of God, in the Western States of America. With a brief account of the entrance and progress of what the world call Shakerism, among the subjects of the late Revival in Ohio and Kentucky. By Richard McNemar. \* \* Cincinnati, printed: Albany, re-printed by E. and E. Hosford. 1808. 12mo. Pp. 119.

Report of the Examination of the Shakers of Canterbury and Enfield before the New-Hampshire Legislature, at the November Session, 1848; including the Testimony at length; several extracts from Shaker publications; the Bill which passed the House of Representatives; the Proceedings in the Pillow case; together with the Letter of James W. Spinney. From Notes taken at the Examination. Concord, N. H.: printed by Ervin B. Tripp . . . Main Street. 1849. 8vo. Pp. 100.

[NOTE.—This book contains some revelations as to the harsh discipline of the children adopted by the Shakers. A boy said to have been beaten to death; women laid upon their backs on the floor in the public meetings, and others would walk over them. (P. 17.) One witness said, "I have never seen so much contention and quarrelling, and hard feeling, in an equal number of the world's people as I have seen there." (P. 18.)

The following was one of their popular hymn-songs:—

Of all my relations that ever I see  
My own fleshy kindred are fartherest from me  
How ugly they look; how distant they feel;  
To hate them—despite them—increases my zeal.  
How ugly they look, &c.]

Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing, exemplified by the principles and practice of the true Church of Christ. History of the progressive work of God, extending from the Creation of Man to the "Harvest," comprising the four great dispensations now consummating in the Millennial Church. Published by the United Society called Shakers. Fourth Edition. Albany, 1856. 8vo. Pp. xxiv, 632.

A Return of Departed Spirits of the highest characters of distinction, as well as the indiscriminate of all nations, into the bodies of the "Shakers," or "United Society of Believers in the Second Advent of the Messiah." By an Associate of said Society. "Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth, both when we wake and when we sleep." Philadelphia: published by J. R. Colon, 203½, Chestnut Street. 1843. 8vo. Entered for copyright by L. G. Thomas.

[NOTE.—The return of departed spirits is spoken of in 1843 as being "more recently" introduced than the gifts of prophecy. "Disembodied" spirits began to take possession of the bodies of the brethren and sisters; "and thus, by using them as instruments, made themselves known by speaking through the individuals whom they had got into; after which they were welcomed to Zion to hear the true Gospel of Christ." Amongst those visitants are named Geo. Washington, William Penn (much admired by the believers, who style him "Father Penn"), Napoleon, Girard, Mahomet, Pope Pius (which?—he had come piping hot from hell, but said it was not a material fire) and several other popes; all of them acknowledged the committal of much crime in their public and private relations, but having repented of it, they had been gathered amongst the faithful. Saint Patrick, Samson, the passengers of the lost steam-ship "President," "whose fate has hitherto been unknown," arrived at Watervliet early in March, 1843, and many others, including a crowd of "indiscriminate characters of different nations."]



A Revelation of the Extraordinary Visitation of Departed Sisters of distinguished men and women of all nations, and their manifestation through living bodies of the Shakers. By a guest of the "Community" near Watervliet, N.Y. Philadelphia: published by L. G. Thomas, No. 27, Sansom Street. 1869. 8vo.

[NOTE.—In this we have a narrative of the spirit of a deceased sister standing beside its own body, and discoursing through a living sister.]

The Youth's Guide in Zion, and Holy Mother's Promises. Given by inspiration at New Lebanon, N. Y., January 5th, 1842.

[NOTE.—From the above title it will be seen that Ann Lee was an after-death authoress. In this occurs the following poem (?) :—

God is with me, and I'm with God,  
 And ever was and e'er will be;  
 We have all power to use the rod,  
 To rend the earth and spill the sea.  
 All heaven is at our command;  
 We speak thereto, it doth obey;  
 And what is earth beneath our hand?  
 It is but one light ball of clay.  
 Now think of this, ye helpless worms!  
 Ye little specks of mortal clay!  
 Since at our word all heaven turns,  
 Dare ye presume to disobey?  
 Dare ye presume to scoff at God?  
 And mock and scorn his holy power?  
 Beware, I say, lest with his rod  
 He smite your souls in that same hour.  
 O little children, could you know  
 The call of mercy unto you,  
 You'd sacrifice all things below,  
 And cast off nature clear from you.  
 The world with its alluring charms  
 Of pleasure, false and vain delight,  
 Its riches, husbands, wives, and farms,  
 Would be disgusting in your sight.]

A Brief Sketch of the Religious Society of People called Shakers. Communicated to Mr. [Robert] Owen, by Mr. W. S. Warder of Philadelphia, one of the Society of Friends. London. 1818. 8vo. Pp. 16.

