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ROBERT OWEN

VOL. I

ROBERT OWE

A BIOGRAPHY

By FRANK POD

Author of "Modern Spiritualis
in Psychical Research

WITH
TWO

ROBERT OWEN

A BIOGRAPHY

By FRANK PODMORE

Author of "Modern Spiritualism, "Studies
in Psychical Research," etc.

WITH FORTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS,
TWO PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES, AND FACSIMILES

Vol. I

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PREFACE

ROBERT OWEN died in 1858. Up to January, 1905, four biographies of him, and four only, had appeared, all in English—the last having been written more than twenty years ago.[1] When, in 1901, I formed the intention of adding another to the list, I was moved less by a sense of the inadequacy of the work of my predecessors, than by my own desire to treat of so congenial a theme. In a word, I made up my mind, as I supposed, to write because I wanted to write. But a subsequent series of coincidences has led me to question whether in following my own pleasure I was not the unconscious instrument of larger forces, and the impulse which I held at the time to be the spontaneous outcome of my own volition part of a wider movement in the world of thought, the existence of which I had scarcely suspected.

Wormser 26 Jul 1935

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[1] *Robert Owen and his Social Philosophy*, by W. L. Sargant, 1860.

Robert Owen . . . the Founder of Socialism in England, by A. J. Booth, M.A., 1869.

Life of Robert Owen, Philadelphia, 1866 (published anonymously, but since acknowledged to be by F. A. Packard).

The Life, Times and Labours of Robert Owen, by Lloyd Jones, first edition (posthumous), 1889. Lloyd Jones died in 1886.

There is also a small pamphlet, *Life and Last Days of Robert Owen*, by G. J. Holyoake, 1859.

For, a few months after I had definitely formulated my own project, I learnt that another Englishman, who subsequently withdrew in my favour, was entertaining the same idea. Again, in the course of 1903, whilst my own work was scarcely begun, I made the acquaintance successively of a German lady, Fraülein Simon, and a Frenchman, M. Edouard Dolléans, who had conceived, about the same time as myself, the idea of writing a biography of the great Socialist.[1] In the previous year, 1902, appeared the first adequate account—for which the world had been content to wait for three-quarters of a century—of Owen's great Communal Experiment at New Harmony.[2] And finally, when the present book was already far advanced, a collection of letters written to or by Owen, which had been lost sight of for more than a generation, was found in a lumber-room and forwarded to the late G. J. Holyoake, by whom it was handed on for safe keeping to the Co-operative Union at Manchester. The timely discovery of this correspondence, of which I have made such use as my opportunities permitted, furnishes a retrospective justification—if further justification is needed—for the project formed five years ago.[3]

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[1] Both these lives have already appeared. *Robert Owen: sein Leben und seine Bedeutung für die Gegenwart*, by Helene Simon. Jena, 1905. *Robert Owen*, by Edouard Dolléans. Paris, 1905.

[2] *The New Harmony Communities*, by George Browning Lockwood.

[3] All the letters quoted in the following pages, when no other source is indicated, are in this Collection, which is not yet catalogued. The letters date from the year 1823, and include a few written to or by Owen on his tour in Ireland in that year. From the fact that the letters begin just where the Autobiography leaves off, it seems probable that

Amongst those who have assisted me to obtain information, and have lent or given valuable books and documents, I have to render special thanks to Mr. T. Parry Jones, of Newtown—the place of Owen's birth and of his death—to Mr. William George Black, Professor Earl Barnes, Mr. J. C. Gray, Secretary of the Co-operative Union, Mr. A. Dransfield, of the Working-Men's Institute and Public Library, New Harmony, Indiana, Mrs. Templeton, Mr. William Tebb, Mr. C. Godfrey Gümpel, Mr. C. S. Loch and the Council of the Charity Organisation Society. To other friends I render cordial acknowledgment for help given.

the letters form part of the material collected by Owen in his life-time for the purpose of his Autobiography. I have found only two letters dated before 1823 (both of which are referred to in the following pages), and these evidently owe their preservation to the date, which is very indistinct in each case, having been misread. The Collection includes a bundle containing several hundred letters written by Owen during the last seven or eight years of his life to his personal friend, attendant and factotum, James Rigby. Most of the letters, some 3,000 in all, are docketed by Rigby, but in a few cases the docket is in the handwriting of William Pare.

F. P.

March, 1906.

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ROBERT OWEN

CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD

OF Robert Owen's early life our only, but sufficient, record is the autobiography which he published in 1857. Apart from the descriptions of what he felt and thought as a child—his speculations on the formation of character, his weighing in the balance the several religions of the world, in all which we cannot but suppose that the old man of eighty-seven read back into the primitive, fluent consciousness of infancy the reflections and judgments of maturer years—there is no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of the narrative, and, in any case, we have no other or better authority. I propose, therefore, as it would be useless to refer the reader to a book which has long been out of print and is now difficult to obtain, to quote from the autobiography, making only a few transpositions for the sake of clearness, and such omissions as are rendered necessary by the limitations of space. In the chapter which follows, therefore, Robert Owen speaks for himself. For the sake of convenience I will omit the usual signs of quotation and omission, and when I find it necessary to summarise or interpolate an editorial comment, square brackets [ ] will indicate the change of person.

As it appears in the family great Bible, I was born in Newtown, Montgomeryshire, North Wales, on the 14th of May, 1771, and was baptized on the 12th of June following.

My father was Robert Owen. He was born in Welshpool, and was brought up to be a saddler, and probably an ironmonger also, as these two trades were at that period often united in the small towns on the borders of Wales. He married into the family of Williams, a numerous family, who were in my childhood among the most respectable farmers around Newtown.

I think my mother (who was deemed beautiful, as I was informed, when she was married) was the eldest sister of the family, and, for her class, superior in mind and manner.

I suppose that on their marriage they settled in Newtown—my father taking up his own calling as a saddler and ironmonger. He was also postmaster as long as he lived.[1] He had the general management of the parish affairs, being better acquainted, as it appears, with its finances and business than any other party in the township. I never thought of enquiring of him for any particulars respecting his father or mother, both being dead before I was born ; and owing to the then very bad state of the roads there was comparatively little communication for young persons between Newtown and Welshpool. Newtown was at this period a very small market town, not containing more than one thousand inhabitants—a neat, clean, beautifully situated country village, rather than a town, with the ordinary trades, but no manufactures except a very few flannel-looms.

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[1] Prior to 1791, the postmaster of Newtown was a sub-deputy to the postmaster of Bristol. When, in the latter year, the office at Newtown was made a head post office, the salary of the postmaster was fixed at £10 a year. It may perhaps be inferred that the appointment of sub-deputy-postmaster conferred more prestige than profit on the holder.

[Newtown is still a very small market town, having now about six thousand inhabitants, and its staple industry is still the manufacture of woollen stuffs. But whereas in Owen's boyhood spinning and weaving were alike done by hand, there are now four or five mills with machinery driven by steam, the two largest having about a hundred looms each. The town is beautifully situated in the upper valley of the Severn, surrounded on all sides by finely wooded hills.

The house in which the elder Owen carried on his trade as a saddler and in which Robert Owen was born stands in the main street of the town—a fairly broad street which goes in a straight line over a stone bridge (built since Owen's time) across the Severn, and then for some distance still in a straight line up the steep side of the opposite hill. The Owens' house has now been thrown into the adjoining house, and a passage-way has been cut through the ground-floor rooms, but the old divisions of the walls are still to be seen. The house is almost incredibly small, the rooms low and dark. All the timber—the staircase, the balustrade, the beams and floors—is of solid oak ; the flooring is made up of pieces of oak—not planks, but odd pieces fitted together in a clumsy mosaic; the doors are of oak with deep-cut panels, and still bear the marks of the broad chisel which was used, instead of a plane, to smooth the surface.

Just to the north of the Owens' house there stood in the middle of the street the old Town Hall, a narrow two-storied building with a high-pitched roof, the ground-floor having a kind of tunnel driven through it lengthways, for the convenience of traffic. The building seems to have occupied nearly half the width of the street. It was pulled down in 1852; but Newtown still possesses several old black-timbered houses, and the general aspect of the town has probably altered less than most English towns in the last hundred and thirty years.]

I was the youngest but one of a family of seven, two of whom died young. The survivors, William, Anne, and John,[1] were older, and Richard was younger than myself. The principal adjacent estate was Newtown Hall, at the period of my birth and for a few years afterwards the property and residence of Sir John Powell Price,[2] Bart.; and my first recollection is of Sir John opening a glass door which divided my father's shop from the dwelling part of the house, and setting a bird flying towards us, saying there was something for the children's amusement, and they must take care of it.

This must have been shortly before he left his estate, I suppose from being in debt, for it soon passed into other hands. My next recollection is being in school

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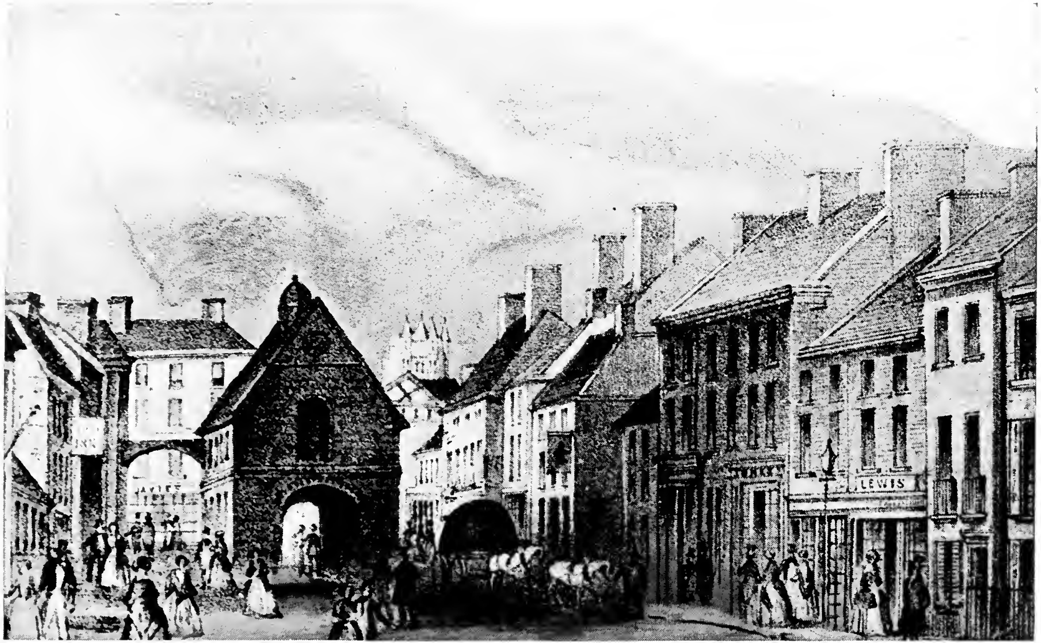
[1] This brother John, as I am informed by Mr. Harold Owen, a great-great-grandson, emigrated as a young man to Canada, and appears to have remained there throughout his life. His grandson returned to this country.

[2] The name is more correctly spelt Pryce.



From a drawing made about 1848. *Reproduced by permission of Messrs. Phillips & Son, Newtown.*

NEWTOWN, MONTGOMERYSHIRE.

in apartments in the mansion of his estate,[1] and a Mr. Thickness, or some such name, was the schoolmaster. I must have been sent young to school—probably at between four and five years of age—for I cannot remember first going there. But I recollect being very anxious to be first in school and first home, and the boys had always a race from the school to the town, and, being a fast runner, I was usually at home the first, and almost always the first at school in the morning. On one occasion my haste nearly cost me my life. I used to have for my breakfast a basin of flummery, a food prepared in Wales from flour, and eaten with milk, and which is usually given to children as the Scotch use oatmeal porridge.[2] [Hastily swallowing his flummery one morning, he found it scalding hot, and the result was a severe and prolonged fainting fit.] In that state I remained so long, that my parents thought life was extinct. However, after a considerable period I revived; but from that day my stomach became incapable of digesting food, except the most simple and in small quantity at a time. This made me attend to the effects of different qualities of food on my changed constitution, and gave me the habit of close observation and of continual reflection; and I have always thought that this accident had a great influence in forming my character.

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[1] This house, a low, rambling, unpretentious building, is still standing. It is just on the outskirts of the small town, barely three hundred yards from the Owens' house. After serving as a school, it was for some time used as a woollen factory. It is now again used as a private residence.

[2] "Welsh flummery—Llumruwd (sour sediment), whence our English word 'flummery.' It is formed of the husks of the oatmeal roughly sifted out, soaked in water until it becomes sour, then strained and boiled, when it forms a pale brown subgelatinous mass, usually eaten with abundance of new milk." (*My Life*, etc., by A. R. Wallace, Vol. I., p. 179.)

Shortly before this event I was doing something with the keyhole of a large door in a passage between my father's house and that of our next neighbour, and by some means I got one of my fingers fast in the keyhole, and in my attempt to get it out it was twisted so painfully that I fainted, and I know not how it came loose, for I was found in a swoon lying on the ground.

On another occasion my life was perilled, and I again escaped without knowing how. Newtown is situated on the banks of the river Severn, over which at that time there was a bridge that had been erected many years before, of wood.[1] It admitted of a wagon-way with a narrow footpath on each side. My father had a favourite cream-coloured mare, and her pasture-fields were on the side of this bridge opposite to where we lived. When my father required this mare, as it was a favourite of mine also, I frequently went for it to the field, and rode it home, although a young horseman, for at this period I was only six or seven years old. One day when returning from the field mounted on this mare, I was passing homeward over the bridge, but before I was half over, a wagon had made some progress from the opposite side. There was not room for me to pass without my legs coming in contact with the wheels of this wagon or with the rails of the bridge. I had not sense enough to turn back, and endeavoured to pass the wagon. I soon found that my leg was in danger of being grazed by the wheels and I threw it over the saddle, and in consequence I fell on the opposite side, but in falling I was so alarmed lest I should drop into the river or should strike against the bridge, that I lost all recollection. How I escaped I know not, but on recovering I found myself on the footpath of the bridge, the mare standing quietly near me, and the wagon had fairly passed and I was unhurt. Since that occurrence I have always felt a more especial liking for cream-coloured horses than for any others.

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[1] This wooden bridge was replaced in 1827 by the stone structure already mentioned.

In schools in these small towns it was considered a good education if one could read fluently, write a legible hand and understand the first four rules of arithmetic. And this I have reason to believe was the extent of Mr. Thickness's qualification for a schoolmaster, because when I had acquired these small rudiments of learning at the age of seven, he applied to my father for permission that I should become his assistant and "usher," as from that time I was called while I remained in school. And thenceforward my schooling was to be repaid by my ushership. As I remained at school about two years longer, those two years were lost to me, except that I thus early acquired the habit of teaching others what I knew.

But at this period I was fond of and had a strong passion for reading everything which fell in my way. As I was known to and knew every family in the town, I had the libraries of the clergyman, physician, and lawyer—the learned men of the town—thrown open to me, with permission to take home any volume which I liked, and I made full use of the liberty given to me.

Among the books which I selected at this period were *Robinson Crusoe*, *Philip Quarle*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Paradise Lost*, Harvey's *Meditations Among the Tombs*, Young's *Night Thoughts*, Richardson's and all other standard novels. I believed every word of them to be true and was therefore deeply interested, and I generally finished a volume daily. Then I read Cook's and all the circumnavigators' voyages, the history of the world, —Rollin's *Ancient History*—and all the lives I could meet with of the philosophers and great men.

At this period, probably when I was between eight and nine years of age, three maiden ladies became intimate in our family, and they were Methodists. They took a great fancy to me, and gave me many of their books to read. As I was religiously inclined,[1] they were very desirous to convert me to their peculiar faith. I read and studied the books they gave me with great attention; but as I read religious works of all parties, I became surprised, first at the opposition between the different sects of Christians; afterwards at the deadly hatred between the Jews, Christians, Mahomedans, Hindoos, Chinese, etc., etc., and between these and what they called Pagans and Infidels. The study of these contending faiths, and their deadly hatred to each other, began to create doubts in my mind respecting the truth of any one of these divisions. While studying

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[1] We have some independent testimony to Robert Owen's religious character in childhood. A nephew—Robert Owen Davies—wrote to the *St. James's Chronicle*, December, 1826, to vindicate his uncle from the charge of Atheism. "As a boy," he writes, "Robert Owen slept alone, because his elder brother was always beating him for saying his prayers upon his knees at the bedside: and afterwards when a youth he was ever remarked for his strict attention to his religious duties." (Quoted in letter to Mrs. Stewart, May 6, 1830, Manchester Collection.)

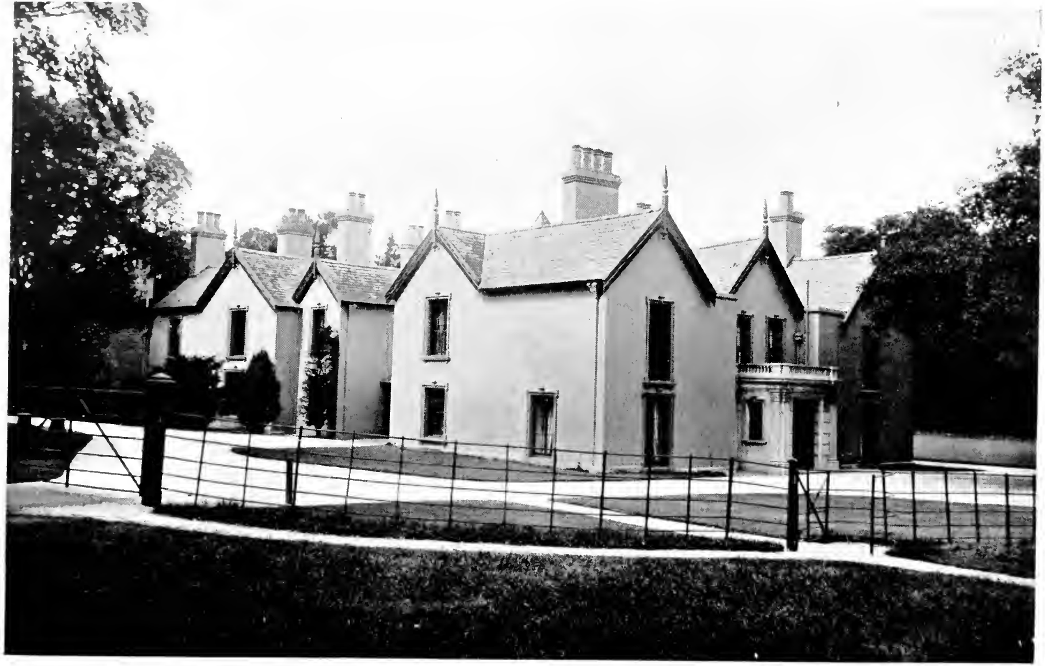

Photo by permission of Mr. John Owen, Newtown, Montgomeryshire.

THE OLD HALL, NEWTOWN, WHERE ROBERT OWEN WENT TO SCHOOL.

and thinking with great earnestness upon these subjects, I wrote three sermons, and I was called the little parson. These sermons I kept until I met with Sterne's works, in which I found among his sermons three so much like them in idea and turn of mind, that it occurred to me as I read them that I should be considered a plagiarist, and without thought, as I could not bear any such suspicion, I hastily threw them into the fire ; which I often after regretted, as I should like to know now how I then thought and expressed myself on such subjects. But certain it is that my reading religious works combined with my other readings, compelled me to feel strongly at ten years of age that there must be something fundamentally wrong in all religions, as they had been taught up to that period.

[As already said] I could not eat and drink as others of my age, and I was thus compelled to live in some respects the life of a hermit as regards temperance. I entered, however, into the amusements of those of my own standing, and followed the games played by boys at that period in that part of the country—such as marbles, hand and foot ball, etc. I also attended the dancing-school for some time, and in all these games and exercises I excelled, not only those of my own age, but those two or three years older, and I was so active that I was the best runner and leaper, both as to height and distance, in the school. I attempted also to learn music, and to play upon the clarionet, and during my noviciate, as my father's house was in the middle of the principal street, I fear I must have annoyed all the neighbourhood, for my "God save the King" and similar tunes were heard almost all over the town. But

I do not recollect that any formal complaint was ever made. I was too much of a favourite with the whole town for my benefit.

About this period, a young gentleman, a Mr. James Donne, who was studying for the Church, either at Oxford or at Cambridge, came upon a visit to Newtown during a vacation, and I became his every-day companion. He was then about nineteen, and I was between eight and nine. The country around Newtown is, I believe, generally considered to be interesting and beautiful, and Mr. Donne and myself, while he remained upon his visit, rambled about the woods and lanes and higher grounds to examine the scenery in all directions. These excursions with a man of his cultivated taste and superior conversation awakened in me a sense of pleasure which I ever afterwards experienced, in observing nature in its every variety—a pleasure which, as I advanced in years, continued and increased. The friendship thus commenced strengthened with our years and continued to the death of Mr. Donne, who became well known and highly respected as Mr. Donne of Oswestry. We had much correspondence, and when I had aroused the thinking faculties of the civilised world by the great public meetings which I held in the City of London Tavern in 1817, I was surprised by receiving a letter from my much valued friend, Dr. Donne, to inform me that he had taken a pleasant task upon himself, which was to trace my pedigree, and had discovered that I was a regular descendant from the Princes of North Wales.[1]

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[1] There are several letters from Dr. Donne in the Manchester Collection. He acted as Owen's agent in forwarding remittances to Owen's sister, Mrs. Weaver.

[During the school holidays Robert Owen used to visit his relations, farmers living in the neighbourhood of Newtown. His most intimate friend appears to have been a cousin, Richard Williams, a boy just a year younger than himself.] One very hot day in hay-harvest time we felt ourselves, being over-clothed, quite overcome with heat while we sauntered from the house towards a large field where numerous haymakers were actively at work. They appeared to us, who had been doing nothing and yet were overcome with heat, to be cool and comfortable. I said, "Richard, how is this? These active workpeople are not heated, but are pleasantly cool, and do not suffer as we do from the heat. There must be some secret in this. Let us try to find it out. Let us do exactly as they do, and work with them." He willingly agreed. I was, I suppose, between nine and ten years of age, and he was between eight and nine. We observed that all the men were without their coats and waistcoats, and had their shirts open. We adopted the same practice, procured the lightest rakes and forks, for both were used occasionally, and Richard and I, unburthened of our heavy clothing, led the field for several hours, and were cooler and less fatigued than when we were idle and wasting our time. This became ever afterwards a good experience and lesson to both; for we found ourselves much more comfortable with active employment than when we were idle.

Our next neighbours were two maiden ladies of the name of Tilsley, and they kept a superior country shop for the sale of drapery and haberdashery on one side, and groceries on the other. One of these ladies changed her situation by marrying a Mr. Moore, and as he enlarged the business so as to add a wholesale branch to their former retail trade, they required more assistance, and as I was active, it was supposed I could be useful to them, and my services were borrowed, at first on market and fair days ; and as I had been then two years in the capacity of usher, learning nothing but how to teach, Mr. Moore requested my father to permit me to be with them every day in the week, instead of, as hitherto, on their more busy days only ; and thus I was occupied for one year, but living in my own family.

Having by this period read much of other countries and other proceedings, and, with my habits of reflection and extreme temperance, not liking the habits and manners of a small country town, I began to desire a different field of action, and wished my parents to permit me to go to London. I was at this time about nine years and a half old ; and at length, although I was a great favourite at home, it was promised that when I should attain my tenth year I should be allowed to go. This promise satisfied me in the meantime, and I continued to gain knowledge of the business in which I was occupied, continuing also to read and to take lessons in dancing.

It was at those lessons that I first became conscious of the natural sympathies and dislikes or jealousies of children. I was esteemed the best dancer of my class, and at that period I was in the first class. The contest for partners among the girls was often amusing, but sometimes really distressing. The feelings of some of them, if they could not obtain the partners they liked, were so overpowering that it was afflicting to see how much they suffered. I have long thought that the minds and feelings of young children are seldom duly considered or attended to, and that if adults would patiently encourage them to express candidly what they thought and felt, much suffering would be saved to the children, and much useful knowledge in human nature would be gained by the adults. I am now conscious there was much real suffering in that dancing-room, which, had there been more knowledge of human nature in the dancing-master and in the parents of the children, might have been avoided.