## APPENDIX B.

## THE SHAKERS OF THE NEW FOREST.

The resemblance between the "Christian Communists" of the New Forest and the American Shakers is too striking to be passed over. The public were startled, in 1874, to learn that a band of enthusiasts were endeavouring to work out the problem of communistic association. It is a curious circumstance that the most successful attempts to realise the socialist formula, "from each one according to his capacities, to each one according to his needs," have been inspired and moulded by religious sentiment. Of this the New Forest settlement is another example.

The first notice of it appears to have been given by a contributor to the *Manchester Guardian*, (August 21st, 1874,) who spent three days with them, and speaks in high terms of their industry and earnestness. They were then living on thirty-one acres of land, bought for them by one of their members, into possession of which they entered early in 1873. The fourteen original settlers had increased to one hundred and thirty men, women, and children. They lived apparently upon the produce of the farm, and the goodwill offerings of disciples still in the world. The men had not adopted any peculiar costume, but the women wore "a plain bodice, short skirt, and "trousers." The usual feminine ornaments—earrings and so forth—were discarded. Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, were amongst them regulated by Obedience. The foundress of the little society was Mrs. M. A. Girling, who was at once prophetess and ruler. The "Mother" assigned to each brother or sister his task. "Here are no 'agitations' and no 'isms'; here is no money, no buying, no selling; here are no poor, no rich, none indolent, none overtaken. There is no sickness, and the brethren believe there will be no death if they 'live the life 'of faith until the Lord shall come.'" There is much virtue in an "if." At the end of the year the "Shakers" were turned out of this Paradise. The property appears to have been mortgaged, and as, according to one statement, the family had paid neither principal nor interest, and exhibited a supreme disdain for the remonstrances of the law, they were evicted under circumstances of extraordinary hardship. Their goods were removed into the fields and road. Their own account

is that they had paid the greater part of the principal and the interest regularly until the previous half-year, when, owing to an illegal seizure they had refused to make payment. Whatever may be the technical rights of the case, the Shakers did not avail themselves of the remedies which the law prescribes. No resistance was offered to the eviction, and the band of enthusiasts, which included about fifty children, were turned out into the rain and snow. The young ones were sheltered in the neighbouring cottages, but the adults passed the night in the road singing psalms. Whilst their goods and chattels were being tumbled out the Shakers were in the highest state of religious enthusiasm, dancing wildly, clapping their hands, and shouting. An attempt was made to have Mrs. Girling removed to a lunatic asylum, but this was unsuccessful. The Shakers were for some time sheltered in a barn belonging to the Hon. Auberon Herbert. He felt bound, however, to make public statements which appear to have been well founded, that, in the ecstasies, men and women danced naked. This was said by a renegade Shaker to have occurred repeatedly.

They left the shelter of Mr. Herbert's barn in February, 1875. From this date they may be styled the Tent Community, having erected a large tent in which to dwell. To this a second one was added. Miss Wood, the original purchaser of the Lodge in the New Forest, was removed to a private lunatic asylum. Her forcible seizure again roused the excitement of the public, and led to a question in the House of Commons. Ultimately she appears to have been released, but to have remained in charge of her relatives. In June they attempted to retake possession of the Lodge, but were promptly turned out of the grounds as trespassers. They are still living, after their fashion, in the tents at Hordle. Some offers of land have been made to them, but having set their hearts upon the hopeless project of regaining the Lodge, these have been refused.

The Shakers of the New Forest regard the New Testament as an absolute guide for life. They take, in their literal form, the denunciations of riches there to be found, and consider that the true disciples of this day, like those of the Apostolic age, have all things in common. To this they add a profession of celibacy and a belief in the speedy advent of the Messiah. Mother Girling claimed that it had been revealed to her that she should never die, but behold the second coming. In all these points their creed and that of the followers of Ann Lee are identical. So in the adoption of children and in the title of "Mother" given to their spiritual chieftainess. The same charges of indecent dancing have

been brought against each sect, and whatever may be thought about graver scandals this appears to have a basis of truth. It does not appear, however, that Mrs. Girling claims to be anything more than a messenger sent to announce the advent of the Millennium, whilst the American Shakers regard their foundress as in some sort and degree a female Christ. The name "Shaker" has, in each case, been applied to and not selected by the members of the sect, and has arisen from the dancing which forms part of their religious exercises. When the "gift of the spirit" is upon them they sometimes shake and tremble, and at others jump and whirl about in a manner so strange and furious as almost to beggar belief. This is an expression of religious emotion common to the enthusiasts of every creed and every clime.

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