The time had now drawn near for my departure from my parental roof, and for me to undertake a journey which in the then state of the roads was thought formidable for grown persons. From Shrewsbury I was to travel alone to London, inexperienced as I then was. At that time I knew and was known to every man, woman, and child in the town, and I called upon and took my leave of every one ; and I received many a keepsake, and, from the more wealthy, presents of money. I deemed myself, at ten years of age, amply provided to seek my fortune with forty shillings—the expenses of my coach hire being paid for me.

Before proceeding to narrate my journey I may state that I was never but once corrected by my parents. This correction took place under the following circumstances, and when I was, I think, scarcely seven years old. I was always desirous to meet the wishes of both my parents, and never refused to do whatever they asked me to do. One day my mother indistinctly said something to me to which I supposed the proper answer was "no," and in my usual way I said "no"—supposing I was meeting her wishes. Not understanding me, and supposing that I refused her request, she immediately, and to me rather sharply—for her custom was to speak kindly to me—said "What! Won't you?" Having said "no," I thought if I said "yes, I will" I should be contradicting myself, and should be expressing a falsehood, and I said again "no," but without any idea of disobeying her. If she had then patiently and calmly enquired what my thoughts and feelings were, a proper understanding would have arisen, and everything would have proceeded as usual. But my mother, not comprehending my thoughts and feelings, spoke still more sharply and angrily—for I had never previously disobeyed her, and she was no doubt greatly surprised and annoyed when I repeated that I would not. My mother never chastised any of us—this was left for my father to do, and my brothers and sisters occasionally felt a whip which was kept to maintain order among the children; but I had never previously been touched with it. My father was called in and my refusal stated. I was again asked if I would do what my mother required, and I said firmly "no," and I then felt the whip every time after I refused when asked if I would yield and do what was required. I said "no" every time I was so asked, and at length said quietly but firmly—"You may kill me, but I will not do it"; and this decided the contest. There was no attempt ever afterwards to correct me. From my own feelings, which I well remember when a child, I am convinced that very often punishment is not only useless, but very pernicious, and injurious to the punisher and the punished.

Though alone in going to London, I was not to be alone when I arrived there. My eldest brother, William, had been brought up by my father to his own business, and when out of his apprenticeship, and after he had subsequently worked some years with my father, he decided to go to London, when he was between twenty and thirty, and he there obtained a situation with a Mr. Reynolds, a saddler, who then lived at No. 84, High Holborn. To him I was consigned, for by this time Mr. Reynolds had died, and my brother had taken the business and had married the widow.

My father took me to Welshpool, and thence I went to take coach for London at Shrewsbury, which was then the nearest place to Newtown to which there was any public conveyance to go to London. The coach left Shrewsbury at night, and an outside place had been taken for me, with the expectation that I might travel inside during the night. The proprietor, who knew my family, was going to put me inside, when some ill-tempered man, who had discovered that I had paid only for an outside place, refused to allow me to enter. It was dark and I could not see the objector, nor discover how crowded the coach might be;—for coaches then carried six inside. I was glad afterwards that I did not know who this man was.

My father had written respecting me to his friend, a Mr. Heptinstall, of No. 6, Ludgate Hill, who was a large dealer in lace, foreign and British; and Mr. Moore had written in my favour to Mr. Tilsley, of No. 100, Newgate Street, who then kept what was deemed a large draper's shop. This was in 1781. I think I had been on this visit to my brother nearly six weeks, when Mr. Heptinstall procured me a situation with a Mr. James McGuffog, of whom he spoke highly as carrying on a large business, for a provincial town, in Stamford, Lincolnshire. The terms offered to me were for three years—the first without pay, the second with a salary of eight pounds, and the third with ten pounds, and with board, lodging and washing in the house. These terms I accepted, and being well found with clothes to serve me more than a year, I from that period, ten years of age, maintained myself without ever applying to my parents for any additional aid.

I left my brother's house in London, and arrived at Stamford, where I found Mr. McGuffog's establishment all that was stated, and his house respectable and comfortable. This was a most fortunate introduction for me into active life. Mr. James McGuffog was a Scotchman, thoroughly honest, and a good man of business—very methodical, kind, and liberal, and much respected by his neighbours and customers, and also, for his punctuality and good sense, by those from whom he purchased his goods for sale; and I was fortunate in obtaining such a man for my first master. He told me that he had commenced life in Scotland with half a crown, laid it out in the purchase of some things for sale, and hawked them in a basket. That by degrees he changed his basket for a pack, with which he travelled the country, acquiring knowledge through experience, and increasing his stock until he got, first a horse, and then a horse and covered van. He made his regular rounds among customers of the first respectability in Lincolnshire and the adjoining counties, until he was requested by the nobility and principal families and farmers around Stamford to open an establishment there for the sale of the best and finest articles of female wear, for which, for some time in his travelling capacity, he had become celebrated. When I came to his house he had been some years established in it, and was beginning to be so independent that he made all his purchases with ready money and was becoming wealthy. He had married a daughter of a well-doing middle-class person, and they appeared to live on very good terms with each other, and both were industrious, always attending to their business, yet respectable at all times in their persons, and altogether superior as retail tradespeople, being quite the aristocracy of that class, without its usual weak vanities. They had at this time an assistant of the name of Sloan, about thirty-five years of age, a bachelor; and also a youth about my own age, nephew to McGuffog.

Here I was at once installed as a member of the family, and during my stay with them I was treated more like their own child than as a stranger come from afar. I was by Mr. McGuffog carefully initiated into the routine of the business, and instructed in its detail, so as to accustom me to great order and accuracy. The business was carried on under a well-considered system, which in its results was very successful. I suppose I was considered industrious and attentive to my instructions, for I was seldom found fault with or unpleasantly spoken to by either Mr. or Mrs. McGuffog—the latter often attending to the business.

The articles dealt in were of the best, finest, and most choice qualities that could be procured from all the markets of the world; for many of the customers of the establishment were amongst the highest nobility in the kingdom, and often six or seven carriages belonging to them were at the same time in attendance at the premises. Mr. McGuffog's shop had become a kind of general rendezvous of the higher-class nobility. I had thus an opportunity of noticing the manners of these parties, and of studying their characters, when they were under the least restraint. I thus also became familiar with the finest fabrics of a great variety of manufactures, many of which required great delicacy in handling and care in keeping from being injured. These circumstances, trivial as they may appear, were of essential service to me in after life, when I became a manufacturer and commercial man upon a large scale; for they prepared me in some measure for the future intercourse I had with what is called the great world.

Mr. McGuffog had a well-selected library, which I freely used; for our chief business was from ten in the morning to four in the afternoon, and while I remained in Stamford I read upon the average about five hours a day.

One of the entrances to Burleigh Park was near the town; and in summer, and as long as the weather permitted, my chief pleasure was to go early into the park to walk, read, think, and study in those noble avenues which were then numerous in it. Very often in the midst of summer I was thus in the park from between three and four in the morning until eight, and again in the evening from six or seven until nearly dark. I had transcribed many of Seneca's moral precepts into a book which I kept in my pocket. To ponder over them in the park was one of my pleasurable occupations; and in this park, which I made my study, I read many volumes of the most useful works I could obtain.

Mr. McGuffog was of the Church of Scotland, Mrs. McGuffog of the Church of England, and they agreed to go in the morning to the service of the one, and in the afternoon to that of the other, and they always took me with them. I listened to the contending sermons, for they were often, and indeed most generally, either in reference to their own sectarian notions, or in opposition to some of the opposing sects. But during the four years I remained with Mr. and Mrs. McGuffog, I never knew a religious difference between them.

I was all this time endeavouring to find out *the true religion*, and was greatly puzzled for some time by finding all of every sect over the world, of which I read, or of which I heard from the pulpits, claim each for themselves to be in possession of *the true religion.* I studied and studied, and carefully compared one with another, for I was very religiously inclined, and desired most anxiously to be in the right way. But the more I heard, read, and reflected, the more I became dissatisfied with Christian, Jew, Mahomedan, Hindoo, Chinese, and Pagan. I began seriously to study the foundation of all of them, and to ascertain on what principle they were based. Before my investigations were concluded, I was satisfied that one and all had emanated from the same source, and their varieties from the same false imaginations of our early ancestors—imaginations formed when men were ignorant of their own nature, were devoid of experience, and were governed by their random conjectures, which were almost always, at first, like their notions of the fixedness of the earth, far from the truth.

It was with the greatest reluctance, and after long contests in my mind, that I was compelled to abandon my first and deep-rooted impressions in favour of Christianity. But being obliged to give up my faith in this sect, I was at the same time compelled to reject all others, for I had discovered that all had been based on the same absurd imagination, "that each one formed his own qualities—determined his own thoughts, will, and action,—and was responsible for them to God and to his fellow-men." My own reflections compelled me to come to very different conclusions. My reason taught me that I could not have made one of my own qualities—that they were forced upon me by Nature; that my language, religion, and habits were forced upon me by Society; and that I was entirely the child of Nature and Society; that Nature gave the qualities, and Society directed them. Thus was I forced, through seeing the error of their foundation, to abandon all belief in every religion which had been taught to man. But my religious feelings were immediately replaced by the spirit of universal charity—not for a sect or a party, or for a country or a colour, but for the human race, and with a real and ardent desire to do them good.

Before, however, I had advanced so far in knowledge, while I was yet a Christian, and was impressed with the sacredness of the Christian Sabbath, it seemed to me that in Stamford it was much disregarded, and it came into my head, at the age of twelve or thirteen, to write upon the subject to Mr. Pitt, who was then Prime Minister. In my letter to him, I stated the desecration which was going forward in Stamford, and expressed a hope that Government would adopt some measures to enforce a better observance of the Sabbath.

[To the delight of the youthful Puritan and the amazement of Mr. and Mrs. McGuffog, a Government proclamation, enjoining a stricter observance of the Sabbath, was published a few days later. At the age of fourteen or fifteen the boy returned to London, and then paid a brief visit to his parents at Newtown.]

After some time of this relaxation from business it was necessary for me to seek for a new situation, and through Mr. McGuffog's recommendation I procured one with Messrs. Flint and Palmer, an old-established house on old London Bridge, Borough side, overlooking the Thames. My previous habits prepared me to take an efficient part in the retail division of the business of serving. I was lodged and boarded in the house and had a salary of twenty-five pounds a year, and I thought myself rich and independent. To the assistants in this busy establishment the duties were very onerous. They were up and had breakfasted and were dressed to receive customers in the shop at eight o'clock—and dressing then was no slight affair. Boy as I was then, I had to wait my turn for the hairdresser to powder and pomatum and curl my hair, for I had two large curls on each side, and a stiff pigtail, and until all this was very nicely and systematically done, no one could think of appearing before a customer. Between eight and nine the shop began to fill with purchasers, and their number increased until it was crowded to excess, although a large apartment, and this continued until late in the evening; usually until ten, or half-past ten, during all the spring months. Dinner and tea were hastily taken—two or three, sometimes only one, escaping at a time to take what he or she could the most easily swallow, and returning to take the places of others who were serving. The only regular meals at this season were our breakfast, except on Sundays, on which days a good dinner was always provided, and was much enjoyed. But when the purchasers left at ten or half-past ten, before the shop could be quite clear a new part of the business was to be commenced. The articles dealt in as haberdashery were innumerable, and these when exposed to the customers were tossed and tumbled and unfolded in the utmost confusion and disorder, and there was no time or space to put anything right and in order during the day. This was a work to be performed with closed doors after the customers had been shut out at eleven o'clock ; and it was often two o'clock in the morning before the goods in the shop had been put in order and replaced to be ready for the next day's similar proceedings. Frequently at two o'clock in the morning, after being actively engaged on foot all day from eight o'clock in the [previous] morning, I have scarcely been able with the aid of the banisters to go upstairs to bed. And then I had but about five hours for sleep.

This hurried work and slavery of every day in the week appeared to me more than my constitution could support for a continuance, and before the spring trade had terminated I had applied to my friend to look out for another situation for me. The spring trade ceased, and the business gradually became less onerous. We could take our meals with some comfort, and retire to rest between eleven and twelve, and by comparison

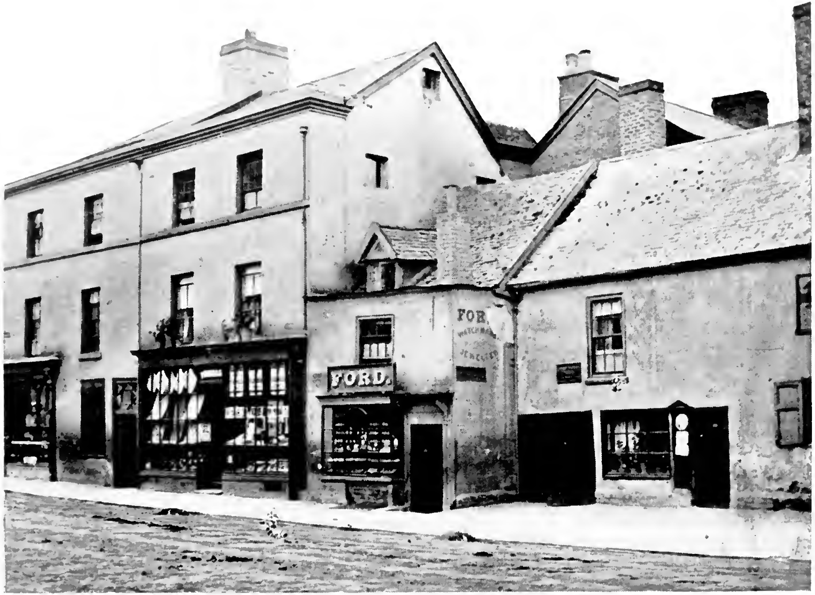

Photo by permission of Mr. John Owen, Newtown, Montgomeryshire.

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ROBERT OWEN'S BIRTH- AND DEATH-PLACE, NEWTOWN, NORTH WALES.

No. 1—The house in which he was born, May 14, 1771.
No. 2—The house in which he died, Nov. 17, 1858. This house, now the "Bear's Head" Inn, has been rebuilt since Owen's death.

this became an easy life. I was kindly treated. The youngest Palmer, a good and fine youth, took a great liking to me, and we became great friends, and spent our Sundays in some excursion always together, and as the less busy season advanced we began to enjoy our leisure hours in out-of-door exercise or in reading. His habits were good and his manners very pleasing. With this change I was becoming every day more and more reconciled to this new mode of life. I was beginning to enjoy it, having forgotten that I had requested my friend to look out for another situation, when, really to my regret, I learned from my brother that my former friend Mr. Heptinstall, of No. 6, Ludgate Hill, had obtained the offer of a very good situation for me, from a Mr. Satterfield, who carried on a wholesale and retail establishment in Manchester, that it was a first-rate house, and that he offered me, besides board, lodging and washing, in his house, *forty pounds a year*.

[With his removal to Manchester, apparently in his seventeenth year, the chapter of Owen's boyhood may be said to have closed. He now began to take up a man's work, and his later life belongs to history.]

CHAPTER II

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

BEFORE proceeding to trace Owen's life and work in Manchester, it will be well to take a wider survey and consider the conditions of the time into which he had been born and the manner of world he was now about to enter.

The closing decades of the eighteenth century witnessed the final stages in the supersession of the mediæval system of industry, and the establishment of the present era. The essential differences between the two eras from the economic standpoint can be summarised in a few sentences. In mediæval England the prices of commodities, the wages of labour, and the rent, where rent existed, of land were fixed by custom, and the changes enforced from century to century by changing economic conditions were regulated and as far as possible retarded by legal enactments, and by the restrictions imposed by guilds and immemorial usage. Profit was not recognised as an element in production, and the minds of devout Christians were still exercised as to the lawfulness of exacting interest. Agriculture for the most part was carried on under the communal system which prevailed at an early stage in the history of all Aryan peoples, and the several functions of landlord, capitalist, and labourer were still in the main undifferentiated. The yeoman freeholder tilled his own land: in the handicrafts the apprentice and the journeyman rose in the natural course of events to the position of a master.

But the revolution, though in its last stages it progressed with startling rapidity, had been for centuries in preparation. Gradually Parliament had learnt the futility of regulating wages and prices by statute: the communal system of land tenure had been disappearing step by step; one industry after another had developed to a point at which it became possible for a single employer to organise and profit by the labours of many workmen. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the revolution began to quicken its pace. The fifty years from 1710 to 1760 were years of good harvests, a slowly increasing population, and unexampled prosperity. The rapid growth of our Colonies created a demand for our manufactures—a demand which our steadily growing mastery of the sea, hampered though internal communication still remained through bad roads, enabled us in a large measure to supply. England exported during this period not only manufactured goods, but a considerable quantity of corn; and the agricultural labourer was better off than he had been for nearly two hundred years. But his status was already changing for the worse. At the close of the preceding century there had been in England some 180,000 yeomen—small freeholders tilling their own land—a large proportion of the land of England was still cultivated by villages on the communal system; there were millions of acres of waste land, on which the poor could graze their beasts and even build their cottages. But throughout the eighteenth century the nobility and the country squires betook themselves to enlarging and improving their estates, partly to have and to hold the political power which went with the land, partly to maintain their position in face of the growing wealth of the merchant princes of London and the west of England. As a means to this end the small freeholders were gradually expropriated, until towards the close of the century the class had become almost extinct. Commons and waste lands were enclosed under successive Acts of Parliament, and the old three-field system of the village commune—wasteful and antiquated as it was—yielded to improved methods of agriculture, which permitted of a better rotation of crops, scientific manuring of the ground, and improved breeds of sheep and cattle. These various measures, whilst largely increasing the productiveness of the soil and the general wealth of the country, had the effect of driving out the small freeholder, and ultimately of making the labourer poorer and much more dependent than before.

But it was in the handicrafts, and especially in the textile industries, that the progress of the century wrought most change. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the staple industry of the country, as it had been for some hundreds of years, was the manufacture of woollen goods. The raw material was for the most part supplied from native sources. The instruments of the manufacture were the spinning-wheel and the handloom; and even if this primitive machinery had admitted of consolidation in large factories, the only available motive power was to be found in the waterwheel and the horse-mill. Moreover, in the early years of the century, "commercial enterprise was exceedingly limited. Owing to the bad state of the roads, and the entire absence of inland navigation, goods could only be conveyed on pack-horses, with a gang of which the Manchester chapmen used occasionally to make circuits to the principal towns, and sell their goods to the shopkeeper—bringing back with them sheep's wool, which was disposed of to the makers of worsted yarn at Manchester, or to the clothiers of Rochdale, Saddleworth and the West Riding of Yorkshire."[1] Baines's description applies chiefly to the north of England, in which the means of internal communication remained in a very backward state until, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, Brindley constructed his famous canals and Metcalf showed how roads could be made. In the south and west no doubt foreign trade and internal communications were much more advanced; and here we find the beginnings of a capitalist industry. But for the most part the functions of capitalist, employer, and workmen were still undifferentiated.

Spinning and weaving were very largely carried on by the poor in their own homes, and often were an adjunct to a small farm or croft. There is a well-known passage in Defoe's *Tour* which describes this cottage or yeoman industry, as he witnessed it in the neighbourhood of Halifax about 1725.

Not only, he writes, were the houses thick at the bottoms of the valleys, "but the sides of the hills were spread with Houses, and that very thick: for the Land being divided into small Enclosures, that is to say, from two Acres to six or seven Acres each, seldom more; every three or four Pieces of Land had a House belonging to it. . . . Hardly a House standing out of a Speaking distance from another. We could see that almost at every house there was a Tenter, and almost on every Tenter a piece of cloth or Kersie or Shalloon, for they are the three Articles of that country's Labour. At every considerable House was a Manufactury. As every clothier must keep a horse, perhaps two, to fetch home his Wool and his Provisions from the Market, to carry his Yarn to the Spinners, his manufacture to a fulling Mill, and when finished, to the Market to be sold, and the like; so every Manufacturer generally, keeps a cow or two or more for his Family, and this employs the two, or three or four pieces of enclosed Land about his House, for they scarce sow Corn enough for their Cocks and Hens. Among the Manufacturers' Houses are likewise scattered an infinite number of Cottages or small Dwellings, in which dwell the Workmen which are employed, the Women and Children of whom are always busy carding, Spinning &c., so that no Hands being unemployed, all can gain their Bread, even from the youngest to the ancient: hardly anything above four years old, but its Hands are sufficient to its self."[1]

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[1] Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, p. 105.

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[1] Defoe's *Tour* (edition of 1727), Vol. iii., pp. 97-101. These remote moorland districts round Halifax were behind many parts of England in their industrial development even in the third decade of the eighteenth century, and they have remained behind the world until quite recent times. Mr. F. H. Williamson, writing to me in January, 1903, gives the following description of this part of Yorkshire, from his personal knowledge:—

"It is only quite recently that the handloom has disappeared from parts of the West Riding. I can quite well remember about 1880-85 seeing a few old men who still carried on their weaving business in their own homes; and the click of the loom was not infrequently heard from the roadside cottages out on the moors.

"I can remember quite a number of old men who had been handloom

William Radcliffe, the joint inventor of a machine for dressing the warp, gives a minute and highly interesting description of rural life in the more populous parish of Mellor, about 14 miles from Manchester, in the period just before the introduction of the new machinery: "In the year 1770, the land in our township was occupied by between fifty to sixty farmers; rents, to the best of my recollection, did not exceed 10*s.* per statute acre; and out of these fifty or sixty farmers, there were only six or seven who raised their rents directly from the produce of their farms; all the rest got their rent partly in some branch of trade, such as spinning and weaving woollen, linen or cotton. The cottagers were employed entirely in this manner, except for a few weeks in the harvest. Being one of those cottagers and intimately acquainted with all the rest, as well as every farmer, I am better able to relate particularly how the change from the old system of hand labour to the new one of machinery operated in

weavers when they were younger, but had been compelled to give it up in later life. These old men were frequently both farmers and weavers; they had a little plot of freehold land where they would keep a cow or two and perhaps a donkey which they used to carry their cloth or materials—when they did not carry them on their backs, as they often did—to market. The warp and weft were, I believe, bought in the neighbouring towns, Huddersfield or Halifax, but all the operations were conducted at home; the warp was put on the loom, the weft was wound on bobbins for the shuttles by the women (I think a treadle winding-machine, somewhat similar to the spinning-wheel, was used) and woven by the men. The piece was "tented" on tenting-frames in the fields, and then taken off to the towns to be disposed of.

"I never saw a young man at the handloom. The older men who had used it were a much finer race than the present generation who work in large factories—tall, hardy, of great physical strength and endurance, and very long-lived. Eighty was not at all an uncommon age; and whole families could be found of which all the members attained that age."

raising the price of land in the subdivision I am speaking of. Cottage rents at that time, with convenient loom-shop, and a small garden attached, were from one and a half to two guineas per annum. The father of a family would earn from eight shillings to half-a-guinea at his loom; and his sons, if he had one, two or three alongside of him, six or eight shillings each per week; but the great sheet-anchor of all cottages and small farms, was the labour attached to the hand-wheel; and when it is considered that it required six to eight hands to prepare and spin yarn, of any of the three materials I have mentioned, sufficient for the consumption of one weaver,—this shows clearly the inexhaustible source there was for labour for every person from the age of seven to eighty years (who retained their sight and could move their hands) to earn their bread, say one to three shillings per week, without going to the parish."[1]

The Yorkshire weavers no doubt used wool grown in the neighbourhood, and the farmers of Mellor were largely dependent upon similar supplies. But where the raw material was imported from afar, or where the proximity of a seaport or other circumstances offered greater facilities for trade, we find that the industry tended to concentrate itself in a particular locality, and that frequently the raw material would be supplied and the whole operation directed by capitalist employers. There were tailors in London at the end of the seventeenth century who employed scores of workmen, engaging and dismissing them as the work required, much as in recent times;[1] the capitalist clothiers of Wiltshire, Somerset, Gloucester and Devon, who employed mostly Spanish wool and exported largely to foreign markets, supplied the raw material to the spinners and weavers, and disposed of the manufactured product, earning large fortunes for themselves in the process. Hollinworth mentions three famous clothiers, at Kendal, Halifax, and Manchester respectively, so early as 1520, each of whom had in his employment a large number of carders, spinners, weavers, and so on.[2] In Arthur Young's time there was a large silk-mill, worked by water power, on the banks of the Derwent.[3] The same writer found in 1776 a linen factory at Ballymote, co. Sligo, employing ninety looms, which had been established by Lord Shelburne some twenty years previously.[4]

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[1] *Origin of Power Loom Weaving*, by William Radcliffe (1828), pp. 59-60.

Again, the manufacture of cotton from the very beginning was concentrated chiefly in Manchester and its neighbourhood. *Both* the fibres of which cotton cloth was at this time composed—for until about 1770 linen thread was always used for the warp—were imported, the linen chiefly from Ireland, the cotton from the West Indies, and it is probable that the geographical situation of Manchester was mainly responsible for the concentration of the industry in this spot. Further, it seems certain that, as in the west of England, the industry was at least partly organised on a capitalist basis. Thus Dr. Aikin, in his *Description of Manchester*,[5] writes:

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[1] Webb's *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 26.

[2] Quoted by Baines, *History of Cotton Manufacture*, p. 91.

[3] See *The Modern Factory System*, by W. Cooke Taylor, p. 71.

[4] *Tour in Ireland*, Reprint of 1892, Vol. I., p. 223.

[5] *Description of the Country Round Manchester*, 1795, p. 158.

"Fustians were manufactured about Bolton, Leigh, and the places adjacent: but Bolton was the principal market for them, where they were bought in the grey by the Manchester chapman, who finished and sold them in the country.

"The Manchester traders went regularly on market-days to buy pieces of fustian of the weaver; each weaver then procuring yarn or cotton as he could, which subjected the trade to great inconvenience. To remedy this, some of the chapmen furnished warps and wool to the weavers, and employed persons on commission to put out warps to the weavers. They also encouraged weavers to fetch them from Manchester, and, by prompt payment and good usage, endeavoured to secure good workmanship."

But the factory system, as we understand it, had not yet begun. Even when the employer supplied the raw material and sold the finished cloth, the workers for the most part provided their own spinning-wheels and looms and worked in their own homes. In the earlier decades of the eighteenth century it was only in the manufacture of silk that the nature of the machinery used was such as to admit of the economical employment of any power except that of human limbs. For indeed, up to the middle of the century, the machinery employed throughout Europe in spinning and weaving had scarcely advanced since the time of the Pharoahs. The distaff had yielded to the spinning-wheel; but the spinster still laboriously wrought a single thread, with such slowness that one loom, even a handloom, required, as we have seen, the services of six or eight spinning-wheels to keep it constantly supplied. The handloom itself, an improvement, no doubt, on the rude frame stretched by the Hindoo between two palm-trees, was still worked by the weaver's feet; and, until the invention, in 1738, of the fly-shuttle, the thread was still passed through the warp by the weaver's hand. Again, the manufacturers of Manchester could not compete in fineness with the fabrics of India, wrought by still ruder machinery, nor make a thread of cotton strong enough to be used for the warp in the process of weaving.

But from 1738 onwards there came, in rapid succession, a number of inventions, each aiming at substituting mechanical devices for the slow and uncertain operations of human fingers in spinning. John Wyatt, Thomas Highs, James Hargreaves, Richard Arkwright, and Samuel Crompton are the chief names on this roll of honour. Hargreaves invented the spinning-jenny (the name was given out of compliment to his wife), Arkwright the water-frame, as it was called, from the motive power originally employed to work it. Both inventions were actually brought into use for commercial purposes between 1760 and 1770; and a few years later Crompton combined the characteristic merits of the inventions of his two predecessors in a new machine, hence called the "mule."

The work done by the fingers in spinning consisted in at once stretching and twisting the fine fibres of the cotton. The problem which the great inventors set before them was how to enable machinery to do the work hitherto done by human fingers; to do it faster; to stretch the fibres to a much higher degree of fineness; and to twist the thread to a much greater hardness. Robert Dale Owen gives an admirable description of the working of Arkwright's machine. "In the earliest days the Hindoo, holding in his left hand a staff around one end of which was wrapped a portion of the vegetable fleece, drew out with forefinger and thumb, moist and delicate, and then deftly twisted, the thread. After tens of centuries Arkwright substituted for human forefinger and thumb two sets of rollers revolving with unequal velocity, the lower roller of each pair fluted longitudinally, the upper covered with leather. This gave them a sufficient hold of the cotton as it passed between them. The space between the two pairs of rollers was made somewhat greater than the length of the cotton fibre. The back pair which received the cotton in the form of a band or ribbon, revolved much more slowly than the front pair, which delivered it. The effect was that, at the moment when the cotton ribbon was released from the grasp of the back pair of rollers, the front pair, because of their greater velocity, exerted upon it a slight steady pull.

"The result of this was twofold, first, to straighten out the fibres left crooked or doubled in the carding; secondly to elongate the line of cotton presented to the action of these rollers, and thus diminish its calibre. In other words, the front pair of rollers drew the cotton out, as the finger and thumb pulling on the contents of the distaff had done, but with far more rapidity and regularity than human fingers ever attained. This process was repeated through three machines, and the cotton band was thus reduced in thickness by successive attenuations. . . . By the front rollers of the last of these machines, usually called a *throstle frame*, the cotton cord was drawn out to the calibre or fineness of the thread to be produced; and underneath these rollers were stationary spindles (revolving with much greater velocity than the spindle of the cottager's wheel had done) on which the hard-twisted thread was finally wound."[1]

In Crompton's mule moving, instead of stationary, spindles were employed, and the final process of stretching and twisting the fibres was effected by the spindles as they receded from the rollers. Yarn of much finer quality was produced by the mule than it had been found possible to produce with Arkwright's machine.

It was obvious that the relations between spinning and weaving were now in danger of being reversed. The mule and the water-frame could produce far more cotton twist than the slow handloom could hope to overtake. A Kentish clergyman named Cartwright, realising this danger, set himself to work in 1785 to invent a loom which could be worked by mechanical power. He took out a patent in the following year; and between that date and the end of the century successive improvements were made by various inventors. It was not, however, until early in the nineteenth century that the power-loom came into general use.

Hitherto, as already said, the only motive-powers available for working machinery, whether for spinning or for weaving, were the labour of men or animals and the waterwheel. But for the last thirty years of the eighteenth century James Watt, protected by a special statutory monopoly, laboured incessantly to perfect his discovery of the steam-engine; and in the early years of the nineteenth century steam began to displace water as the motive-power in mills and factories.

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[1] *Threading my Way* (An Autobiography), by Robert Dale Owen, pp. 10-12. London, 1874.

At the time when Robert Owen came to Manchester, however, the power-loom and the steam-engine were still in their infancy. The spinning machinery employed in the great mills which were springing up on every side in Manchester was worked by water-power. Manufacturers on a smaller scale drove the spinning jennies and mules by hand or foot. Its nearness to a great port had originally made Lancashire the chief seat of the cotton industry : the abundance of water-power enabled the county still to retain its pre-eminence in this manufacture, to which the mechanical inventions described now gave an enormous impetus. The following figures will show that Owen came upon the scene just at the time of the most rapid increase, due mainly to the annulling of Arkwright's patent in 1785.

COTTON IMPORTED INTO GREAT BRITAIN FROM 1701-1800.

	LBS.
In 1701 the amount of cotton imported was ...	1,985,868
,, 1764 ,, ,, ,, ...	3,870,392
,, 1776-80 (yearly average) ,, ...	6,766,613
,, 1790 ,, ,, ,, ...	31,447,605
,, 1800 ,, ,, ,, ...	56,010,732

BRITISH COTTONS EXPORTED FROM 1701-1800.

Official Value.

	£
In 1701 the cottons exported were valued at ...	23,253
,, 1764 ,, ,, ,, ...	200,354
,, 1780 ,, ,, ,, ...	355,060
,, 1790 ,, ,, ,, ...	1,662,369
,, 1800 ,, ,, ,, ...	5,406,501 [1]

In the space of ten years, from 1780 to 1790, the amount of raw cotton imported, and the value of the manufactured cottons exported from this country had increased in about the same proportion, viz. nearly fivefold. At the end of the next decade the imports had again nearly doubled, whilst the exports had increased more than threefold in value. This enormous increase in the volume of the work done was necessarily accompanied by a large, though not of course a proportionate, increase in the number of the workers. There were no census returns in the eighteenth century, and it is difficult to find trustworthy figures showing the growth of population. But Dr. Aikin in the work already quoted gives, presumably from official sources, tables of the number of births and deaths in Manchester at successive periods, which afford some measure of the enormous growth of the population at this time :—

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[1] These figures are quoted from Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, p. 215, where they are stated to have been supplied by the Custom House.

BILLS OF MORTALITY FOR MANCHESTER.

YEAR.	BIRTHS.	DEATHS.
1700	231	229
1760	793	818
1770	1,050	988
1780	1,566	993
1790	2,756	1,940

These figures, it will be seen, tell the same tale as the statistics of imports and exports already quoted. Between 1780 and 1790 the population had probably doubled itself.[1] The rush to the great cotton centres

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[1] Sir S. Walpole in his *History of England from* 1815 (Vol. I., p. 89) gives the following figures of the population of Manchester at different periods :—

1724	2,400 families ... ... =	12,000 persons
1757	Manchester and Salford	20,000 „
1774	Manchester alone	41,032 „
1801	„ „	84,020 „

must have been like the rush to a goldfield in more recent times, but on a much more extended scale, for all alike, the old, men and women in their prime, and young children, could take part in this race for wealth. And, as will presently be shown, the young children bore a disproportionate part of the burden. Again, the influx comprised all classes. Those who had money and organising capacity to invest, and those whose only capital was the ability of their hands, alike flocked into Manchester and the surrounding districts. The numbers were recruited no doubt largely from the labourers, the yeomen and small farmers who had been thrust off the land as a consequence of wholesale enclosures and other changes described in the earlier part of this chapter.

William Radcliffe, from whom I have already quoted, gives a vivid description of the nature of the revolution in the textile industry, in so far as it affected the domestic manufacturers in the closing decades of the eighteenth century: "From the year 1770 to 1788, a complete change had gradually been effected in the spinning of yarns; that of wool had disappeared altogether, and that of linen was also nearly gone; cotton, cotton, cotton was become the almost universal material for employment; the hand-wheels were all thrown into lumber-rooms; the yarn was all spun on common jennies. . . . In weaving, no great alteration had taken place during these eighteen years, save the introduction of the fly-shuttle, a change in the woollen looms to fustians and calico, and the linen nearly gone, except the few fabrics in which there was a mixture of cotton. To the best of my recollection, there was no increase of looms during this period, but rather a decrease. . . .

"The next fifteen years, viz. from 1788 to 1803, I will call the golden age of this great trade. . . . Water twist and common jenny yarns had been freely used in Bolton, etc., for some years prior to 1788; but it was the introduction of mule yarns about this time, along with the other yarns, all assimilating together and producing every description of clothing, from the finest book-muslin, lace, stocking, etc., to the heaviest fustian, that gave such a preponderating wealth through the loom. . . .

"The families in my own neighbourhood, whether as cottagers or small farmers, had supported themselves by the different occupations I have mentioned in spinning and manufacturing, as their progenitors from the earliest institutions of society had done before them. But the mule twist now coming into vogue, for the warp, as well as weft, added to the water twist and common jenny yarns, with an increasing demand for every fabric the loom could produce, put all hands in request, of every age and description. The fabrics made from wool and linen vanished, while the old loom-shops being insufficient, every lumber-room, even old barns, cart-houses, and outbuildings of any description were repaired, windows broke through the old blank walls, and all fitted up for loom-shops. This source of making room being at length exhausted, new weavers' cottages, with loom-shops, rose up in every direction; all immediately filled, and when in full work, the weekly circulation of money, as the price of labour only, rose to five times the amount ever before experienced in this sub-division, every family bringing home weekly forty, sixty, eighty, one hundred, or even one hundred and twenty shillings per week."[1]

But the spinning-jenny, the water-frame and the mule cost far more to purchase than the old cottage wheel which they had displaced, and under the new conditions the cotton industry depended wholly on foreign countries for the supply of its raw material, and largely on foreign markets for the sale of its finished products. Both the cost of the new machinery and the conditions attending production for external markets favoured the capitalist at the expense of the individual worker. We find Robert Owen starting in 1790 as the owner of three of the new machines (Crompton's mules), and the master to that extent of three pairs of hands besides his own. And in all directions it is clear that the new industry was being organised on a large scale. Already in 1787, according to the reckoning of a contemporary pamphlet,[2] there were 143 cotton mills in Great Britain, of which 41 were in Lancashire and 22 in Derbyshire; and we see from Owen's account of his life in Manchester that more mills were springing up yearly in the town and its environs. Half a century later, at the time of the publication of Baines's book, the number of cotton mills in Lancashire alone was 657, and the number of operatives employed in them was estimated at more than 137,000. By that date the industrial revolution may be supposed to have been complete, and the cottage industry had practically ceased to exist except in a few moorland parishes and other remote corners of

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[1] Radcliffe, *op. cit.* pp. 63-6.

[2] Quoted by Baines, p. 219.

England. But during Owen's sojourn in Manchester from 1788 to 1800, the two forms of production existed side by side. These twelve years represent the most interesting part of the transition period. It was not until the steam-engine and the power-loom had been perfected that the superior advantages conferred by capital and organising ability became sufficiently marked to drive the cottage manufacturer from the field.

CHAPTER III

LIFE IN MANCHESTER

IT was in 1787, apparently, that Robert Owen entered the shop of Mr. Satterfield, in St. Ann's Square, Manchester. The living, he tells us, was good, the company congenial, and the work not too hard ; he was well treated, and found his income much more than sufficient for his moderate wants. In this situation he remained for two uneventful years, leaving it when eighteen years of age to take a share for himself in the great industrial hurly-burly.

At this time, 1789, Crompton's mule, the invention of which had been made public a few years previously, was rapidly displacing the spinning-jenny and the water-frame. As Crompton had neither the means nor apparently the desire to patent his great invention, it was open to all the world to make and use the new machine. A man named Jones, who sold wire bonnet-frames to Mr. Satterfield's establishment, told Owen of the new invention, and suggested that if Owen could find the small capital required, they might enter into partnership and make mules for sale. Owen obtained the loan of a hundred pounds from his brother William in London, left Mr. Satterfield's service, and set up business with Jones. They rented a large machine-shop, obtained the necessary wood, iron, and brass on credit, and soon had forty men at work making spinning-mules. But whilst Jones supplied the knowledge requisite for working the machinery, the whole direction of the business devolved upon young Owen. "I had not the slightest knowledge of this new machinery—had never seen it at work. I was totally ignorant of what was required; but as there were so many men engaged to work for us, I knew that their wages must be paid, and that if they were not well looked after, our business must soon cease and end in our ruin. Jones knew little about book-keeping, finance matters, or the superintendence of men. I therefore undertook to keep the accounts—pay and receive all; and I was the first and last in the manufactory. I looked very wisely at the men in their different departments, although I really knew nothing. But by intensely observing everything, I maintained order and regularity throughout the establishment, which proceeded under such circumstances, far better than I anticipated." (*Autobiography*, p. 23.)

In a few months' time, however, Jones found another partner, a man who had a larger capital to dispose of, and Owen was bought out, accepting for his share of the business the promise of six mules, a reel, and a making-up machine. Thus in 1790, at the age of nineteen, Owen was left to his own resources.

It is worthy of note that whilst still in partnership with Jones, Owen had received an offer from his first master, McGuffog, that he should join him in his Stamford shop, receiving half profits in the first instance, and ultimately succeeding to the whole business. This offer, Owen writes, "I was of course obliged to decline"—conceiving apparently that his undertaking with Jones precluded him from dissolving the partnership.

Owen now immediately hired a large building "or *factory*, as such places were beginning to be called," and engaged three men to work his *three* mules—all that he ever received out of the promised six—and thus started life on his own account as an employer of labour on a small scale. The mules could only undertake the final process in the manufacture of cotton thread: the preliminary stages of carding, drawing, and making-up the cotton into "rovings" were performed on Arkwright's machines. Owen purchased his "rovings,"—loose skeins of half-spun cotton fibre—from two young Scotchmen, McConnell and Kennedy, afterwards well known as cotton lords, at twelve shillings a pound, and sold the finished cotton yarn at twenty-two shillings a pound. His profits in the first year were no less than £300.

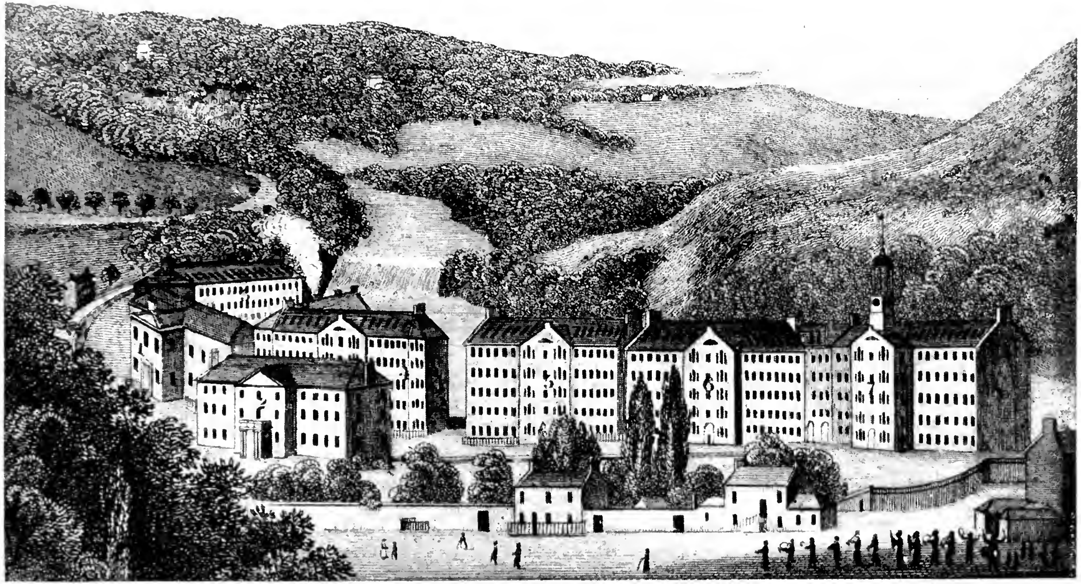
At this time, as already said, many wealthy capitalists were embarking on the business of cotton-spinning, and large factories were springing up on every hand. One Drinkwater, a rich fustian manufacturer, was amongst those who had recently built and equipped with machinery a large cotton mill, when his superintendent, tempted by a richer offer from the outside, suddenly left his service, and Mr. Drinkwater, himself almost wholly ignorant of the processes of cotton manufacture, was forced to advertise for a new manager: "On the Monday morning following," Owen writes, "when I entered the room where my spinning-machines were, one of the spinners said—'Mr. Lee has left Mr. Drinkwater, and he has advertised for a manager.' I merely said, 'What will he do?' and passed on to my own occupation. But (and how such an idea could enter my head, I know not), without saying a word, I put on my hat and proceeded straight to Mr. Drinkwater's counting-house, and boy and inexperienced as I was, I asked him for the situation which he had advertised. The circumstances which now occurred made a lasting impression upon me, because they led to important future consequences. He said immediately—'You are too young'—and at that time being fresh coloured I looked younger than I was. I said 'That was an objection made to me four or five years ago, but I did not expect it would be made to me now.'—'How old are you?' 'Twenty in May this year'—was my reply. 'How often do you get drunk in the week?' (This was a common habit with almost all persons in Manchester and Lancashire at that period). 'I was never,' I said, 'drunk in my life'—blushing scarlet at this unexpected question. My answer and the manner of it made, I suppose, a favourable impression; for the next question was—'What salary do you ask?' 'Three hundred a year'—was my reply. 'What?' Mr. Drinkwater said, with some surprise, repeating the words—'Three hundred a year! I have had this morning I know not how many seeking the situation, and I do not think that all their askings together would amount to what you require.' 'I cannot be governed by what others ask,' said I, 'and I cannot take less. I am now making that sum by my own business.' 'Can you prove that to me?' 'Yes, I will show you the business and my books.' 'Then I will go with you, and let me see them,' said Mr. Drinkwater. We went to my factory. I explained the nature of my business, opened the book, and proved my statement to his satisfaction" (p. 27).

In the sequel Owen got the appointment on his own terms, and was set straightway to superintend an establishment employing five hundred workpeople, and fitted with machinery much of which was quite unfamiliar to him. For a time, he tells us, his heart failed him at the thought of the task which lay before him, and he was stupefied at his own presumption. But "there I was, to undertake this task, and no one to give me any assistance. I at once determined to do the best I could, and began to examine the outline and detail of what was in progress. I looked grave,—inspected everything very minutely,—examined the drawings and calculations of the machinery, as left by Mr. Lee, and these were of great use to me. I was with the first in the morning, and I locked up the premises at night, taking the keys with me. I continued this silent inspection and superintendence day by day for six weeks, saying merely yes or no to the questions of what was to be done or otherwise, and during that period I did not give one direct order about anything. But at the end of that time I felt myself so much master of my position, as to be ready to give directions in every department" (p. 29).

Owen's experience during the past year, and the training and knowledge of fine fabrics acquired under Mr. McGuffog, now stood him in good stead. He soon learnt to correct defects in the machinery and to improve the quality of the yarn. He learnt also to maintain order and discipline amongst the workpeople, and succeeded, as he tells us, in winning their goodwill and in establishing a salutary influence over them.

Owen's management of the factory soon proved remarkably successful. Under the management of his predecessor, Lee, the finest yarn produced averaged only one hundred and twenty hanks to the pound. Within twelve months Owen so improved the process of manufacture that his yarns ran from two hundred and fifty to three hundred hanks to the pound—a noteworthy feat in those early days—and were eagerly sought after by the best houses for weaving of muslin and other fine fabrics. His name was printed on the outside of every bundle, so that he soon became favourably known in manufacturing circles. Mr. Drinkwater seems to have been fully alive to his merits, and within a short time offered him a partnership in the business—an offer which Owen gladly accepted. Within a year or two, however, Mr. Drinkwater was led to repent his precipitancy. Mr. Oldknow, the leading manufacturer at that time of British muslins—for the finest muslins still came from the East—proposed for the hand of Mr. Drinkwater's eldest daughter, and seems at the same time to have suggested a partnership, or at least a joint interest between them in business. The deed of partnership with young Owen stood in the way of this scheme, and, at Oldknow's suggestion, Drinkwater approached Owen to ascertain on what terms he would consent to cancel the agreement, offering him any salary he might choose to name as the price of his consent. The boy's pride took fire—he destroyed the deed on the spot, and resigned at the same time his position as manager, consenting, however, to remain until Mr. Drinkwater should find some one to replace him. Owen at once received more than one offer of partnership from capitalists who were no doubt already acquainted with the excellence of the yarn produced under his superintendence, and finally entered into an agreement with two well-known firms, Messrs. Borrodale and Atkinson of London, and Messrs. Barton of Manchester. He joined himself with them to form a new firm under the style of the Chorlton Twist Company, and left Drinkwater's service in 1794 or 1795 to take up his new duties.

As one of the managing directors of the Chorlton Twist Company he had first to superintend the building of the new factory, and to install the machinery, and, when this work was completed, to purchase the raw cotton, to supervise its manufacture, and to dispose of the manufactured product. In the course of his duties he visited not only other manufacturing towns in Lancashire, but proceeded as far north as Glasgow, where his firm had many customers. His journeys to Glasgow had important consequences. It so happened that on his first visit he met in the street a Miss Spear, sister of a business acquaintance in Manchester. Miss Spear introduced him to the friend with whom she was staying in Glasgow, a young lady of nineteen, Caroline, daughter of the well-known merchant and philanthropist, David Dale. Miss Dale gave Owen an introduction to see her father's cotton mills at New Lanark; and on Owen's return from their inspection he saw Miss Dale again, and even accompanied her and her younger sisters in their morning walk on Glasgow Green. The acquaintance thus happily begun was improved on Owen's subsequent visits to Glasgow, which his partners decided should in future be made twice a year. In those days of dear postage it was the custom for every traveller to defy



From a contemporary engraving.

No. 1—Top part a School for the Children—the under part a Public Kitchen.
No. 2—A School for the Formation of Character. Nos. 3-7—Cotton Factories.
The figures represented are the Village Band.

A VIEW OF NEW LANARK.

the Postmaster-General's monopoly, and become an unlicensed postman for the benefit of his friends. Owen in this fashion, on his next journey to the north, conveyed a letter from Miss Spear to her friend Miss Dale. He was no doubt a purely innocent go-between ; but it may be doubted whether Miss Spear was not actuated by other motives than the desire of defrauding the revenue. She had, it seems, already spoken to Owen much, and with intention, of the excellent qualities of her friend, and of the still unfettered state of her affections. This second visit, thanks to the timely introduction afforded by Miss Spear's letter, led to more walks on the banks of the Clyde, and to a further progress in intimacy. On his return from this second visit, Miss Spear again spoke much of her friend's personal excellence ; and, finally—for the young Owen, bold and self-reliant in business, was sufficiently diffident in social matters to need something stronger than a hint—ventured to tell him plainly that Miss Dale desired no other than himself for her future husband. Owen for his part was more than willing, though without this open encouragement he would scarcely, he tells us, have ventured to aspire so high. For David Dale stood well in the eyes of the world. He was a man of great wealth, the leading merchant, probably, at that time in Glasgow. He owned several factories and other business concerns in various parts of Scotland ; his cotton mills at New Lanark, founded in conjunction with Arkwright in 1783, were the first mills of any importance in Scotland ; he had opened a branch of the Royal Bank in Glasgow ; had helped to found the Chamber of Commerce in that town ; was a member of the Town Council and had twice served as magistrate. As material evidence of his wealth and position he had built for himself, some fifteen years previously, a magnificent house—still standing—in Charlotte Street, of which the brothers Adam are the reputed architects. Moreover his religious views presented, even more than his social importance, a serious obstacle to a prospective son-in-law who already suspected, if he had not at this time openly proclaimed, that he had discovered the fallacies of all revelation.

For David Dale was religious with all the fervour and narrowness of his country and his generation. He had in early manhood seceded from the mother Church of Scotland and founded the sect of the "Old Scotch Independents." He travelled round the country visiting and encouraging the various churches belonging to the communion, and himself acted for nearly forty years as pastor to his own special congregation in Greyfriars Wynd. To help him in his Sunday sermons he had taught himself to read the Scriptures in Hebrew and Greek. Such was the man whose daughter Owen, the freethinker, aspired to marry.[1]

Upon his next visit to Scotland, nevertheless, Owen discovered his hopes to Miss Dale, who for her part explained that she could never marry without her father's consent, but added, "If you can find the means to overcome my father's objections it would go far to remove any I may now have to the request you have made."

Owen had already learnt from Miss Dale that her father, finding the management of so many concerns too heavy a burden, was anxious to dispose of the New Lanark Mills. This gave him the pretext he required. He called on Mr. Dale and proposed himself as a purchaser, explaining in reply to Mr. Dale's expression of astonishment at such an offer from one so young—Owen was then twenty-eight, but looked much younger than his years—that he represented men older and wealthier than himself. With Mr. Dale's permission Owen proceeded to make a detailed survey of the mills, and duly reported the matter to his partners on his return to Manchester. Two of them at once accompanied him back to Glasgow, and visited Mr. Dale. After making the necessary enquiries as to their financial position, Mr. Dale expressed himself ready to treat with them. When asked his terms, Mr. Dale professed himself at a loss to put a fair price upon the concern, as he was seldom there, and left its management entirely to his half-brother, James Dale, and a Mr. Kelley. "'But, said he, 'Mr. Owen knows better than I do the value of such property at this period, and I wish that he would name what he would consider a fair price between honest buyers and sellers.' I was somewhat surprised and nonplussed at this reference to me, with all its responsible consequences, taking into consideration the position of all parties. My estimate of the establishment, from having taken only the very general inspection of it which I had had an opportunity of doing, was such, that I said, 'It appears to me, that sixty thousand pounds, payable at the rate of three thousand a year for twenty years, would be an equitable price between both parties.' Mr. Dale had been long known for the honest simplicity of his character, and as such was universally trusted and respected, and as a further proof of it, to the surprise of my London and Manchester commercial partners, he replied—'If you think so, I will accept the proposal as you have stated it, if your friends also approve of it.' And equally to my surprise they said they were willing to accept the terms; and thus, in a few words, passed the establishment of New Lanark from Mr. Dale into the hands of the 'New Lanark Twist Company'" (p. 53).

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[1] I owe much of the information about David Dale given in the text to an essay by Mr. W. G. Black on *David Dale's House in Charlotte Street*, printed in the papers of the Regality Club, Vol. IV., part ii. (Glasgow, 1902).

This transaction took place apparently in the early summer of 1799.[1]

Owen proceeded at once to assume the management of the mills on behalf of his partners, and took up his quarters in the Clydesdale Hotel, Old Lanark, about a mile distant from the mills. Miss Dale and her sisters were at this time, according to their usual custom, spending the summer months in a cottage on the New Lanark estate, and they remained there for some six weeks after Owen took over the management. In the intervals of business there were, we learn, more walks and talks on the banks of the Clyde, until Mr. Dale cut short his daughters' holiday and summoned them to return to Glasgow. Mr. Dale had previously to the purchase of the mills been informed by his daughter of Owen's aspirations, and had given her to understand that he was not prepared to welcome as a son-in-law a "land louper,"—a stranger of whom he knew nothing. No doubt Owen's views on religious matters had a share in influencing his decision.

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[1] "Apparently," for the dates given in the early part of Owen's Autobiography are confused and to some extent contradictory. I infer, however, that the purchase of New Lanark took place in the same year as his marriage, and the date of that is fixed as September, 1799.

Gradually, however, his opposition weakened, a result due, it may be surmised, not more to the representations of his friends and the knowledge of his daughter's own inclinations in the matter, than to his increasing recognition of the sterling worth of Owen himself. In effect, the marriage was ultimately fixed for September 30 of this year, 1799. The marriage took place, Scotch fashion, in Mr. Dale's house in Charlotte Street.

"When we were all met on the morning of our marriage, waiting for the ceremony to commence, Mr. Dale was there to give his daughter to me, and the youngest sisters of Miss Dale for her bridesmaids. Mr. Balfour [the officiating clergyman] requested Miss Dale and me to stand up, and asked each of us if we were willing to take the other for husband or wife, and each simply nodding assent, he said without one word more—'Then you are married, and you may sit down'—and the ceremony was all over.

"I observed to Mr. Balfour, that it was indeed a short ceremony. He said, 'It is usually longer. I generally explain to the young persons their duties in the marriage state, and often give them a long exhortation. But I could not presume to do this with Mr. Dale's children whilst he lived and was present'" (p. 55).

The brief ceremony over, the young couple straightway posted "over very bad roads" to Manchester. Owen had for some two years before his marriage been living in a house called "Greenheys." The house had been built and sumptuously fitted up—the doors of Honduras mahogany imported for the purpose, and the windows of plate glass—for a wealthy merchant who died before he could occupy it. Owen and a friend took the house, which had large gardens and pleasure-grounds attached, and divided it into two separate dwellings. Owen's bachelor establishment consisted of an elderly couple, who took care of the house, the garden, and the stable. "One of my habits," he writes, "at that period was peculiar. The old housekeeper came always after breakfast to know what I would have for dinner. My reply was 'an apple dumpling'—which she made in great perfection—'and anything else you like'; and this practice was uniform as long as I remained unmarried. My attention was devoted to business and study, and I could not be troubled to think about the details of eating and drinking."

To this house Owen brought his bride. But on the way he essayed a small mystification. "We had to pass in sight of a small low building erected by the well-known Mr. Henry for the manufacture of his concentrated essence of vinegar, and I pointed it out as soon as in sight, there being no other building near, as our future residence—and wished to know from my new wife what she thought of it. She evidently did not expect to find that I lived in a house with that common appearance, and she said she thought the house I had described to her was different. The old servant was, I perceived, disappointed that her young mistress was to be no better accommodated. After we had passed it they perceived I had not been serious in describing my residence, and we soon drove into the grounds of Greenheys, and entering into the house through a part well contrived and neatly arranged as a greenhouse, and the interior being well constructed, furnished, and nicely arranged, both my wife and her servant were uncommonly well pleased. And here we passed our honeymoon" (p. 56).

But their sojourn at Greenheys was of the briefest. It was found that the two managers, originally appointed by Mr. Dale, who had been left in charge of the New Lanark Mills, were incapable of conducting the business to the satisfaction of the new proprietors, and at the request of his partners Owen went with his young wife back to Scotland, and entered upon the government of New Lanark, in January, 1800. With this change of scene a new period of Owen's life opens, which will form the subject of a later chapter.

Before closing the account of Owen's life in Manchester, it will be profitable to glance briefly at the social side of his activities. Of society in the ordinary sense, indeed, he saw but little—much less, probably, than most of his contemporaries in age and equals in wealth and standing. He was, as he tells us, much absorbed at this period in his business, and in study. In later life he claimed to have read in his youth and early manhood at least four hours a day on an average for twenty years.[1] Moreover he was shy, ignorant of the manners and requirements of society, and painfully conscious of his own deficiencies in these respects. But of society of another kind he had no lack. There was at this time in Manchester a Unitarian College,[2] under the presidency of Dr. Baines.

"At this period John Dalton, the Quaker, afterwards the celebrated Dr. Dalton, the philosopher, and a Mr.

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[1] First Discourse delivered at Washington in 1825 (*New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 225).

[2] The original of Manchester College, Oxford.

Winstanley, both intimate friends of mine, were assistants in this college under Dr. Baines; and in their room we often met in the evenings, and had much and frequent interesting discussion upon religion, morals, and other similar subjects, as well as upon the late discoveries in chemistry and other sciences—and here Dalton first broached his then undefined atomic theory. We began to think ourselves philosophers. Occasionally we admitted a friend or two to join our circle, but this was considered a favour. At this period Coleridge was studying at one of the universities, and was then considered a genius and eloquent. He solicited permission to join our party, that he might meet me in discussion, as I was the one who opposed the religious prejudices of all sects, though always in a friendly and kind manner, having now imbibed the spirit of charity and kindness for my opponents, which was forced upon me by my knowledge of the true formation of character by nature and society. . . . These friendly meetings and discussions with my friends Dalton and Winstanley were continued until they attracted the attention of the principal, Dr. Baines, who became afraid that I should convert his assistants from his orthodoxy, and our meetings were required to be less frequent in the college. They were, however, continued elsewhere, and I acquired the name, from some of the parties who attended these meetings, of 'the reasoning-machine'—because they said I made man a mere reasoning-machine, made to be so by nature and society" (pp. 35, 36).

One of the leading men in Manchester at the end of the eighteenth century was Dr. Thomas Percival, a Fellow of the Royal Society, a physician in active practice, and a man of keen intelligence and wide sympathies, profoundly interested in the various social and economic problems which were at that time forcing themselves upon the attention of thoughtful men. Amongst his published works are essays on the principles and limits of taxation ; on the growth of the population of Manchester ; on improved methods for recording bills of mortality, etc. As will be seen in the next chapter, Percival's sympathies had been specially directed to the monstrous evils attending the aggregation of large numbers of workers, especially of children, for long hours in close, ill-ventilated factories ; and from 1795 onwards he took a prominent part in calling public attention to the matter, and in insisting upon the need for interference by the State to secure the regulation of the hours of factory labour and the enforcement of proper sanitary conditions. In 1781 Percival, with one or two others, had founded the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. The aim of the Society, which had grown out of a series of informal meetings of a few friends, was the reading and discussion of papers on various subjects. The range of its discussions was extremely wide, and embraced practically the whole field of knowledge. But at this period its interest lay mainly in the direction of physics, chemistry, geology, and the natural sciences generally. Percival was its president. Amongst its honorary members were numbered Sir Joseph Banks, Alexander Volta, Erasmus Darwin, Joseph Priestley, Arthur Young, and several bishops. The most prominent contributors, judging from the five volumes of selected papers published between 1785 and

1802, were Percival himself, Dr. Ferriar, author of *An Essay towards a Theory of Apparitions*, John Dalton,[1] Beddoes, Priestley, and one or two others.

Into this Society, which included, it will be seen, many men of the highest distinction in science and philosophy, young Owen was elected on November 1, 1793, when he was only in his twenty-third year; his last recorded attendance was on December 21, 1798. During the period of his membership he read four papers at the Society's meetings, viz. on November 29, 1793, *Remarks on the Improvement of the Cotton Trade*; on December 27, 1793, *An Essay on the Utility of Learning*; on March 13, 1795, *Thoughts on the Connection between Universal Happiness and Practical Mechanics*: and on January 13, 1797, *On the Origin of Opinions with a View to the Improvement of the Social Virtues*.[2]

None of Owen's papers were included amongst the essays selected for publication in the volumes already referred to; nor indeed is it at all probable that they possessed anything of permanent value either in form or matter. He thus describes the origin of the first paper: "Upon one occasion, at the sitting of the Society, the subject of cotton was introduced, on one of the nights when the President was in the chair.[3] I had never

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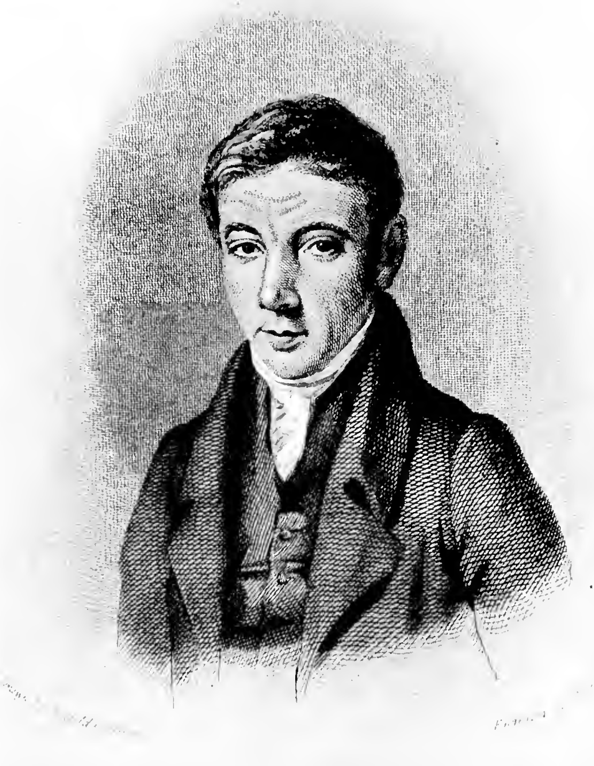
[1] Owen's name appears as one of the proposers of Dalton in April, 1794.

[2] I owe these details to the courtesy of Mr. Charles Leigh, sometime Secretary of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, which is still in existence.

[3] The date was apparently the 4th October, 1793, when a paper is recorded to have been read by Dr. Matthew Guthrie, *On the Nature and Cultivation of Persian Cotton*. The minutes show that Owen was present as a visitor on this occasion, and was proposed for membership by Dr. Percival, Dr. Bardsley, Mr. Henry, and Mr. Harvey. Owen's own paper on cotton followed not, as stated by him, at the next meeting, but some seven weeks later.



From an engraving after a drawing by Matilda Heming, published Dec 1, 1823.

ROBERT OWEN.

spoken in the Society, nor ever heard my own voice in public, nor had I the slightest desire ever to hear it. I was too diffident and sensitive to feel any such inclination; but upon this occasion, to my surprise and great confusion, Dr. Percival said, 'I see a young friend present who I am sure can, if he will, give us some valuable information upon the subject. I mean Mr. Owen, so well known for his knowledge in fine-cotton spinning.' I blushed, and stammered out some few incoherent sentences, and felt quite annoyed at my ignorance and awkwardness being thus exposed. Had it not been for this incident, it is probable I should never have attempted to speak in public. I was conscious I knew more of the kinds, qualities, and history of this material than any of those who spoke this evening on the subject. This impression induced me to attempt to write a paper for the Society upon this subject, and it was read and discussed at the following meeting of the Society."

The second paper, if we may judge from its title, was a mere schoolboy's essay. In the titles of the two later papers, however, we see indications that Owen's thoughts were already beginning to work on the lines which in his maturer life developed into his characteristic system of philosophy. But however crude his own performances may have been, there can be little doubt that the experience gained in the Literary and Philosophical Society was of much value to Owen in later life. It was his first introduction to educated society; and apart from the general intellectual stimulus supplied by familiar intercourse with men of learning and distinction, his association with Dr. Percival, who was occupied at this very time with his investigations into the condition of the factories and the wrongs of those who worked in them, can hardly have failed to influence the young Owen, and may even have determined the bent of his whole future life and work.[1]

One other episode of Owen's life in Manchester must be chronicled. For some months in 1794 he was a lodger at 8, Brazen Nose Street, in the same house with Robert Fulton, the celebrated engineer. Fulton had been for some years studying painting under West in London, but at this time had forsaken pictorial art for engineering, and had just patented a device, a double inclined plane, which was intended to supersede the use of locks on canals. He was also engaged in perfecting the invention of a dredging-machine, or mechanical "navvy," for which also he intended to take out Letters Patent. But the perfecting and patenting of his inventions required more money than he possessed, and Owen some time in 1794 found it necessary to assist him with a loan. Later in the same year more money, it would seem, was required, and in December, 1794, a formal deed of agreement was drawn up, under which, in consideration of an immediate advance of £65, and further loans amounting ultimately to a maximum of £400, Owen was to be admitted into partnership with Fulton, and to share in the profits from his inventions. In the following March, however, the partnership was dissolved by mutual consent;

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[1] In 1796 there was founded in Manchester, mainly through the efforts of Dr. Percival, the Manchester Board of Health, the main object of which was to devise remedies for the evils incident to factory employment. On the Committee, besides physicians and magistrates, appeared the names of several well-known cotton-spinners, including Robert Owen himself and two of his first partners, John Atkinson and John Barton.

but Owen advanced some more money, making the actual loan about £170.

The next two or three years Fulton seems to have spent chiefly in London or Paris, writing at intervals to Owen. Some time in 1797 he repaid a first instalment—£60—of the loan; but Owen never heard from him again. The relations between them seem to have been marked throughout by the greatest cordiality, and Owen in his old age refers to the episode with pleasure and with some pride in having been able to help one who had done so much for the advancement of the world.

CHAPTER IV

THE FACTORY SYSTEM

THE industrial revolution described in a preceding chapter brought an enormous increase of wealth and prosperity to the country. And though its benefits tended at first to accumulate in the hands of a few, yet in the process of two or three generations they have become diffused through the whole nation, and have helped materially to raise the standard of living even for the poorest. In no point is this higher standard of life more conspicuous than in the matter of clothing. For centuries the poorer classes in these islands were clothed mainly in woollen, linen and silk being luxuries reserved for the well-to-do, and cotton, at any rate in large quantities, being of comparatively recent introduction. Now woollen fabrics are costly, and, as every housewife knows, they tend rapidly to deteriorate with washing. One practical result must have been that the poorer classes in this country could rarely afford the luxury of clean clothes. With the rapid multiplication of cheap cotton fabrics towards the close of the eighteenth century, all this was changed. The new stuffs were within the reach of the poorest; the wives and children of the labourer and the factory operative could have two or three dresses where they had but one before, and could afford to wash them again and again without detriment to their usefulness. Few inventions, it is probable, have done more to increase the comfort and the health of the poor.

But in the earlier years of the change these benefits were purchased at a heavy price. As already shown, between 1780 and 1790 the population of Manchester, swollen by recruits drawn in from the surrounding country to work in the new cotton-mills, had almost doubled itself. Year after year new mills sprang up, to be filled, as soon as they were built, by ever new recruits. The results of this process are well described by Dr. Aikin.

"The invention and improvement of machines to shorten labour has had a surprising influence to extend our trade, and also to call in hands from all parts, especially children for the Cotton Mills. It is the wise plan of Providence that in this life there shall be no good without its attendant inconvenience. There are many which are too obvious in these Cotton Mills, and similar factories, which counteract that increase of population usually consequent on the improved facilities of labour. In these children of very tender age are employed, many collected from the Workhouses of London and Westminster, and transported in crowds, as apprentices to masters resident many hundred miles distant, where they serve unknown, unprotected and forgotten by those to whose care nature or the laws had consigned them. These children are usually too long confined to work in close rooms, often during the whole night: the air they breathe from the oil, &c., employed in the machinery and other circumstances is injurious: little regard is paid to their cleanliness, and frequent changes from a warm and dense to a cold and thin atmosphere are predisposing causes to sickness and disability, and particularly to the epidemic fever which so generally is to be met with in these factories. It is also much to be questioned if Society does not receive detriment from the manner in which children are thus employed during their early years. They are not generally strong to labour, or capable of pursuing any other branch of business, when the term of their apprenticeship expires. The females are wholly uninstructed in sewing, knitting, and other domestic affairs requisite to make them notable and frugal wives and mothers. This is a very great misfortune to them and the public, as is sadly proved by a comparison of the families of labourers in husbandry, and of manufacturers[1] in general. In the former we meet with neatness, cleanliness and comfort : in the latter with filth, rags and poverty, although their wages may be nearly double those of the husbandman. It must be added, that the want of early religious instruction and example, and the numerous and indiscriminate associations in these buildings, are very unfavourable to their future conduct in life. To mention these grievances is to point out their remedies : and in many factories they have been adopted with true benevolence and much success. But in all cases the Public have a right to see that its members are not wantonly injured, or carelessly lost." [2]

The above passage contains an admirable summary of the chief evils wrought upon the poor, and upon the community at large, by the early cotton lords in their race for wealth. It was the malignant fever which was very prevalent in the mills during the closing decades of the eighteenth century which first drew attention to the subject. The early factories were badly constructed; often they were mere make-shift buildings—two or three cottages knocked together, or something of the kind. Little attention was paid to ventilation or sanitary requirements; moreover the machinery often ran night and day, and the importance of cleanliness, for the sake of the machinery and the fabric, if not for that of the workers, was at the outset very imperfectly realised. It is little wonder that in these close, hot rooms, crowded throughout the twenty-four hours with human beings, infectious diseases found occasion to spread. So early as 1784, on the occasion of an outburst of fever in the Radcliffe cotton factories, the Manchester magistrates had requested a committee of medical men to investigate the matter. Amongst these medical men were Drs. Percival and Ferriar, of whose doings we have learnt something in the preceding chapter. Later, in 1796, a permanent committee, of which these gentlemen were members, was formed in Manchester under the style of the Board of Health, and a series of resolutions was drawn up by Dr. Percival, which were quoted at length by Sir R. Peel in his evidence before the Select Committee of 1816. Premising that the object of the Board was to prevent the generation and spread of infectious diseases, the resolutions proceeded to draw attention to the unhealthy conditions in which the operatives, and especially children, were forced to labour in cotton-factories—the confinement; the hot and impure air; the long hours of labour both by night and day; and the want of proper education and religious instruction. In conclusion the resolutions invoked the aid of Parliament to establish laws "for the wise, humane, and equal government of all such works."[1]

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[1] *i.e.* factory operatives, as we should say now.

[2] *Description of the Country Round Manchester* (pp. 219, 220).

These resolutions, though their immediate effect was not conspicuous, appear to have first drawn public attention to the evils prevalent in cotton factories, and to have given the first impulse to legislation on the subject. Peel owned his indebtedness to Percival and his associates in the preparation of the Act of 1802.[2]

Percival, it will be seen, like Aikin, was not content with drawing public attention to the physical evils attendant on the overcrowding of factories, and the resultant danger to the community, but proceeded to point out the effect upon the health and the morals of the persons, especially the young, employed under such inhuman conditions. For the great majority of the early workers in the cotton-mills were children; and the children began their work as early in many cases as five or six years of age, and worked the same hours as the men and women employed with them. As we have already seen, in the passages quoted in a previous chapter from Defoe and Radcliffe,[3] long before the introduction of the factory system the children of the yeoman and the cottager had been employed from a very early age at the spinning-wheel; children in the workhouses were set to labour from the age of six; and the children of the handloom weavers, at any rate until the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century, worked side by side with their parents in the cellars of Manchester and neighbouring towns, often for as long as fifteen hours a day. There was little sentiment, then, in the eighteenth century, on the part of the parents to prevent the exploitation of child labour; and the manufacturer naturally looked to this source to reduce the expenses of working his mills. But child labour was not only cheap and tractable, it was also peculiarly suited for the manufacturer's requirements. Much of the labour incident to the working of cotton-spinning machinery was of the lightest kind. The machines ran of themselves. The attendants had merely to piece together the broken threads, remove accidental obstructions, and clean the machines; and for work of this kind a child's slender fingers and small lithe body were admirably fitted. Thus William Lockhart, writing of the New Lanark Mills under David Dale, says, "The greater number of children a widow has, she lives so much the more comfortably: and upon such account alone she is often a tempting object to a second husband. Indeed at cotton-mills it often happens that young children support their aged parents by their industry."[1]

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[1] *Report of the Minutes of Evidence on the State of Children employed in Manufactories*, 1816, pp. 139-40; *Proceedings of the Board of Health in Manchester*, 1796-1805. Manchester, 1805.

[2] *Report*, p. 133.

[3] Above, pp. 28, 29.

Child labour, then, was regarded as essential to the profitable working of the cotton-mills. But it is probable that in a town like Manchester the evils attendant on the employment of children, to which Percival and Aikin drew attention, were mitigated by various circumstances. Many of the children employed, it is likely, lived in the town with their parents; and in any case the conditions of life in a large city, and the force of public opinion, would do something to keep cruelty and oppression within bounds. But cotton-mills at this time were worked by water-power, and many were necessarily built in remote districts, far removed from supervision by public opinion or the possibility of legal interference. In such circumstances, there being no resident population in the neighbourhood of the mills, the master manufacturer was forced to look elsewhere for his supply of child labour. In any case he would have found it difficult to obtain as many volunteers as he required, for parents very generally at this time regarded it as discreditable to send their children to work in the factories. The father who allowed his child to enter a mill "made himself the town's talk, and the unfortunate girl so given up by her parents in after life found the door of household employment closed against her, because she had been a factory girl."[1] In these circumstances the manufacturer drew upon the only available source of supply—the parish apprentices. In those days it was the practice for pauper children, from the age of six and upwards, to be employed on useful work, either in the workhouse itself, or as apprentices to outside employers. In the Bloomsbury Workhouse, for instance, there were some two hundred children, from the age of six to twelve or fourteen, employed for ten hours a day in summer and nine in winter, their chief occupations being to wind silk or to pick oakum.[2] But the children were as a rule apprenticed, as opportunity served, to outside employers —farmers, manufacturers, etc. ; and, in the early years of the great industry, very large numbers of them were thus sent to the spinning-mills. So great was the demand for child labour that the apprentices went in many cases when only six years old—some even younger—to serve their time in the factories. Many of the first mills, as already shown, were of necessity built in remote districts, far from any possibility of effective supervision. Many of the early masters were men of little education, sprung from the ranks of the yeomen or even labourers: men of coarse fibre, and drunk with the prospects of unlimited wealth.[1]

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[1] Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland*, Vol. XV.

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[1] "Alfred," *History of the Factory Movement*, 1857, Vol. I., p. 16.

[2] Evidence of Dr. Ogle before the Committee of 1816.

It is not necessary here to fill in the details of the picture: they may be found in the ghastly story told by Robert Blincoe,[2] and the evidence given before the Committee of 1832. Even where the mill-owners were themselves liberal and humane, the vicious system still permitted all manner of iniquity and oppression. Here is a description given by Sir R. Peel of the state of affairs, towards the close of the eighteenth century, in his own mill at Radcliffe:[3] "The house in which I have a concern gave employment at one time to near a thousand children of this description (*i.e.* parish apprentices). Having other pursuits, it was not often in my power to visit the factories, but whenever such visits were made, I was struck with the uniform appearance of bad health, and in many cases stunted growth of the children: the hours of labour were regulated by the interest of the Overseer, whose remuneration depending on the quantity of work done, he was often induced to make the poor children work excessive hours, and to stop their complaints by trifling bribes. Finding our own factories under such management, and learning that like practices prevailed in other parts of the Kingdom where similar machinery was in use, the children being much overworked, and often little or no regard paid to cleanliness and ventilation in the building," Peel proceeded, as he told the Committee of 1816, to introduce the Act of 1802 in order to remedy the evils thus brought to light.

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[1] See Hutchins and Harrison, *A History of Factory Legislation* (1903), p. 19; Gaskell, *On the Manufacturing Population*, 1833, pp. 52, 53.

[2] *Memoir of Robert Blincoe, an Orphan Boy*. Manchester, 1832.

Robert Blincoe was a pauper child, who in 1799, at the age of seven, was sent, with a number of other workhouse apprentices, to a cotton-mill, where he was forced to work fourteen hours a day, "half-starved and cruelly treated by his taskmaster." In manhood he wrote an account of his experiences, which was edited and published by John Brown, who appears to have been at some pains to verify the painful facts given in the narrative.

[3] *Report* of 1816, p. 133.

Peel in short invoked the law to do what he was unable to do for himself. For, in a case such as this, good intentions on the part of an employer, however well disposed, were of little avail. Nothing less than personal and incessant supervision would suffice to prevent oppression and abuse. A further illustration is afforded by the history of the works at New Lanark, the management of which devolved upon Robert Owen at the beginning of 1800. David Dale, their sole owner for some years, was, as "Alfred" says, "known as one of the most spirited, enterprising and benevolent men of his age," and New Lanark was "one of the most humanely conducted factories in the Empire."[1] It had been made the subject of a laudatory notice in the *Annual Register* for 1782,[2] the writer dwelling specially on the provision made by Dale for the health and comfort of the children employed: "The boys enjoy hours of relaxation in succession. Their apartment was likewise clean and well aired, and ten schoolmasters are daily employed in their tuition."

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[1] *History of the Factory Movement*, Vol. I., p. 20.

[2] Part II., p. 33*.

Again, the reports of the "Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor" contain an account by Sir Thomas Bernard, given on the authority of Professor Garnett of the Royal Institution, on the state of New Lanark under David Dale. The report mentions that five hundred children are employed, who are entirely fed, clothed, and educated by Dale: and that "the healthy and pleasurable appearance of these children has frequently attracted the attention of the traveller." The Reporter goes on to note that cleanliness and fresh air are insisted on; the children wash themselves before work and after it; boys and girls lodge apart, in airy rooms; their clothes are regularly washed; they receive good food and plenty of it. Their supper is fixed at 7.0 p.m.; and, supper over, they attend classes until 9.0 p.m. Three regular masters, it is added, instruct the lesser children during the day. Seven others assist in the evening.[1]

There is no mention in this last account of any provision for holidays—unless attendance at Church on Sundays may be reckoned as coming under that head, and as the church held only one hundred and fifty, and from five hundred to eight hundred children were employed, even this form of recreation could only be enjoyed at long intervals.[1] Their hours of work were eleven and a half a day, *i.e.* thirteen hours, with intervals of one and a half hours for meals. For the rest, the report is chiefly noteworthy for the fact that the Reporter thinks it necessary to mention that the elementary rules of health and decency were not violated in the model factory of the Empire. In "Alfred's" *History* we find a more critical account of the conditions under which New Lanark Mills were worked. Mr. Dale, like most of the employers of his time, found some difficulty in procuring a sufficient supply of free labour, a difficulty which was no doubt increased by the remote situation of his mills. The surrounding peasantry, accustomed to their own standard of comfort and personal freedom, refused to enter his employment. Mr. Dale built cottages near the mills, but so great was the aversion to work in a factory that "very few, not being homeless and friendless, would accept of house-accommodation from Mr. Dale on the lowest possible terms." As a matter of fact, his mills were largely recruited in 1791, as we read in Garnett's report, from the passengers on a vessel, with two hundred emigrants from Skye, which was wrecked in the neighbourhood of the Clyde.

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[1] *Reports*, Vol. II. (1800), pp. 364 *seqq*. The date of the Reporter's visit is not given by Bernard. But see Dr. Garnett's own Report, *Tour through the Highlands of Scotland*, first published in 1800. Dr. Garnett's visit was apparently made in 1799, for he mentions in a footnote that an English company, of whom his friend Owen was one, have just purchased the mills.

In this difficulty Dale, like others, "applied to the managers of charities, and the parish authorities of Edinburgh, for a supply of children. The application was successful, and the children under Mr. Dale's control ultimately numbered five hundred.[2] Mr. Dale, in exchange for the services of these children, undertook to feed, lodge and clothe them. It has been our lot," "Alfred" continues, "to know two women, who, in early life, had been Mr. Dale's apprentices. On the authority of these witnesses, Mr. Dale was a man of benevolent disposition, but seldom visited his factories ; when he did visit them, it was remarked that 'things were put in better order,' and he sometimes brought the children little presents, and was at heart the friend of his workpeople. . . . The ages of the children when apprenticed to Mr. Dale were from five to eight, the period of apprenticeship from seven to nine years, the hours of labour in the factory from six in the morning to seven in the evening."[1]

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[1] David Dale's letter to Manchester Board of Health.

[2] In November, 1793, according to Lockhart (Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland*, Vol. XV.) there were 795 persons under 18 employed at the New Lanark Mills, of whom 204 were less than ten years old.

Owen, in his evidence before the Committee of 1816, explained that from these thirteen hours were to be deducted one and a half hours allowed for meals, so that the children actually worked eleven and a half hours a day.[2] In describing the state of the children on his taking over the management, Owen explained to the Committee that the children under Mr. Dale's régime were "extremely well fed, well clothed, well lodged, and very great care taken of them out of the mills." Nevertheless, in consequence of the long hours of work and their tender years, their growth was stunted, their limbs occasionally deformed, and through sheer exhaustion they made very slow progress in the night-school, even in learning the alphabet. Dale himself, writing in 1796 to the Manchester Board of Health, can only claim that out of 507 scholars, 80 could read well, and 24 of these 80 stood in no need of further instruction in reading.

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[1] *History of the Factory Movement*, Vol. I., pp. 19, 20.

[2] The hours were from 6.0 a.m. to 7.0 p.m., with intervals from 9 to 9.30 a.m. and from 2.0 to 3.0 p.m. (David Dale's letter to Manchester Board of Health).

And in many mills at this time the children were not well fed, well clothed or well lodged, little or no care was taken for their physical and moral welfare: the hours of work were even longer, and the conditions far more oppressive.

So matters stood when Owen entered in January, 1800, on his duties at New Lanark. To place his future work there in its true proportions, it is desirable at this point to anticipate a little, and to refer briefly to the course taken by the Factory Movement up to 1816.

Moved by the considerations already set forth, and with the assistance, as he has told us, of Percival and other Manchester doctors, Sir. R. Peel prepared and passed through Parliament in 1802 a measure known as the "Health and Morals of Apprentices Act." The Act prescribed the periodical whitewashing of all factories and the introduction of proper ventilation. For the rest, its provisions related solely to the employment of parish apprentices, who formed at the time the vast majority of the children and young persons employed in factories. The maximum working hours for apprentices were fixed at twelve a day; night work was to be discontinued; the apprentices were to be instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic; to go to church once a month; and separate sleeping-apartments were to be provided for the two sexes. The Act, less no doubt by the force of its legal sanctions than by the attention which it called to the subject, and by the standard of humanity set up, appears to have helped, with other social forces, in bringing about some improvement of the conditions of child labour.

The newer factories were built with more regard to sanitary requirements; the rooms were loftier; they were better ventilated; more attention was paid to cleanliness—the last reform being made in the interests of the masters quite as much as in those of the workmen. Working throughout the night was gradually discontinued. A more important and not wholly beneficial change was the substitution of "free" labour for the system of apprenticeship. Many causes working concurrently appear to have contributed to this change. By some employers, no doubt, the provisions of the Act of 1802 were felt to impose irksome restrictions, whereas there was no power but that of the parents to impose limits on the labour of "free" children. And of the parents, it seems clear, some had too little humanity, and many were too poor to dare enter a protest. Again, apprentices were now more difficult to procure. The magistrates in many towns refused any longer to allow the pauper children to be apprenticed to the cotton manufacturers, or qualified their permission with conditions which the employers were reluctant to accept.[1]

Again, the reluctance of the parents to allow their children to enter the factories appears to have gradually broken down, partly, no doubt, by greater familiarity with the conditions, largely under the pressure of increasing poverty as the burden of taxation imposed by the long wars grew heavier and heavier. But the main cause of the rapid transformation, in the earlier years of the last century, in the character of the labour employed, is no doubt to be found in the altered conditions of the industry. With the introduction of steam as a motive-power, employers were no longer forced to place their factories by the banks of streams in out-of-the-way country districts. They came now by preference to the large centres of population, where the markets were ready to hand, and where labour was abundant.

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[1] See *Report* of 1816. Evidence of Theodore Price, pp. 122, 124, on his own refusal, and the refusal of the Birmingham Magistrates, to sign indentures to cotton-mills. At p. 182 it is given in evidence that the Preston Workhouse authorities refuse any longer to apprentice their children to cotton-mills. The Manchester Magistrates, so early as 1784, had passed a resolution binding themselves not to apprentice to mills where the children worked more than ten hours a day (Hutchins and Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 9).

From this time onwards some of the worst evils of the factory system gradually disappeared. The children now lived at home, in the charge of their parents. They had, at any rate, the daily change of scene, and such opportunities of home life as could be enjoyed on a Sunday. The work was done in larger and cleaner buildings, and generally under healthier conditions. The master was for the most part of higher social type, and if not always more humane, at least more amenable to public opinion. And, not least, the eyes of the public had to some extent been opened. But notwithstanding all these ameliorating influences, it is abundantly clear from the evidence given before the Select Committee of 1816 how much still remained to be done, and how inhuman were the conditions at the best. The children began work far too young. The manufacturers took such labour as they required when it was offered by the parents : and the parents sent their children to the mill as soon as they were able to work, sometimes that they themselves might live in idleness on the money so earned ; more often, perhaps, because they could not afford to keep them at home. Thus Mr. John S. Ward and Mr. Peter Noaille gave evidence before the Committee of 1816 that in their silk-mills the children commonly began work at six or seven years of age. Thomas Whitelegg had known children employed in cotton-mills at Manchester as early as five. Richard Arkwright gave evidence that children used to enter the Cromford mills at seven or eight.

Again, the hours of work were far too long. In the Bloomsbury Workhouse the children had worked ten hours a day in summer and nine in winter. Dale had allowed his apprentices to work eleven and a half hours a day in all. But the bulk of the manufacturers, even the best and most enlightened of their number, who gave evidence in 1816 had fixed the minimum hours of work at twelve a day or seventy-two a week. Generally this meant a stretch of thirteen hours, with one interval of an hour for dinner ; breakfast and tea being brought to the child in the mill, and snatched at intervals during the work, the machinery going at full speed all the while. Sometimes the interval for dinner was omitted, and the children were forced day after day to work twelve hours without a break.[1] Some manufacturers worked regularly from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m., with but one hour's interval—or thirteen hours' solid work in the day. In many cases even this limit was exceeded. In the Backbarrow Mills the regular hours, all the year round, were from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., with but one hour's interval for meals. And many of these hapless children were in addition called upon to attend several hours on Sunday for the purpose of cleaning the machinery. Peel himself expressed the opinion that fourteen or fifteen hours work a day had become too general.[1]

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[1] *Report*, pp. 212, 213.

It was contended by the manufacturers that these long hours were not really hours of work; that the children had to be in attendance, but that no physical exertion was involved, since they had merely to watch the machines, and piece the broken threads. But they had to stand practically for the whole time. In most mills no provision was made for their sitting down at all; and one manufacturer, Mr. William Sidgwick, more outspoken than the rest, put the facts very clearly:

"*Q.*—When a child is found sitting in the mill, is not that contrary to the rules?

"*A.*—Certainly, I expect them to be at work.

"*Q.*—The whole day?

"*A.*—Yes: the master will not notice it, if the work is in a proper state.

"*Q.*—If the threads were not breaking, and the work was going on properly, you would have no objection to their sitting down?

"*A.*—No: I should not, occasionally; but it might become a habit.

"*Q.*—Could they sit down, and yet be able to superintend the threads?

"*A.*—Not correctly: I think they would see those in the immediate neighbourhood of their seats, but not those at the other end, perhaps."[2]

The evil effects of the long hours of confinement and the fatigue of standing were much enhanced by the heated atmosphere. After 1802 the ventilation of the mills, as already said, was much better than it had been. But it appears that the finer qualities of yarn, at any rate, required a warm atmosphere; and in many factories the air was accordingly, summer and winter, maintained at a temperature of about 80 degrees.

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[1] *Report*, p. 137.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Under such conditions it was inevitable that the health of the children should deteriorate. The medical witnesses testified to a general impairment of the physique; the digestion suffered, the whole organism was enfeebled; the children became pale, slight, and weedy-looking. Specific ailments of various kinds were induced. Moreover, accidents, owing to the fingers and other parts of the body being caught in the moving machinery, were by no means infrequent, especially towards the close of the long day's work.

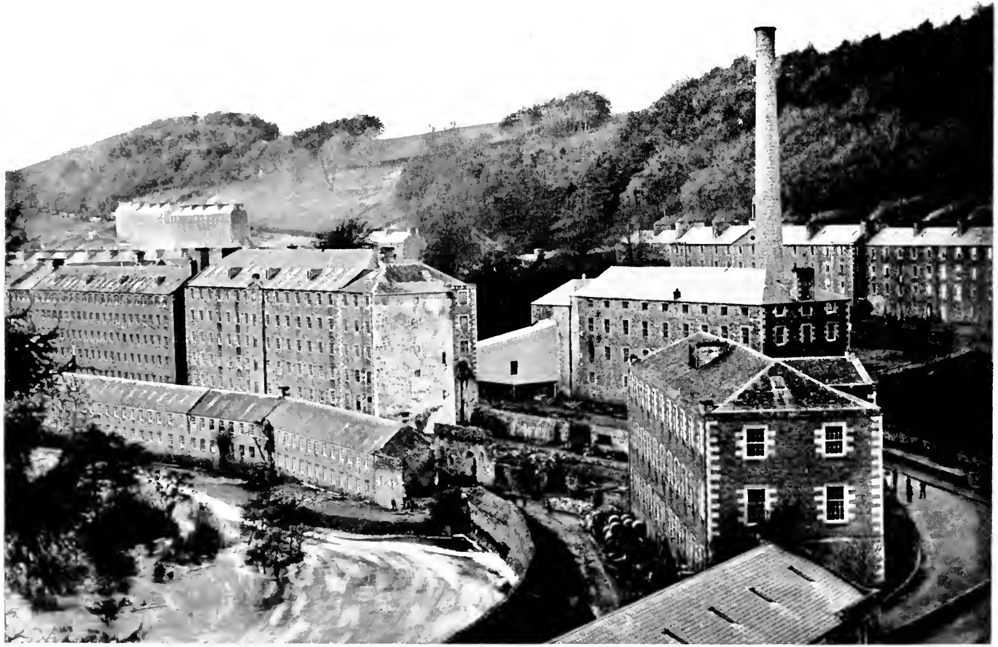
It need hardly be said that the children had little energy left to take advantage of the educational opportunities which, as the masters one after another explained to the Committee, were freely offered to them. Some of the employers provided an hour's schooling in the evening, for such as chose to attend after thirteen hours' work in the day. Others placed their reliance upon the religious and moral instruction which could be afforded in the Sunday Schools. But attendance at the schools was, as a rule, voluntary, and but a small proportion of the children cared to come.

Such, then, were the general conditions of child labour in the cotton-factories up to the passing of the Factory Act of 1819. To what extent Owen succeeded in ameliorating the lot of the children employed at New Lanark we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

NEW LANARK

THUS in January, 1800, Robert Owen entered upon his kingdom. The road from the old grey town of Lanark to the mills runs for about a mile between stone walls across a treeless and somewhat bleak plateau, which forms a stern setting for the beauty of New Lanark itself. For some miles above the town of Lanark the Clyde flows through a deep ravine between banks which form precipitous cliffs of no great height at the water's edge, and then shelve backwards at a slope which permits of their being covered with a luxuriant growth of woodland. For some distance the river falls in a series of cascades—the Falls of the Clyde : but by the time it reaches New Lanark the descent has become less rapid, the channel has broadened out, and the river retreats so as to leave on one shore, between the wooded banks and the stream, a broad, gently sloping shelf of rock. The stream itself widens to a crescent shape at this point, and half its channel is occupied by a small, richly green island. Just opposite this island, on the broad, almost flat shelf which forms the floor of a natural amphitheatre, whose steep sides, clothed with trees, rise abruptly to the plateau above, lie the village and the Mills—



From a photo by Davidson & Sons, New Lanark.

THE MILLS AT NEW LANARK.

three or four rows of grey stone houses, and four gaunt cotton-mills, seven storeys high, not indeed smoke-begrimed, but planned with as rigid an economy of the beautiful as cotton-mills in any other part of the world. The cold grey colouring and the unlovely squareness of the buildings make up a picture which seems altogether unworthy of the exquisite beauty of its frame.

Such was New Lanark as it was built by Richard Arkwright and David Dale in 1784; such it was when Robert Owen made his home there in 1800; twenty-five years later, when he left it for ever, the chief outward memorial of his labours and his dreams were two large buildings hardly less ungainly than the mills themselves. And to this day the external aspect of the place is scarcely changed; to this day the mills depend for their motive-power upon the water brought from an upper reach of the river through the long tunnel which David Dale caused to be dug out of the solid rock.

In January, 1800, the establishment, the sole management and direction of which were vested in Robert Owen, consisted of some 1,800 or 2,000 persons, of whom about 500 were children from the parish workhouses who had been apprenticed to the mills for a term of years. For the rest, the original population, as Owen described it twelve years later, was "a collection of the most ignorant and destitute from all parts of Scotland, possessing the usual characteristics of poverty and ignorance. They were generally indolent and much addicted to theft, drunkenness and falsehood, with all their concomitant evils, and strongly experiencing the misery which these ever produce."[1] Nevertheless he was able in 1812 to write that these same persons "had now become conspicuously honest, industrious, sober and orderly, and that an idle individual, one in liquor, or a thief, is scarcely to be seen from the beginning to the end of the year."[2]

But this result had been brought about gradually and in the face of many difficulties and discouragements. To begin with, Owen's "government," as he himself calls it, was a strictly limited monarchy. He seems indeed to have had from his partners the full trust and confidence to which his past career as a successful manufacturer entitled him. But he was a junior partner, a man himself with little capital, acting as the representative of men older and wealthier than himself. They were simply manufacturers, probably neither better nor worse than their contemporaries, looking in the first instance for a large return on their capital, and little likely to share their junior partner's enthusiasm for reforming the world. The junior partner's first concern, then, was to secure an ample dividend : whatever measures he undertook which had not this result for their immediate aim, must, in so far as they involved expenditure, be justified on the score of their ultimate commercial advantage. But the opposition to Owen's schemes which proceeded from the workpeople themselves was more serious, because more difficult to combat, and to one of less sanguine temperament must have proved almost hopelessly discouraging. The late proprietor, David Dale, had given a hundred proofs of his goodwill to the people who worked in his factories. He had failed, no doubt, to devote the incessant personal attention to the business which was necessary for the complete realisation of his benevolent intentions : but he had done what he could ; the people knew him as a just man, and one who cared for something beyond the profit which he derived from their labour. But Owen and his associates had come from England—in itself matter for hostility—with novel ideas and speaking an unfamiliar tongue. The old managers had been dismissed, the old machinery displaced : and now the new manager wished to impose new customs and regulations, and to teach new ways of doing the work. To what could all these things tend but the piling up of bigger dividends, and heavier burdens on the workers. The cotton lords of England had certainly given the poor little cause to credit them with any disinterested desire for the well-being of their operatives : if the people of New Lanark viewed Owen's innovations with suspicion and even overt hostility, they had at any rate some reason for their conduct.

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[1] No man is an impartial witness in his own cause, and there can, I think, be little doubt that to make the contrast more effective, Owen unconsciously darkened the shadows in the picture which he drew of the state of New Lanark in 1800. Dale, as has been said, was a just and benevolent man, and he had certainly done much to improve the lot of his workpeople. He had set his face against drunkenness and immorality; he had provided good food, clothing, and housing for the children, and had given them, in addition, the means of proper schooling; he had set up a store at which articles of good quality could be purchased at a cheap rate. That these measures had failed of their full effect for want of the continuous supervision which only the master's eye could have exercised, must be admitted. But there is sufficient testimony to assure us that the state of New Lanark under Dale was not quite so desperate as it was represented by Owen. [See in particular Lockhart's report in the *Statistical Account* quoted, and a *A Refutation of Mr. Owen's System*, by the Rev. John Aiton, Edinburgh, 1824. Aiton, though strongly biassed by his theological views, is on the whole a fair-minded witness.] But Owen did without doubt effect a marvellous improvement, partly by working on the lines laid down by Dale, partly by innovations of his own.

[2] *Statement regarding the New Lanark Establishment.* Edinburgh, 1812.

Step by step, however, and month by month, the fine simplicity of the man, his pure unalloyed good-will, his high character, made themselves felt; and all opposition was finally conquered, when, in 1806, the American embargo on cotton exportation had nearly brought the trade to a standstill. It was impossible to continue working the mills; but Owen persuaded his partners to allow the workpeople their full wages for the four months during which the embargo lasted; and by this act of wise generosity he finally won the full confidence and affection of all those employed in the factories.[1]

After the discharge of the former managers and the instalment in their place of a man called Humphreys, who on Owen's recommendation had succeeded him in Mr. Drinkwater's factory, Owen's next step was to replace the obsolete types of machinery, and to introduce improved methods of working. He then set himself to fight the dishonesty and drunkenness which prevailed to a ruinous extent. Writing twelve years later, he says, "He soon discovered that theft was extended through almost all the ramifications of the community, and the receipt of stolen goods through all the country around. To remedy this evil, not one legal punishment was inflicted, not one individual imprisoned, even for an hour; but checks and other regulations were introduced. They were at the same time instructed how to direct their industry in legal and useful occupations. Thus the difficulty of committing the crime was increased, the detection afterwards rendered more easy, the habit of honest industry formed, and the pleasure of good conduct increased."[1]

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[1] In this Owen followed a precedent set by his predecessor. One of the mills first built was burnt to the ground in 1788; and two hundred and fifty people were thrown out of employment. David Dale is said to have paid them their full wages until the mill could be started again (*Threading my Way*, by Robert Dale Owen, p. 15).

To combat the second evil, he appointed caretakers, who patrolled the streets of the village each night, and reported all who were found intoxicated. On the following morning the offenders were duly fined. Partly because of this discipline, but more perhaps as a gradual result of the influence of a higher public sense on such matters, drunkenness became so rare in the establishment that the statement quoted at the beginning of the present chapter seems to have been no idle boast. Owen's young son, Robert Dale, tells us that one day in his twelfth year (*i.e.* in 1813), when accompanying his father on the daily visit to the mills, he saw "at a little distance on the path before us, a man who stopped at intervals in his walk, and staggered from side to side.

"'Papa,' said I, 'look at that man. He must have been taken suddenly ill.'

"'What do you suppose is the matter with him, Robert?'

"'I don't know. I never saw any man act so. Is he subject to fits? Do you know him, papa?'

"'Yes, my dear, I know him. He is not subject to fits, but he is a very unfortunate man.'

"'What kind of illness has he?'

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[1] Second Essay on the Formation of Character, quoted in *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 279-80.

"My father stopped, looked first at the man before us, and then at me. 'Thank God, my son,' he said at last, 'that you have never before seen a drunken man.'"[1]

Not the least important of Owen's innovations was the village store. The establishment of New Lanark had sprung up suddenly, under artificial conditions, apart from the usual channels of food-supply. The population was thriftless; and the retail shopkeepers seem to have ministered to their thriftlessness by selling their wares on credit, and necessarily at extravagant prices. The articles sold were of poor quality, and all the shops sold spirits. Owen started[2] a store on behalf of the proprietors, purchasing food and clothing of good quality wholesale, and retailing them at a moderate profit to all who chose to purchase. The prices charged, though, as Owen tells us, some 25 per cent. lower than those of the private shopkeepers, were yet sufficient to cover all the expenses of the business, and leave a profit of about £700 a year, which was devoted entirely to the maintenance of the schools. So that he was able to point out to the Committee of 1816, as he had no doubt already pointed out to his partners, that the expenses of the schools did not form a charge on the profits of the mills, but, in the most literal sense, were borne by the people themselves.[1]

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[1] *Threading my Way*, p. 71. Owen did not, however, succeed in entirely stopping the practice of drinking on New Year's Day. Fines were inflicted for the irregularity, and a special holiday in the summer was offered to all who would come to work as usual on New Year's Day, instead of giving up the day to idleness and drink. But these measures appear, even as late as 1814, to have met with little success (see John Walker's letter dated December 26, 1814, and the order in relation to New Year's Day quoted in *New Existence*, Part V., pp. lxix-lxx.

[2] Or more probably improved and set going again a store already started by Dale.

But the innovation which aroused the most active opposition was Owen's insistence upon cleanliness and good order in the village streets, and in the houses of the people. He found the streets unswept—a rubbish heap or dunghill in front of each door—the houses small, neglected, and dirty: the natural decay of the fabric being expedited by the action of the tenants, who in some cases would burn the window-shutters and inside doors for firewood, and then decamp.[2] Owen, at the expense of the company, as it would seem, enlarged, repaired, and, where necessary, rebuilt the houses, removed the dunghills, and cleansed the streets.[3]

He further drew up a set of rules providing for the observation of proper cleanliness, order, and good behaviour on the part of all the inhabitants in future. Under these rules (which are printed in full in the Appendix to Part V. of *The New Existence of Man upon Earth*) every house was to be cleaned once a week and whitewashed at least once a year by the tenant; the tenants were further, in rotation, to provide for the cleaning of the public stairs and the sweeping of the roadway in front of their dwellings; it was forbidden to throw ashes and dirty water into the streets, or to keep cattle, swine, poultry or dogs in the houses. There were provisions for the prevention of trespass and damage to the company's fences and other property.

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[1] *Report* of 1816, p. 22. See also *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 63.

[2] *New Existence*, Part V. (1854), Appendix, p. xi.

[3] *Robert Owen at New Lanark* (1839), p. 4.

In the winter months all doors were to be closed at 10.30, and no one was to be abroad without permission after that hour. The minimum age for children to begin work in the mills was fixed at ten, and from five to ten years of age all children might attend, free of charge, the school provided by the company. Temperance in the use of liquors was enjoined.

The two final rules are of sufficient interest to be quoted in full :

"18. That as there are a very great variety of religious sects in the world (and which are probably adapted to different constitutions under different circumstances, seeing there are many good and conscientious characters in each), it is particularly recommended, as a means of uniting the inhabitants of the village into one family, that while each faithfully adheres to the principles which he most approves, at the same time all shall think charitably of their neighbours respecting their religious opinions, and not presumptuously suppose that theirs alone are right."

"19. And, lastly. That all the village shall, to the utmost of their power as far as is consistent with their duty to God and society, endeavour, both by word and deed, to make every one happy with whom they have any intercourse."

The government of the establishment, it will be seen, was of a paternal kind. But Owen was not so ill-advised as to attempt to enforce foreign standards of cleanliness upon an unwilling peasantry by sheer despotism, however benevolent. The constitution provided for some kind of representative government. The village was divided into wards, or "neighbour divisions," each of which chose by ballot a "principal." The principals, in turn, met together and chose from among their number twelve jurymen, who were charged with the twofold duty of seeing that the regulations were duly understood and observed, and of acting as a judicial board, to try offenders and to mete out appropriate punishment. Some of these delegates had, in the beginning of the new régime, no enviable task to fulfil. From an anonymous pamphlet, written by one who had himself been brought up in Owen's time at New Lanark, we get a peep behind the scenes.[1] Owen "advised that they should appoint a committee from amongst themselves, every week, to inspect the houses in the village and to insert in a book, to be given for that purpose, a faithful report of the state of each house as they might happen to find it. This recommendation was upon the whole pretty cordially acceded to by the male part of the population, but the rage and opposition it met with from the women, I well remember, was unbounded. They almost unanimously resolved to meet the visitants with locked doors. They bestowed upon them the appellation of 'Bug Hunters,' and Mr. Owen escaped not without his share of the general odium."

Robert Dale Owen tells us that gradually the opposition was overcome, the force of example and the kindness and tact of Owen and his wife doing much to bring about the desired result. Meanwhile an example of order and cleanliness was set by the master himself. "Within the mills everything was punctiliously kept. Whenever I visited them with my father, I observed that he picked up the smallest flocks of cotton from the floor, handing them to some child near by, to put into his waste-bag.

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[1] *Robert Owen at New Lanark, etc.*, by one formerly a teacher at New Lanark. Manchester, 1839.

"'Papa,' said I one day, 'what *does* it signify—such a little speck of cotton?'

"'The value of the cotton,' he replied, 'is nothing, but the example is much. It is very important that these people should acquire strict habits of order and economy.'"[1]

One instance of Owen's benevolent disposition must be quoted at length, for it illustrates not less the paternal attitude which he assumed towards his people, than the filial response which it seems to have elicited. Surely no man of less admirable simplicity could have ventured to propound, or have succeeded in imposing, a device such as that described in the following extract:—

"But that which I found to be the most efficient check upon inferior conduct, was the contrivance of a silent monitor for each one employed in the establishment. This consisted of a four-sided piece of wood, about two inches long and one broad, each side coloured—one side black, another blue, the third yellow, and the fourth white, tapered at the top, and finished with wire eyes, to hang upon a hook with either side to the front. One of these was suspended in a conspicuous place near to each of the persons employed, and the colour at the front told the conduct of the individual during the preceding day, to four degrees of comparison. Bad, denoted by black and No. 4,—indifferent by blue, and No. 3,—good by yellow, and No. 2,—and excellent by white, and No. 1.[1] Then books of character were provided for each department, in which the name of each one employed in it was inserted in the front of succeeding columns, which sufficed to mark by the number the daily conduct, day by day, for two months; and these books were changed six times a year, and were preserved; by which arrangement I had the conduct of each registered to four degrees of comparison during every day of the week, Sundays excepted, for every year they remained in my employment. The superintendent of each department had the placing daily of these silent monitors, and the master of the mill regulated those of the superintendents in each mill. If any one thought that the superintendent did not do justice, he or she had a right to complain to me, or, in my absence, to the master of the mill, before the number denoting the character was entered in the register. But such complaints very rarely occurred. The act of setting down the number in the book of character, never to be blotted out, might be likened to the supposed recording angel marking the good and bad deeds of poor human nature." [2]

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[1] *Threading my Way*, p. 73.

Owen tells us that the plan succeeded admirably, and that, as the years went on, black and blue gave place to yellow and white. But probably the plan was not put into operation until he had succeeded in gaining the confidence of the people by other measures.

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[1] Joseph Lancaster, who, as a Quaker, was opposed to corporal punishment, used leather labels, stamped with gilt letters, to indicate various degrees of merit and demerit amongst his scholars. It is possible that Owen may have borrowed the idea of the silent monitor from this source (see *A Comparative View of the Plans of Education of Dr. Bell and Mr. Lancaster*, by Joseph Fox, London, 1808).

[2] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 80, 81.

At the outset Owen had resolved to take on no more parish apprentices, but to draw the necessary supply of child labour from the population resident in Lanark, and it does not appear that he ever found difficulty in procuring the services of as many children as were required. As we have already seen, he fixed the limit of age at ten; below that age the children might, if the parents chose, attend the school, but there was no work for them in the factory. On a point of scarcely less importance he was compelled to defer to the wishes of his partners. Dale had worked the mills thirteen hours, with intervals of one and a half hours for meals. Monstrous as those hours appear to us, especially when we remember that a large proportion of those employed were young children, they were too merciful for the ordinary manufacturer of that day. Owen told the Committee of 1816 that for some time during his management the hours of work at the New Lanark Mills were fixed at fourteen a day (including two hours intervals for meals). It was not until January, 1816, that he was enabled to reduce the hours to twelve a day, with one and a quarter hours for meals, leaving ten and three-quarter hours for actual work. In other ways he found his liberty of action during these early years hampered by his partners: they on their part seem ultimately to have taken alarm at the magnitude of his schemes for bettering the condition of the operatives. They presented him with a silver salver, but hinted disapproval of the mixture of philanthropy and business. In the result Owen agreed to purchase the mills from them at the price of £84,000. This was in 1809. During the ten years of the partnership, Owen reckoned that the business had produced, over and above interest at the rate of 5 per cent. on the capital invested, a dividend of about £60,000, of which sum £7,000 had been expended in payment of wages for the four months when the machinery stood idle.[1]

Owen now formed a new partnership to purchase and work the mills. One of his late partners, John Atkinson, joined the new venture. The other members were Dennistown and Alexander Campbell, sons-in-law of Mr. Campbell of Jura, a relative of Mrs. Owen, and Colin Campbell, an associate of Alexander Campbell. But the new partners proved even less amenable than their predecessors. Owen had planned to provide a large schoolroom, lecture hall, dining-room, and other public institutions. The building which was to serve these various purposes—a huge structure 145 feet long by 45 feet wide—had already been completed, at a cost of some £3,000 : the fittings and furniture were, according to Owen's plan, to cost as much again. But his partners objected to further expenditure on projects not directly remunerative. They objected also to his liberal scale of wages and salaries, and generally to his schemes of social improvement. The differences became in the course of two or three years so acute that Owen once more offered to buy the concern at a reasonable valuation. On their refusal to sell, he resigned his position as managing director. Owen then proceeded to draw up a pamphlet stating the history of New Lanark ; what had already been done and what he had hoped to do for furthering the cause of education and improving the position of the people employed; and appealing to benevolent and wealthy men to join with him in purchasing the business, not merely for the immediate good to be effected to the population actually employed in the mills, but also that the establishment "might be a model and example to the manufacturing community, which without some essential change in the formation of their characters, threatened, and now still more threatens, to revolutionise and ruin the empire."[1]

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[1] Compare *Statement Regarding the New Lanark Establishment*, p. 9, with R. Owen's *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 87.

A great part of the years 1812-13 was spent in London, partly on the search for new partners, who should be men of like mind with himself, partly on the business of seeing through the press the first two of his *Essays on the Formation of Character.* The following letter, which bears the postmark 1st February, 1813—the earliest letter of Owen's which has been preserved—refers to his doings in London at this time, and to the writing of the *Essays.*

"TO MRS. OWEN,
"BRAXFIELD, LANARK.

"LONDON, 34, Fenchurch Street.
"Monday evening.

"Mr. Clegg's letter, which I have just received, gave me, my dearest Caroline, the greatest pleasure, as it informed me that you, our sisters, and all our dear pets were well and Robert getting daily better.[2] To know that you are well is the greatest pleasure I have, except to hear that you are happy, as that includes something still more than health, and I now look with the greatest delight to my return, which I shall expedite by every

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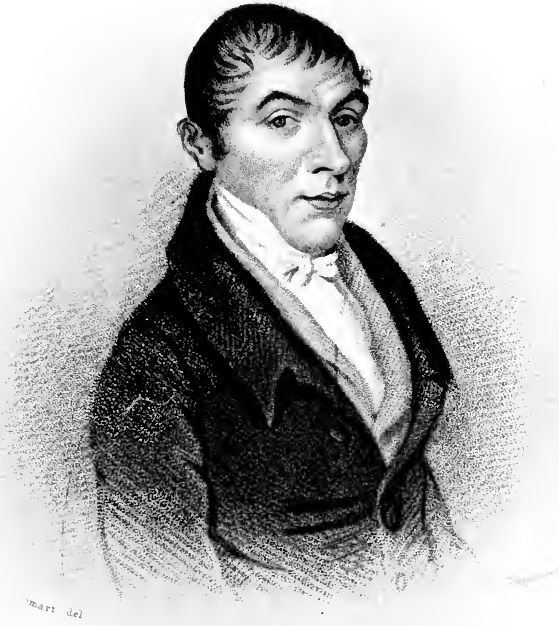
[1] *Statement*, p. 4.

[2] Robert Dale, the eldest son, had a long and serious illness this year.



From a print after a drawing by Smart, published in 1822.

ROBERT OWEN.

means in my power. I have been from London since Saturday morning, part of the time with Mr. Lancaster at Labrador House, part with Mr. and Mrs. Tom Borradaile and the Coles, whom our dearest Jane and Julia know, and part with the celebrated and learned Dr. Ireland, whom none of you'I daresay know—whatever you may do hereafter. My time is therefore as fully occupied as ever, and I have much to do yet before I can leave the work which I have commenced. The first part of it, however, comes out to-morrow, and the second which I have in hand will finish all I intend to do this journey. And it must afterwards find its level and accomplish its own work. I shall however leave it in very good hands.

" But what am I to say, my dearest Caroline, to relieve your anxieties in the meantime, particularly about my first appearance before the public. All that just now occurs to me to say is that it has been written with care and read and inspected by men of the acknowledged and finest abilities of all parties, and approved by all. But the second is of far more importance in some respects. But it will not contain any doctrines which will not be admired [1] by the leaders of all the sects and parties in the kingdom. You need not therefore have any fears regarding my proceedings, which will soon prove on what foundation they proceed. I am interrupted by Mr. and Mrs. Borradaile, and to save post must hastily conclude. With kind love and kisses to all our dear boys and girls and sisters, with remembrances to all the household. Tell [word undecipherable] Mr. Lancaster spoke to me about his visit to London, which I cannot object to. Mr. Clegg must supply him with money for his journey if he sets out before I return home, but I will see Mr. Lancaster before I can say when he ought to set out.

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[1] So apparently in the original—though "admitted" would make better sense.

"In haste, my dearest Caroline, I must conclude, with kindest wishes for your happiness, and that you will soon have all your wishes fulfilled.

"With the sincerest affection,
"Your truly attached husband,
"R. OWEN."

In the result Owen succeeded in getting promises of the capital—about £130,000 in all—required to purchase the New Lanark Mills. The most famous of the new partners was Jeremy Bentham, who consented to receive Owen in person. "After some preliminary communication with our mutual friends James Mill and Francis Place, his then two chief counsellors, and some correspondence between him and myself, it was at length arrived at that I was to come to his hermit-like retreat at a particular hour, and that I was, upon entering, to proceed upstairs, and we were to meet half-way upon the stairs. I pursued these instructions, and he, in great trepidation, met me, and taking my hand, while his whole frame was agitated with the excitement, he hastily said—'Well! well! It is all over. We are introduced. Come into my study.'"[1]

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 96. Some fifteen years later young Robert Dale Owen was invited to Bentham's house. The philosopher's parting words to him were, "God bless you, if there be such a Being, and, at all events, my young friend, take care of yourself."—(*Threading my Way*, p. 177.)

Of the other partners four were members of the Society of Friends—William Allen, John Walker, Joseph Fox, and Joseph Forster—and one, Michael Gibbs, a member of the Church of England, and afterwards Lord Mayor of London. Of all the new partners William Allen seems to have taken the most active part in the management of the affair. The proprietor of some large chemical works, and himself a student of science, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and lecturer on natural and experimental philosophy at Guy's Hospital, zealous in good works, especially in the cause of popular education and social reform, he was before all things a devout, if somewhat narrow-minded Christian.[1]

Robert Owen's views on religious questions were at this time not so fully developed as in later years, or he was at less pains to promulgate them. There is no indication in the two *Essays on the Formation of Character*, published in this year (1813), that the author rejected all religious revelation. At all events William Allen, in December, 1813, seems to have had no forewarning that he was about to ally himself with one whom he would have considered an infidel. His hesitation and timidity as to joining the partnership appear to have proceeded rather from the excessive scrupulousness of a devout and conscientious Christian about to embark on an enterprise of a novel kind.[1] On December 27, 1813, however, the matter was finally settled between Owen on the one hand, and Allen, Walker, and Fox, on the other.[2]

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[1] Robert Dale Owen gives an amusing illustration of Allen's strictness. One day the youth was dining at Allen's house in Plough Court. The host asked the guest, "Will thee have more roast beef?" Absorbed in conversation, young Owen declined, but later asked leave to change his mind, only to meet with the answer, "Robert, thee has already refused." No second supply was forthcoming (*Threading my Way*, p. 87). Allen at about this time was editing the *Philanthropist*, a monthly journal devoted to Social Reform, and especially to Education. He was one of the trustees of the Duke of Kent's estates, and no doubt introduced Owen to the Prince. At a later date Allen started an Agricultural Colony and Industrial Schools at Lindfield in Sussex.

Owen's late partners, Atkinson and the Campbells, had refused to sell the business at an agreed price, and the whole concern was therefore advertised for sale by "public roup." From the advertisement, which appeared in the *Glasgow Herald* of December 24, 1813, we learn that the establishment consisted of four cotton-mills, three of seven and one of six storeys, a long building 454 ft. × 20, used as a storeroom; a machine shop; a brass and iron foundry; and another building which is thus described:

"There is also another building of the following dimensions, at present unoccupied, 145 ft. × 45 ft. over the walls, containing a cellar 140 ft. long × 19 ft. broad, and 9 ft. high; *first floor*, above the cellars, one room 140 × 40 × 11.6 high; *second floor*, 140 × 40 × 21 high. This building has been planned to admit of an extensive store cellar, a public kitchen, eating and exercise room, a school, lecture room, and Church. All of which, it is supposed, may be fitted up in a very compleat manner for a sum not exceeding £2,500, and this arrangement may be formed so as to create permanent and substantial benefits to the inhabitants of the village, and to the proprietors of the Mills."

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[1] See *Life of William Allen* (1846), Vol. I., p. 180,—"much exercised in mind about New Lanark," and again, "I had much conflict of mind on account of the responsibility involved in it. I trust, however, I had a degree of evidence that it was right."

[2] Bentham, apparently, came in after the purchase had actually been completed (see letter dated January 8, 1814, from Allen to Owen, quoted in *New Existence*, Part V., p. lxvi.).

The 31st December, 1813, four days after Owen's agreement with his new partners, was fixed on as the date for the sale by auction. In the interval the old partners had, according to Owen, spread rumours to depreciate the value of the property, hoping to be enabled to buy it in at much less than its real value, and supposing that Owen, of whose recent proceedings they appear to have been in ignorance, would be unable in any event to find the purchase-money. The property was put up at £60,000, Owen having arranged with his new friends not to let it go under £120,000. The price gradually mounted up, the old partners advancing by bids of £1,000 and Owen's solicitor capping each bid with an advance of £100. The persistence of Owen's representative seems to have disconcerted his opponents, for their final bid was £114,000, and the property was in the event knocked down to Owen at £114,100.[1]

Owen dispatched a mounted messenger to carry the news to his wife at New Lanark, and a few days later, as soon as the necessary business formalities had been completed, followed himself with two of his new partners, Joseph Fox and Michael Gibbs.[2] The following extract

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[1] Owen tells us that his late partners had made so sure of the victory that they had invited their friends to a dinner to celebrate it. At the dinner one of the guests, Colonel Hunter, knowing that his hosts had for weeks past been running down the value of the property, ironically proposed the toast of "Success to those who had sold for £114,100 a property which they had valued at £40,000 only" (*Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 92).

[2] See extracts from their letters, alluding to their reception at New Lanark, published in *New Existence*, Part. V., p. lxvii.

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from a letter published in the *Glasgow Herald* of January 10, 1814, describes the reception with which they met. The letter is dated Lanark, January 5, 1814.

"There were great rejoicings here yesterday on account of Mr. Owen's return, after his purchase of New Lanark. The Society of Free Masons at this place, with colours flying and a band of music, accompanied by almost the whole of the inhabitants, met Mr. Owen, immediately before his entrance into the burgh of Lanark, and hailed him with the loudest acclamations of joy ; his people took the horses from his carriage and, a flag being placed in front, drew him and his friends along, amid the plaudits of the surrounding multitudes, until they reached Braxfield, where his Lady and two of her sisters being prevailed upon to enter the carriage, which was then uncovered, the people with the most rapturous exultation proceeded to draw them through all the streets of New Lanark, where all were eager to testify their joy at his return. On being set down at his own house, Mr. Owen, in a very appropriate speech, expressed his acknowledgements to his people for the warmth of their attachment, when the air was again rent with the most enthusiastic bursts of applause. Mr. Owen is so justly beloved by all the inhabitants employed at New Lanark, and by people of all ranks in the neighbourhood, that a general happiness has been felt since the news arrived of his continuing a proprietor of the mills. The houses were all illuminated at New Lanark on Friday[1] night when the news came, and all has been jubilee and animation with them ever since."

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[1] December 31, 1813.

It was not only Owen's own workpeople who took part in this demonstration : the inhabitants of the town of Old Lanark insisted on testifying their respect and admiration for their neighbour by joining the crowd and helping to draw the carriage through the streets. His Quaker friends, Owen tells us, were much alarmed at the first moment when they saw the multitude running towards them on their nearing the town of Lanark, and afterwards proportionately pleased with the affection and gratitude manifested by the people.[1] Owen himself, we are told, warmly expostulated with those who proposed to harness themselves to his carriage, protesting that the working classes had already too long been treated like the brutes.[2]

[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 97.
[2] *Robert Owen at New Lanark*, p. 16.

CHAPTER VI

A NEW VIEW OF SOCIETY

THE name of Robert Owen is little known to the present generation as an educational reformer. We find scant mention of him in Encyclopædia articles on Education or in histories of pedagogy. Yet whether we look at the soundness and novelty of his theories, the magnitude of the results actually achieved, or the measure of his reputation and influence amongst his contemporaries, we are justified in awarding him a high place amongst the pioneers of popular education. There are two main causes for the undeserved oblivion which has fallen on this, not the least fruitful and significant part of his life's work. In the first place, Owen published no formal treatise on pedagogy, unless indeed his *Essays on the Formation of Character* may be classed in that category; he did not even find time to write a systematic account of the scheme of education actually pursued in the New Lanark schools, nor did any of his contemporaries, with one exception, think it worth while to supply the omission. The only comprehensive account which we possess is to be found in a small book written by his son, Robert Dale Owen, in 1824, which seems to have attracted, in this country at any rate, less notice than it deserved.

But the main cause for the rapid passing into oblivion of Owen's work in this direction is, no doubt, to be found in his own later history. It was the ambiguous reputation of Owen the Socialist, Owen the Infidel, and Owen the Spiritualist which eclipsed the fame of Owen the founder of Infant-schools, and the pioneer in this country of rational education.

The education of the children of the poor was possibly more neglected in England at the beginning of the last century than in any other civilised country. The piety of former generations had endowed numerous Grammar Schools for giving a liberal education to the children of the well-to-do. Throughout the eighteenth century a large number of charity schools had been founded to teach the children of the poor to read and write. But even the beggarly elements offered by these charity schools were available only for a few. The buildings could accommodate but a fraction of those who needed their help. There was no one to make the teaching offered attractive, or in default of such attraction to compel the children to come. Moreover the parents themselves were in many cases unwilling or unable to forego their children's earnings. A large proportion therefore of the children of this country could neither read nor write. So late as 1816 the Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders in the Metropolis, presided over by Henry Brougham, concluded "that a very large number of children are wholly without the means of instruction, although their parents appear to be generally very desirous of obtaining that advantage for them." Owen's partner William Allen, one of the witnesses before the Committee, estimated the number of children in London alone at that date who were wholly without education at over 100,000. The Lancastrian Association had organised an actual census in two districts of London. In the Covent Garden division they found that out of 4,790 children, 2,748 were wholly uneducated. The result of a similar census in Spitalfields showed that out of 5,953 children, there were 2,565 between six and fourteen years of age without any education.[1] These figures applied to London alone. There was no reason to suppose that things were better in the rest of England; and in the manufacturing districts, where, as already shown, the whole energies of the children were devoted from an early age to winning their bread, the amount of education must have been almost infinitesimal.

The Committee of 1816 was appointed as the result of a long period of popular ferment on this question of education. From the beginning of the nineteenth century both parties in the State had been in strenuous rivalry to found schools in the interest of their own views and so capture the growing generation. The Liberals and Nonconformists were first in the field. A young Quaker named Lancaster, filled with zeal for the education of the people, had begun in 1798 to teach some poor children near his father's home in Southwark. As his pupils grew in numbers he acted upon a plan already formulated by Dr. Bell, an army chaplain at Madras, and set his pupils to teach each other. By this means he soon gathered nearly a thousand pupils at his school. The problem of popular education at an inexpensive rate seemed already solved. The Nonconformists and the reforming party generally took up Lancaster's scheme with enthusiasm, and the Royal Lancastrian Association, afterwards known as the British and Foreign Schools Society, was founded.

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[1] *Report*, pp. 36, 189.

Amongst the most influential of Lancaster's early patrons were some wealthy members of the Society of Friends, under whose guidance the Bible was regularly read and studied in the schools. But the Church party, not satisfied with this undenominational instruction, supported Dr. Bell, the original inventor of the monitorial system, and founded in opposition "The National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church." Both parties collected funds and established schools through the country. It does not appear, however, that either Bell or Lancaster aimed at any radical reform, beyond that already mentioned for cheapening the machinery of popular education. Reading, writing, and arithmetic still formed the staple of the course, and these elements were still taught by crude mechanical methods which exercised the memory at the expense of the judgment and reasoning powers.

The main object aimed at by both reformers was necessarily economy. It was economy which suggested to Bell setting the elder children to teach the younger, and the use of sand instead of writing-paper. Lancaster adopted both devices, but at a later date substituted slates for sand. Both systems made large use of a blackboard for giving instruction. Reading, writing and arithmetic lessons seem commonly to have been given *viva voce*, the pupil writing the problem down on the slate from dictation, or copying it from the blackboard—the expense of books for each scholar was thus saved.

Lancaster is credited with the invention of syllabic spelling and some minor reforms. But both his contributions and those of Dr. Bell to the art of education seem to have been for the most part of a mechanical kind.[1]

It should be added that the plan, essential to the proper carrying out of the monitorial scheme, of having a large number of classes carried on simultaneously under the director's eye in one large room, though no doubt economical, necessarily tended to impair efficiency. Owen, who originally planned the arrangement of his own schools at New Lanark somewhat on this model, had come later to regret his action ; for, as his son points out, experience soon showed that it was difficult to gain and fix the attention of the children when a number of separate centres of instruction were carrying on business simultaneously in an immense room ninety feet by forty.

Owen had at an early period given generous assistance to both Lancaster and Bell. To the first he had sent subscriptions amounting in all to a thousand pounds. Later, when the Church party took up Dr. Bell, he had offered them a similar sum if they would open their schools without distinction of creed, and £500 if they refused to accept the condition. After some debate, as Owen tells us, the smaller sum was accepted.[1]

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[1] See *A Comparative View of the Plans of Education of Dr. Bell and Mr. Lancaster*, by Joseph Fox, 1808 ; and *Address in Recommendation of the Madras System of Education*, by Rev. N. J. Hollingsworth, London, 1812. William Allen, before Brougham's Committee, estimated the cost of conducting a school of 1,000 children on the Lancastrian plan at only 4*s*. 6*d*. a head. He mentions also that both Bell and Lancaster made one book serve for the whole school (*Report*, p. 115).

In 1812 Lancaster came to Glasgow and Owen took the chair at a public dinner given in his honour. In a brief speech he maintained the thesis that education, "so far at least as depends upon our operations, is the primary source of all the good and evil, misery and happiness, which exist in the world." For consider, said he, the differences, bodily and mental, which are found between different races of mankind, and different individuals in the same race. "From whence do these general bodily and mental differences proceed? Are they inherent in our nature, or do they arise from the respective soils on which we are born? Evidently from neither. They are wholly and solely the effects of that education which I have described. Man becomes a wild ferocious savage, a cannibal, or a highly civilised and benevolent being, according to the circumstances in which he may be placed from his birth."

"Let us suppose," he proceeded, "an exchange of any given number of children to be made at their birth between the Society of Friends, of which our worthy guest, Joseph Lancaster, is a member, and the loose fraternity which inhabit St. Giles's in London; the children of the former would grow up like the members of the latter, prepared for every degree of crime, while those of the latter would become the same temperate good moral characters as the former."[1] How momentous in its consequences for good or evil, he concluded, is the work of educating the youth of the nation.

The passage contains two assumptions, each of which would in modern times be held as highly controvertible—that the differences between man and man are due to differences in the environment, and that the conditions of the environment are directly under human control. These assumptions, expressed or understood, informed, it need scarcely be pointed out, the advanced political thinking of the last half, at least, of the eighteenth century. They are implied in the *Contrat Social*; they justified the paper constitution of the Abbe Sieyès; they form the basis of the argument in Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* and in Godwin's *Political Justice*; they are embodied in the American Declaration of Independence; nay, they are the unwritten postulates on which Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity ultimately rest. They found qualified expression in the writings even of so sober and representative a thinker as Adam Smith: "The difference of natural talents in different men is in reality much less than we are aware of: and the very different genius which appears to distinguish men of different professions when grown up to maturity, is not, upon many occasions, so much the cause as the effect of the division of labour. The difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street porter, for example, seems to arise, not so much from nature as from habit, custom and education. When they came into the world, and for the first six or eight years of their existence, they were very much alike, and neither their parents nor their playfellows could perceive any remarkable difference. About that age or soon after, they come to be employed in very different occupations. The difference of talents comes then to be taken notice of, and widens by degrees, till at last the vanity of the philosopher is willing to acknowledge scarce any resemblance."[1]

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 84; Hollingsworth, *op. cit.*

These conceptions, then, were more or less taken for granted in much of the literature of the closing decade of the eighteenth century, and Owen drank them in at the most impressionable period of his intellectual life, the years between 18 and 28, which he spent in Manchester. That he read and studied at all systematically is improbable. We have seen that his school education ceased before he was ten years of age. But by his own account he was an eager reader of books both before and after that date. He tells us that his hours of leisure at Stamford were mostly devoted to reading. When he came to Manchester his leisure was no doubt more scanty;[2] and his writings show little trace of wide, much less of systematic reading.

His son's account fully accords with this view: "When I first remember him, he read a great deal, but it was chiefly one or two London dailies, with other periodicals as they came out. He was not, in any sense of the word, a student; one who made his own way in life, unaided by a single dollar from the age of ten, could not well be. I never found in his extensive library a book with a marginal note, or even a pencil mark of his, on a single page. He usually glanced over books without mastering them; often dismissing them with some such curt remark as that 'the radical errors shared by all men made books of little value.' Except statistical works, of which his favourite was Colquhoun's 'Resources of the British Empire,' I never remember to have seen him occupied in taking notes from any book whatever.

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[1] *Wealth of Nations*, Book. I., Chap. iv.

[2] But see above, Chap. iii., p. 55.

"In this way he worked out his problems for human improvement to great disadvantage, missing a thousand things that great minds had thought and said before his time, and often mistaking ideas that were truly his own, for novelties that no human being had heretofore given to the world."[1]

Owen thus got his ideas, as a self-educated man, with little leisure for study, must do, from few, and those mostly secondhand, sources. And he has the characteristic defects of the self-educated thinker. His conceptions are presented with a crudity and sharpness of definition impossible for one who had continually supplemented his own scanty store of observations and reflections out of the accumulated riches of the past.

His ideas were no doubt already belated even at the time when he wrote. In his exaggeration of the importance of circumstances—that is, post-natal circumstances—in forming character, he is guided by the bias of the eighteenth century thinkers. But the reaction against the pre-Revolutionary philosophy had set in long before 1813: and the great conception of evolution was even then dawning upon the world. Charles Darwin, it is appropriate to remember, was born just four years before the publication of the first *Essay on the Formation of Character*, Buffon, Goethe, Erasmus Darwin had already written, and Lamarck was at the time struggling with his speculations on the origin of species. It is certain, apart from these great names, that the plain facts of inheritance, though not, of course, bulking so largely as in modern thought, were even then recognised as counting for much more than Owen apparently had ever imagined. It is not that he deliberately sets facts of this kind on one side, but that he does not apparently recognise their bearing on his argument. His mind was dominated by the one idea, and held it in naked simplicity, which admitted neither deduction nor qualification.

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[1] *Threading my Way*, p. 67.

Again, it is to be remarked that his first years at New Lanark shut him off to a great extent from such intercourse with educated men as he had enjoyed at Manchester ; and the extraordinary success of his efforts for the regeneration of the miniature society over which he exercised lordship confirmed and hardened his views that Man was the creature of circumstance, and the reconstruction of the world, when this novel truth was firmly grasped, a mere question of the adaptation of means to ends. So that he puts forward his theories with the uncompromising directness of a child, and with more than a child's self-confidence.

Some time in 1812 Owen had published, anonymously, the pamphlet already referred to—*A Statement regarding the New Lanark Establishment.* During the same year he wrote his first "Essay on the Principle of the Formation of Human Character," and published it early in 1813 under the title of *A New View of Society.* The second Essay appeared at the end of the same year. Both were originally published anonymously. The third and fourth Essays, though written about the same time and circulated amongst a large number of persons eminent in the social and political world, were not published until July, 1816.

The key-note of the Essays is the proposition that "*Any general character, from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means; which means are to a great extent at the command and under the control of those who have influence in the affairs of men.*"[1] Thus by suitable training any standard of conduct and any belief, however elevating on the one hand, or absurd and injurious on the other, can be impressed upon a human being. "Children are without exception passive and wonderfully contrived compounds," which can be moulded into any form at the pleasure of those who have control over them in the plastic stages of infancy and childhood. They are thus liable to be impressed, and as history shows us, always have received the impression of the habits, sentiments, and beliefs held by their parents and guardians, the impression being modified only by the circumstances in which they are placed and, to some small extent, by the particular organisation of each individual. From this it follows that no person is responsible for his own character and impulses, though the whole system of society and the whole doctrine of religion have assumed the contrary. No human being is properly the subject of praise or blame, still less of reward or punishment. Hence we may perceive the absurdity and glaring injustice of our penal laws: "How much longer shall we continue to allow generation after generation to be taught crime from their infancy, and, when so taught, hunt

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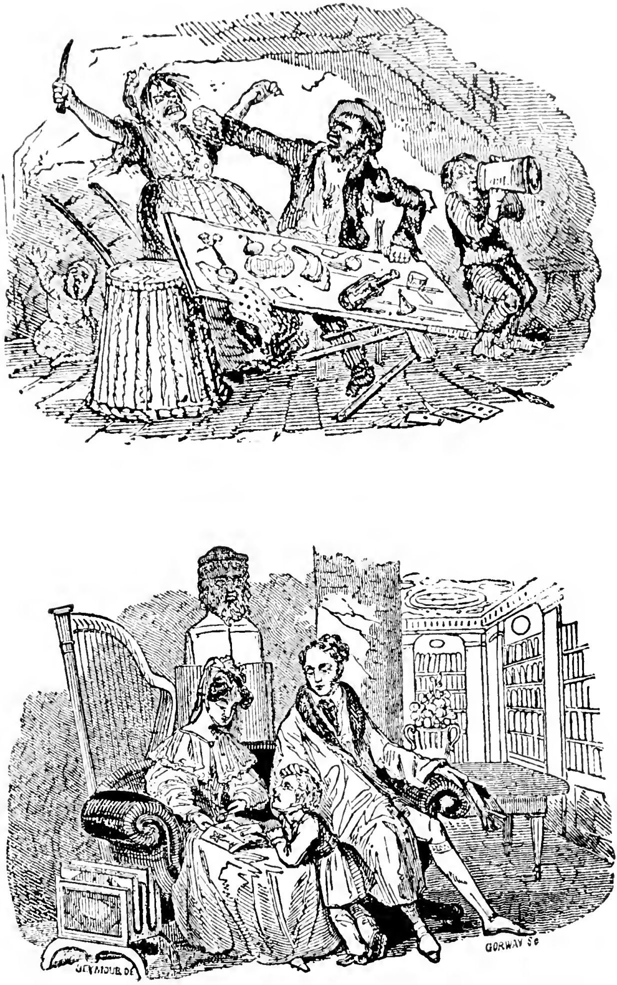
[1] *Autobiography*, Vol I., p. 266. The Essays in their original form being now difficult to obtain, the references given in the present chapter are to the reprint of them included in the Appendix to the first volume of the *Autobiography*.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Two woodcuts from the 1834 reprint of Owen's *Essays on the Formation of the Human Character,* illustrating the effect of bad and good circumstances respectively.

them like beasts of the forest, until they are entangled beyond escape in the toils and nets of the law? when, if the circumstances of those poor unpitied sufferers had been reversed with those who are even surrounded with the pomp and dignity of justice, these latter would have been at the bar of the culprit, and the former would have been in the judgment seat."[1]

On the other hand, "the child who from infancy has been rationally instructed in these principles, will readily discover and trace *whence* the opinions and habits of his associates have arisen, and *why* they possess them. At the same age he will have acquired reason sufficient to exhibit to him forcibly the irrationality of being angry with an individual for possessing qualities which, as a passive being during the formation of those qualities, he had not the means of preventing."[2] He will thus be moved to pity, not to anger, for those less fortunate in their upbringing than himself. A child so educated will be filled with a spirit of universal tolerance and good will; he will constantly desire to do good to all men, even to those who hold themselves his enemies. "Thus *shortly*, *directly*, and *certainly* may mankind be taught the essence, and to attain the ultimate object, of all former *moral* and *religious* instruction."[3]

To Owen it seemed that these principles and their corollaries, when thus clearly stated, were almost self-evident. Nevertheless he appeals for corroborative evidence to the past history of every nation, and in particular relates in some detail the result of his own experiment at putting these principles into practice at New Lanark.

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 274, 275.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 273.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 273.

In the preface to the third Essay he makes an earnest appeal to manufacturers and other employers of labour, in their own interests no less than those of the nation at large, to follow his example. He points out that the difference between profit and loss in running a manufactory is commonly held to depend largely on the attention bestowed on the machinery and the proper condition of the plant: "If then," he continues, "due care as to the state of your inanimate machines can produce such beneficial results, what may not be expected if you devote equal attention to your vital machines, which are much more wonderfully constructed?

"When you shall acquire a right knowledge of these, of their curious mechanism, of their self-adjusting powers; when the proper main-spring shall be applied to their varied movements,—you will become conscious of their real value, and you will readily be induced to turn your thoughts more frequently from your inanimate to your living machines; you will discover that the latter may be easily trained and directed to procure a large increase of pecuniary gain, while you may also derive from them high and substantial gratification.

"Will you then continue to expend large sums of money to procure the best devised mechanism of wood, brass, or iron; to retain it in perfect repair; to provide the best substance for the prevention of unnecessary friction, and to save it from falling into premature decay? Will you also devote years of intense application to understand the connection of the various parts of these lifeless machines, to improve their effective powers, and to calculate with mathematical precision all their minute and combined movements? And when in these transactions you estimate time by minutes, and the money expended for the chance of increased gain by fractions, will you not afford some of your attention to consider whether a portion of your time and capital would not be more advantageously applied to improve your living machines? From experience which cannot deceive me, I venture to assure you, that your time and money so applied, if directed by a true knowledge of the subject, would return you, not five, ten, or fifteen per cent, for your capital so expended, but often fifty, and in many cases a hundred per cent."[1]

But it is to Governments rather than to individuals that Owen prefers to make his appeal. "On the experience of a life devoted to the subject, I hesitate not to say, that the members of any community may by degrees be trained to live *without idleness*, *without poverty*, *without crime*, *and without punishment*; for each of these is the effect of error in the various systems prevalent throughout the world. *They are all necessary consequences of ignorance*."[2]

That ignorance removed, nothing, he proclaimed, forbids the immediate putting into effect of the principles here first set forth in their entirety to the world—"Shall yet another year pass in which crime shall be forced on the infant, who in ten, twenty, or thirty years hence shall suffer DEATH for being taught that crime? Surely it is impossible."[3] If such delay were permitted, it is the makers of the law, and others in high places who ought to suffer the penalty of the misdeed, rather than the untrained or mistrained culprit.

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 260, 261.

[2] *Ibid.*, p 285.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 286.

In the fourth Essay, the sub-title of which runs, "The Principles of the Former Essays applied to Government," he indicates the measures which should be adopted to reconstruct human society on the basis of the New Views. The first step towards the introduction of the New System is the establishment of a national scheme of Education. That education must be universal; no child in the whole Empire should be excluded from its benefits. It should be unsectarian; though Owen would welcome the co-operation of the Church, and held indeed that such co-operation was essential to the smooth working of the scheme, he deprecated the teaching of theological dogmas. Lastly, the national education must be a real education, and not merely the teaching by rote of the beggarly elements. He briefly reviews the systems of education then on trial in the country—those of Bell, Lancaster, and Whitbread—and shows how far they fall short of the standard required.

"It must be evident to common observers, that children may be taught, by either Dr. Bell's or Mr. Lancaster's system, to read, write, account, and sew, and yet acquire the worst habits, and have their minds rendered irrational for life.

"Reading and writing are merely instruments by which knowledge, either true or false, may be imparted; and, when given to children, are of little comparative value, unless they are also taught how to make a proper use of them. . ." (p. 318). "Enter any of the schools denominated National, and request the master to show the acquirements of the children. These are called out, and he asks them theological questions to which men of the most profound erudition cannot make a rational reply; the children, however, readily answer as they had been previously instructed; for memory, in this mockery of learning, is all that is required.

"Thus the child whose natural faculty of comparing ideas, or whose rational powers, shall be the soonest destroyed, if, at the same time, he possess a memory to retain incongruities without connexion, will become what is termed the first scholar in the class; and three-fourths of the time which ought to be devoted to the acquirement of useful instruction, will be really occupied in destroying the mental powers of the children" (p. 319).

But the remodelling of our institutions need not wait until the education of the rising generation on rational principles shall have been completed. There is much that an enlightened Government can do at once to improve the circumstances which hinder and oppress the men and women whose time for education is unhappily almost over. First a Labour Bureau should be established "for the purpose of obtaining regular and accurate information relative to the value of and demand for labour over the United Kingdoms" (p. 325); and "it ought to be a primary duty of any Government that sincerely interests itself in the well-being of its subjects, to provide perpetual employment of real national utility, in which all who apply may be immediately occupied" (p. 329). But Owen expressly disclaims interference with private enterprise: his Labour Bureau is to provide employment only for those otherwise unemployed. Such employment he suggests will best be found in the making and repairing of the public highways; for, he points out, it would probably be true national economy to keep the roads in a much higher state of repair than had been the case up to that time. Should this source of employment prove insufficient, he suggests that the unemployed might be set to work to construct canals, harbours and docks, and even to build ships (p. 329).

These two, National Education and National Employment, are the principal and most urgent measures necessary to the policy. But amongst minor reforms Owen indicates the abolition of State Lotteries; the regulation of the drink traffic in the interests of the Nation; the reform and ultimate supersession of the Poor Laws. Lastly, the Church must be purged. The theological dogmas which "constitute its weakness and create its danger" must be "withdrawn"; all tests must be abolished, and all men invited again within the fold, so as to constitute once more a truly National Church. "For the first grand step towards effecting any substantial improvement in these realms, without injury to any part of the community, is to make it the clear and decided interest of the Church to co-operate cordially in all the projected ameliorations. Once found a National Church on the true, unlimited, and genuine principles of universal charity, and all the members of the State will soon improve in every truly valuable quality"[1] (p. 322).

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[1] Arnold Toynbee held somewhat similar ideas on the need for making the Church truly national by abolishing all doctrinal tests, and securing the co-operation of clergy and laity. See the memoir prefixed to the *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution*, 1884.

In concluding, Owen indicates that there is yet one more instalment of the truth to be revealed when the time is ripe. "All that is now requisite, previous to withdrawing the last mental bandage by which hitherto the human race has been kept in darkness and misery, is by calm and patient reasoning to tranquillise the public mind, and thus prevent the evil effects which might otherwise arise from the too sudden prospect of freely enjoying rational liberty of mind" (p. 331).

In these words no doubt Owen foreshadowed his famous denunciation of all the religions of the world, which took place at the "London Tavern" in August, 1817.

Those who are familiar with the *Political Justice* will recognise a striking similarity, extending in some cases to the actual phrases employed, between Godwin's philosophical conceptions and those expounded by Owen twenty years later. Godwin had taught that "the characters of men originate in their external circumstances"; that "children are a sort of raw material put into our hands," to be moulded according to our wishes;[1] that, unlike the animals, in whose idiosyncrasies inheritance plays a large part, "the original differences of man and man . . . may be said to be almost nothing;"[2] "there is for the most part no essential difference between the child of the lord and of the porter":[3] that the differences found to exist in after life are due partly to the accident of the environment, partly to formal education, partly to the educative influence of the political and social system; that man's character and destiny are therefore largely determined by causes directly under human control. Again, Godwin ascribes all error to ignorance. "Remove the causes of this ignorance . . . and the effects will cease. Show me in the clearest and most unambiguous manner that a certain mode of procedure is most reasonable in itself or most conducive to my interests, and I shall infallibly pursue that mode."[1] Again, Godwin had taught that "the terms guilt, crime, desert and accountableness, in the absolute and general sense in which they have sometimes been applied, have no place. . . . So far as praise implies that the man could have abstained from the virtuous action I applaud, it belongs only to the delusive system of liberty."[2] If then "vicious propensities" have for the most part been implanted in human beings by "ill-constituted Governments," it would be absurd to hold the individuals responsible; "punishment can at no time make part of any political system that is built upon the principles of reason," and can at most be admitted as a measure of temporary expediency.[3]

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[1] *Political Justice*, edition of 1798, Vol. I., p. 47.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

The *Political Justice* first appeared in 1793, towards the beginning of Owen's residence in Manchester. The book can hardly have escaped his notice; and, though I cannot find that he ever mentions it by name, it seems tolerably certain that his philosophical views were profoundly influenced by its teachings. Doubtless in the twenty years which elapsed before the appearance of the *Essays on the Formation of Character*, Owen had so made these views his own by reflection and observation that he had forgotten whence his inspiration may have been derived. But if, as seems probable, he owed much to

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[1] *Political Justice*, edition of 1798, Vol. I., p. 45. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 394, 395.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. II., pp. 361-63.

Godwin, he was at any rate no servile follower of that curiously passionless thinker. On the constructive side of his speculations Owen parted company with his master. Godwin would have had no Government interference, no State employment of labour, no national system even of education: and he would assuredly have shuddered at the idea of co-operation with the Church.

But there are indications that another influence than Godwin's was working upon Owen at the time of the writing of the Essays. Owen's subsequent publications are commonly characterised by tediousness and monotony. Mr. Holyoake has somewhere illustrated this later style by a felicitous simile. Alluding to the well-known saying that Montaigne's sentences were so alive that if pricked they would bleed, he remarks that if you tried to prick one of Owen's utterances on the "System" you would infallibly lose your needle in the cotton-wool. But in these earliest Essays we find a certain crispness and clearness of style. The fourth Essay in particular gives us much more than this. Up to this point Owen had dealt mainly with the exposition of the general principles on which his "System" is based, and with the account of his work at New Lanark. But in the last Essay he presents us with a comprehensive and clearly reasoned scheme of social reconstruction. The argument is marked by studied moderation of tone, sobriety of judgment, and considerable insight into political possibilities. The whole composition reaches a higher level than any of Owen's other utterances. The explanation is probably to be found in a visit which Owen, prior to the publication of the Essays, paid to

Francis Place, the radical tailor of Charing Cross. Owen sought Place's aid in correcting the MS., and from internal evidence it is probable that Place's hand helped to guide the pen, at any rate in the writing of this final Essay.[1]

Place, writing in 1836, gives a shrewd and not unkindly account of his visitor. Owen "introduced himself to me, and I found him a man of kind manners and good intentions, of an imperturbable temper, and an enthusiastic desire to promote the happiness of mankind. A few interviews made us friends. . . He told me he possessed the means, and was resolved to produce a great change in the manners and habits of the whole of the people, from the most exalted to the most depressed. He found all our institutions at variance with the welfare and happiness of the people, and had discovered the true means of correcting all those errors which prevented their having the fullest enjoyment possible, and consequently of being wise and happy. His project was simple, easy of adoption, and so plainly efficacious that it must be embraced by every thinking man the moment he was made to understand it. He produced a manuscript, which he requested me to read and correct for him. I went through it carefully, and it was afterwards printed. . . . Mr. Owen then was, and is still, persuaded that he was the first who had ever observed that man was the creature of circumstances. On this supposed discovery he founded his system. Never having read a metaphysical book, nor held a metaphysical conversation, nor having ever heard of the disputes respecting free-will and necessity, he had no clear conception of his subject and his views were obscure. Yet he had all along been preaching and publishing and projecting and predicting in the fullest conviction that he could command circumstances or create them, and place man above their control when necessary. He never was able to explain these absurd notions, and therefore always required assent to them, telling those who were not willing to take his words on trust that it was their ignorance which prevented them from assenting to these self-evident propositions."[1]

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[1] James Mill is said also to have assisted in the revision of the MSS. (see Holyoake's *History of Co-operation* (First edition), Vol. I., p. 57).

We cannot but recognise the essential justice and sanity, within its limits, of Place's criticism, even whilst we feel that it fails to mete out full justice to Owen's character, and to recognise one supreme quality in which the critic, more nearly perhaps than any other man then living, resembled the man upon whom he passed judgment. Born in the same year, trained in the same stern school—though Owen's education there lacked the completeness which years of adversity had given to Place's character—inheritors, even though one of them never realised his debt, of the same great traditions, political, religious, and philosophic, Francis Place and Robert Owen alike excelled by reason of their untiring faith in the possibilities of human progress. This faith was the motive-power of both lives until the end. But in Place it was guided and subordinated by an intellect of rare quality, which was quick to see and resolute to use the small occasions which presented themselves from day to day for building up the gradual edifice of national freedom. With Owen that faith burned generous and uncontrollable as the sun, and like the sun, most of its light and heat might seem to have run to waste. If the realised achievements of the one man are weighed against those of the other, the higher rank would perhaps be assigned to Francis Place. But perhaps the other's claim to our remembrance lies less in the things which he did—substantial though his achievements were—than in the hopes which he inspired, the faith which his example kept alive. For the sun of that faith was never shorn of a single ray, nor suffered even a momentary eclipse. When he published his *New View of Society*, he looked for the regeneration of the world to begin on the morrow : throughout his long life that high vision, ever receding as he advanced, was still before his eyes : and he died at the age of eighty-seven happy in the belief that the millennium was even then knocking at the door.

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[1] From the Place MSS. in the British Museum, 27, 791 (264-68), quoted in the *Life of Francis Place*, by Graham Wallas, pp. 63, 64.

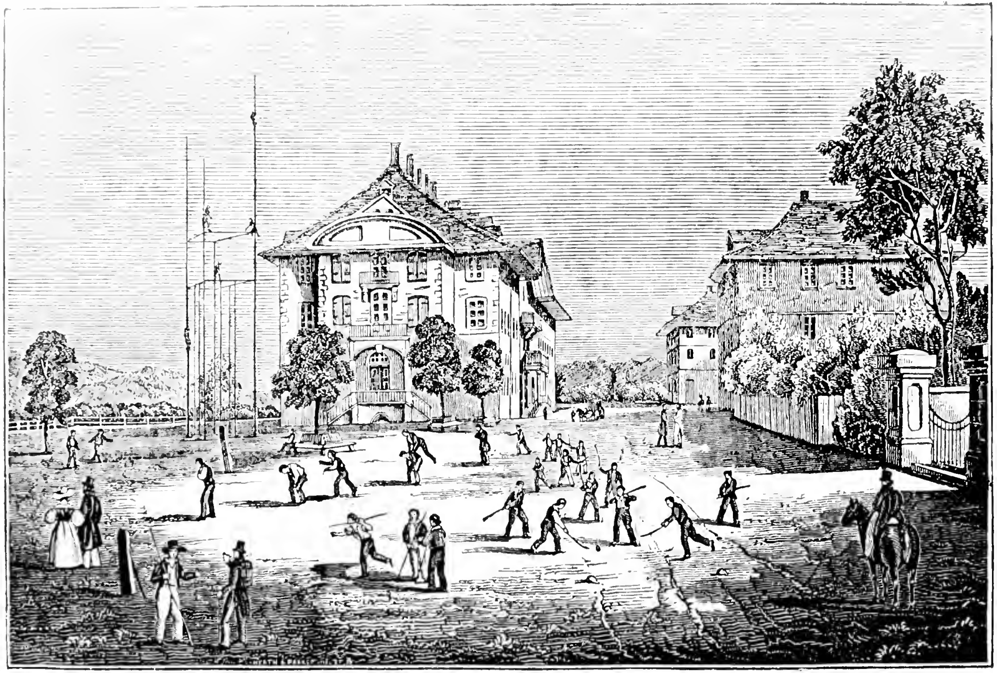
The publication of the first two Essays, together with the growing fame of his work at New Lanark, brought Owen's name prominently before the public, and was the means of introducing him to many of the leading men of the day. He had an interview with Lord Liverpool, the Prime Minister, who introduced him to Lady Liverpool, that she might express to Owen her warm approval of the Essays. Lord Sidmouth, then Home Secretary, not content with expressing his own sympathy, undertook to circulate the privately printed edition containing the two later Essays amongst the Governments and learned bodies of Europe and America. The Archbishop of Canterbury (Sutton) invited him to Lambeth that Owen might read to him the two later Essays whilst still in MS., and afterwards, Owen tells us, expressed a desire to correspond with their author, that he might hear more of the subject. Amongst his other acquaintances of this time were the Archbishop of Armagh, several bishops, Clarkson, Wilberforce, Zachary Macaulay, Sir Thomas Bernard and other philanthropists, Malthus, James Mill, Ricardo, Sir James Mackintosh, Colonel Torrens, Place, and Godwin. A copy of the Essays even reached Napoleon in his retirement at Elba, and Owen expresses his belief that the destinies of Europe might have been changed if the Allied Sovereigns had allowed the Exile to return peaceably to his throne, and thence carry into effect the good resolutions with which the *New View of Society* had inspired him.

Owen's account of all these interviews and transactions was written in extreme old age, and details with the naïve vanity of second childhood the gracious speeches and compliments made to him by these eminent personages. It is difficult to take his account of the matter quite seriously, or to suppose that either the Archbishop or the Home Secretary set so high a value on these revelations and proposals for social reconstruction as Owen would have us believe. But apart altogether from natural courtesy, it is probable that Owen's unaffected sincerity, the goodwill to all mankind which radiated from him, and the knowledge of the great things which he had already done at New Lanark, drew men towards him, and made them welcome one who must have proved merely a colossal bore if he had not been, as Leslie Stephen has finely said, of the very salt of the earth.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW LANARK SCHOOLS

FROM what has been said in the last chapter it will appear that it would be unprofitable to enquire too closely how far originality can be claimed for Owen's system of education. Ultimately, no doubt, like all other educational reformers since the French Revolution, he derived his inspiration from Rousseau, or from the movement of thought of which Rousseau is the most conspicuous embodiment. The general similarity of his ideas with those of Rousseau and of Rousseau's most prominent disciple, Pestalozzi, leave no room for doubt on this point. But the debt on Owen's part was probably unrecognised. There is no allusion to Rousseau in any of his writings ; he no doubt drank in the Genevan prophet's ideas at second-hand, and was ignorant even at the time of their source. Of Pestalozzi he does not seem to have heard until he went, in 1818, to the Continent in company with Professor Pictet, and there visited the schools of Oberlin at Fribourg, of Fellenberg at Hofwyl, and of Pestalozzi himself at Yverdun. Owen warmly approved "the truly catholic spirit" in which Oberlin conducted his school for the children of the poor. But he seems to have taken much pains to demonstrate to the good Father the imperative necessity



From a woodcut in the "Saturday Magazine," *Dec.*, 1834, *by permission of the Charity Organisation Society.*

M. FELLENBERG'S CHIEF SCHOOL AT HOFWYL.

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of taking children whilst still in their earliest years, for, said he, "to a great extent the character is made or marred before children enter the usual schoolroom."[1] Owen was obviously unaware when, in his extreme old age, he wrote his account of this visit to Fribourg, that Oberlin had anticipated him by some forty years in founding infant schools. In the early years of his pastorate in the Ban de la Roche, Oberlin had established such a school, with young women to act as *conductrices.* The children were taken at a quite tender age, when too young for formal lessons, were made to sit on forms, and taught to knit, spin, and sew, or to look at pictures of sacred subjects. They were especially—a significant foreshadowing of one of Owen's favourite devices—taught to interest themselves in maps, amongst them a large scale-map of the Ban de la Roche, in which each child learnt to find its father's house. The children were further taught to recite short lessons after the teachers.[2]

With Fellenberg's establishment, which they next visited in the course of this tour, Owen was so pleased that a few months later he sent his two elder boys, Robert Dale and William, to be educated there. But the impression produced by the Yverdun School was not so favourable. Here is his own account of the visit:

"Our next visit was to Yverdun, to see the advance made by Pestalozzi—another good and benevolent man, acting for the benefit of his poor children to the extent of his knowledge and means. He was doing, he said, all he could to cultivate the heart, the head, and the hands of his pupils. His theory was good, but his means and experience were very limited, and his principles were those of the old system. His language was a confused *patois*, which Professor Pictet could but imperfectly understand. His goodness of heart and benevolence of intention were evident in what he had done under the disadvantages which he had to encounter. His school, however, was one step in advance of ordinary schools, or the old routine schools for the poor in common society, and we were pleased with it as being this one step in advance, for the rudiments of common school education for the poor, without attention to their dispositions and habits, and without teaching them useful occupation, by which to earn a living, are of little real utility. We left him, being much pleased with the honest homely simplicity of the old man. His one step beyond the usual routine had attracted and was attracting the attention of many who had previously known only the common routine."

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 175.

[2] *Vie d'Oberlin* (Paris, 1845), p. 117.

Pestalozzi throughout his life had been hampered by narrow means and by his own lack of organising power, and Owen's visit came just at the darkest hour for the old man. The Institute at Yverdun was then in great financial straits; owing to jealousies among the staff, the majority of Pestalozzi's disciples and colleagues and a large number of pupils had already left the school, or were about to leave; and Pestalozzi himself was almost in despair. Owen's unfavourable impression was therefore, no doubt, superficially justified. Nevertheless it is probable that he derived some useful ideas from the visit. And indeed the germs of many of Owen's ideas on education were no doubt derived from his tour in 1818. A hostile witness already quoted, the Rev. John Aiton, says, "His mode of education is a jumble of Dr. Bell's and Mr. Lancaster's with hints from M. Fellenberg, Père Girard, Pestalozzi and others."[1] Owen himself in 1816—shortly before the Continental tour just described—was not disposed to claim originality for his ideas. In the evidence before the Factory Committee he is content to describe his educational system as "a combination of what appears to me the best parts of the National and Lancasterian systems, with some little additions which have suggested themselves."[2] But in this matter Owen appears to have "builded wiser than he knew." He can have owed but little to either Bell or Lancaster. He distrusted the system of teaching by rote, and he regarded it as essential that the children should have more of the individual attention of the master than was possible under the monitorial system.[3] Owen's educational ideas were certainly far in advance of his contemporaries in these islands, and his enterprise at New Lanark deserves to be commemorated as furnishing a model in some respects too far in advance of the time to be generally adopted even now.

It was not, however, until 1816—the year which saw the beginning of Froebel's work at Griesheim and Brougham's Select Committee on Education in this country—that Owen was able to carrry out his ideas on a liberal scale. Up till 1813 all his schemes for the improvement of the people at New Lanark had to be adjusted to meet the views of partners who were mainly intent on money-getting. Nevertheless he had, as already stated, succeeded prior to the dissolution of partnership in erecting, at a cost of £3,000, a building of three storeys, which was to serve amongst other purposes for schools and lectures. After 1813, with the cordial goodwill and assistance of his Quaker partners, Owen set to work to put up a new building to be used exclusively for school classes, lectures, concerts and recreation generally. The building was formally opened on January 1, 1816. In an address of considerable length, mercifully broken by a brief musical interlude, Owen expounded the views already set forth in his Essays on the Formation of Character, dwelling especially on the importance of right education from the earliest years as a means to the regeneration of mankind. "What ideas," he said, "individuals may attach to the term Millennium, I know not; but I know that society may be formed so as to exist without crime, without poverty, with health greatly improved, with little, if any, misery, and with intelligence and happiness increased a hundred-fold; and no obstacle whatsoever intervenes at this moment, except ignorance, to prevent such a state of society from becoming universal."[1]

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[1] *A Refutation of Mr. Owen's System*, p. 11.

[2] See his evidence (*Report*, p. 26). See also the fuller statement of his system given by him before Lord Brougham's Committee of the same year (p. 238).

[3] See his evidence before Lord Brougham's Committee (pp. 238 242).

The Institution for the Formation of Character is still standing; it is the only one of the mill buildings on the hither side of the lade which brings the water from the river to work the mills. It is a building of two storeys; the lower storey is at the present time used as kitchens and dining-room for the mill-hands, and one room on the upper floor is fitted up as a concert hall and lecture-room. Until the establishment of Board Schools in Scotland, the building continued to be used as a school for the children of those working in the mills.

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 349.

The upper floor, in Owen's time, was divided into two rooms, one about ninety and the other between forty and fifty feet long. The breadth is about forty[1] and the height twenty feet. To quote Robert Dale Owen's description, written in 1824:

"The principal school-room is fitted up with desks and forms, on the Lancasterian plan, having a free passage down the centre of the room. It is surrounded, except at one end, where a pulpit stands, with galleries, which are convenient when this room is used, as it frequently is, either as a lecture-room or place of worship.

"The other and smaller apartment on the second floor has the walls hung round with representations of the most striking zoological and mineralogical specimens, including quadrupeds, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects, shells, minerals, etc. At one end there is a gallery, adapted for the purpose of an orchestra, and at the other end are hung very large representations of the two hemispheres; each separate country, as well as the various seas, islands, etc., being differently coloured, but without any names attached to them. This room is used as a lecture- and ball-room, and it is here that the dancing and singing lessons are daily given. It is likewise occasionally used as a reading-room for some of the classes.

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[1] According to Robert Dale Owen (*Education at New Lanark*, p. 28) my own measurements make it nearly forty-five.

"The lower storey is divided into three apartments, of nearly equal dimensions, twelve feet high, and supported by hollow iron pillars, serving at the same time as conductors in winter for heated air, which issues through the floor of the upper storey, and by which means the whole building may, with care, be kept at any required temperature. It is in these three apartments that the younger classes are taught reading, natural history, and geography."

The whole of the building was opened in the evenings for the use of children and adults who had been working in the mills during the day; further, there were in the evenings periodical singing and dancing classes, lectures, etc.

The clearest account of the system of infant education pursued at New Lanark is given by Owen himself.

The Infant School was, he tells us, opened on January 2, 1816.[1] All children above a year old[2] were, if the parents were willing, to be sent to the school. Owen himself during the first few months of its establishment was constantly in the schools, and took pains to win the confidence and affection of all the children. The selection of teachers for the infants had exercised him much; he felt it would be worse than useless to take persons whose only ideas of education

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[1] *New Existence*, Part V., p. liii.

[2] In practice it would seem from occasional references that a somewhat higher limit was observed.

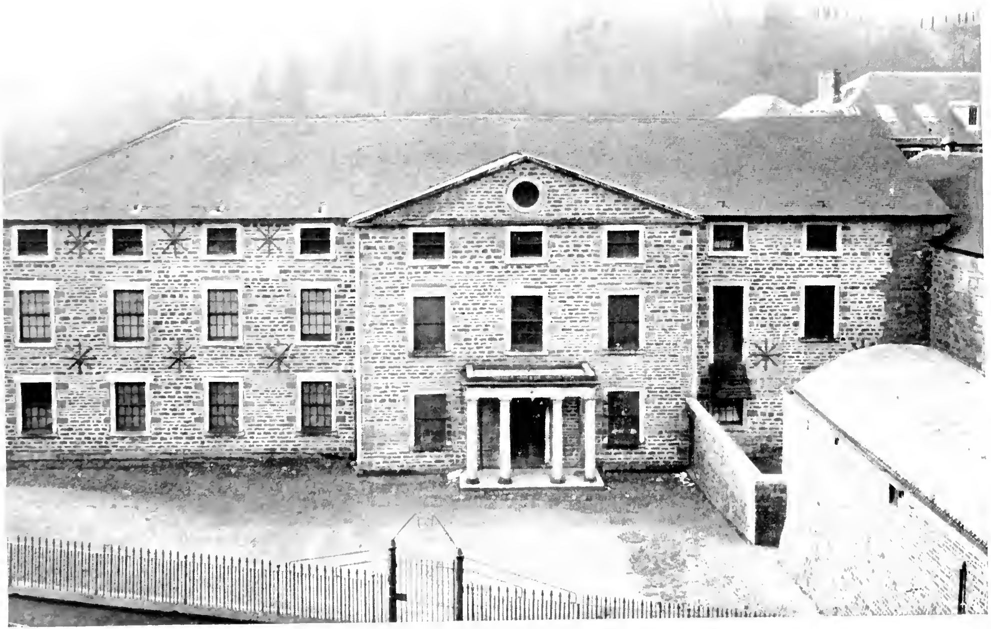

Photo by Davidson & Sons, New Lanark.

INSTITUTION FOR THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER, NEW LANARK.

were concerned with books. He needed those who loved children and would have unlimited patience with them, and who would moreover be willing unreservedly to follow Owen's instructions as regards the things to be taught and the methods of teaching. His choice finally fell upon one James Buchanan, a simple-hearted weaver, who is happily described as having been "previously trained by his wife to perfect submission to her will." With him was joined a young woman of seventeen, named Molly Young. Owen found in these persons sufficiently pliant instruments of his designs. His first instruction to them was never on any provocation to use harsh words or actions to the children. Further, whilst showing in themselves an example of uniform kindness, they were to endeavour by every means in their power to inculcate a like spirit of loving kindness in the children in all their dealings with each other.

"The children," he proceeds, "were not to be annoyed with books; but were to be taught the uses and nature or qualities of the common things around them, by familiar conversation when the children's curiosity was excited so as to induce them to ask questions respecting them. . . . The schoolroom for the infants' instruction was . . . furnished with paintings, chiefly of animals, with maps, and often supplied with natural objects from the gardens, fields, and woods,—the examination and explanation of which always excited their curiosity and created an animated conversation between the children and their instructors, now themselves acquiring new knowledge by attempting to instruct their young friends, as I always taught them to think their pupils were, and to treat them as such.

"The children at four and above that age showed an eager desire to understand the use of the maps of the four quarters of the world upon a large scale purposely hung in the room to attract their attention. Buchanan, their master, was first taught their use, and then how to instruct the children for their amusement—for with these infants everything was made to be amusement.

"It was most encouraging and delightful to see the progress which these infants and children made in real knowledge, without the use of books. And when the best means of instruction or forming character shall be known, I doubt whether books will be ever used before children attain their tenth year. And yet without books they will have a superior character formed for them at ten.

"After some short time," he proceeds, the infants subjected to this training, "were unlike all children of such situated parents, and indeed unlike the children of any class in society. Those at two years of age and above had commenced dancing lessons, and those of four years of age and upwards singing lessons—both under a good teacher. Both sexes were also drilled, and became efficient in the military exercises, being formed into divisions, led by young drummers and fifers, and they became very expert and perfect in these exercises."[1]

Of the general principles on which the scheme of education was founded, and of the methods employed in the teaching of the older children—from about five to ten or twelve—a clear account is given by Robert Dale Owen in his *Outlines of the System of Education at New Lanark*, published at Glasgow in 1824. The system had then been at work for upwards of eight years—long enough to enable the results to be seen and weighed. On the other hand, the children were only in school for some five hours a day and were subject in family life "to the counteracting influence of an association with persons who had not received similar education." Moreover the parents, though they were at liberty to leave their children at school until twelve years of age, generally withdrew them at ten, to send them into the mills. Even after they had begun full work in the mills, however, the children were at liberty to attend the evening schools, and most of them seem to have availed themselves of the privileges offered. The education, it should be noted, was practically free, the parents being required to contribute only 3*d.* a month for each child—a sum insufficient, it may be surmised, to pay for the consumption of books, ink, and paper.[1]

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol I., pp. 140, 141.

Prior to the shortening of the hours of work, the average attendance at the evening schools was less than one hundred a night. But after the reduction on January 1, 1816, from eleven and three-quarters to ten and three-quarter hours a day, the attendance rose rapidly. The average was 380 a night in January, 1816, 386 in February, and 396 in March. The following table gives the distribution of the scholars by age and sex:

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[1] The actual cost of the schools in 1816 was £700 a year, viz. £550 for salaries of a Head Master and ten assistants, and £150 for lighting, heating, and materials. (Evidence given before Lord Brougham's Committee, p. 241.) But this does not include rent and maintenance.

	From the General Register.				
	AGE.	DAY.	EVENING	TOTAL.	
Boys ...	3-6	41			Preparatory class.
	6-10	104		145	
	10-15	...	124		Reading, writing, arithmetic, music, dancing, and military exercises.
	15-20	...	49		
	20-25	...	1	174	
Girls ...	3-6	39			Preparatory class.
	6-10	90		129	
	10-15	...	220		Reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing, dancing, and music.
	15-20	...	52		
	20-25	...	39	311	
		274	485	759	Average attendance, 622 daily.[1]

The general principle underlying the whole of the New Lanark system was the exclusion of all artificial rewards or punishments. Owen held that such artificial incentives to action are harmful as disguising the operation of natural and social laws, substituting false ideals and erroneous notions of the world, and generally leaving the character weak and unstable when the artificial system ceases to operate. There were at New Lanark no prizes for industry or good conduct; no child was punished for idleness or disobedience. The scholars were taught to find the best incentive to industry in the pleasure of learning, and in the spirit of innocent emulation which springs naturally when children are learning in company; amiability and good conduct brought their own reward in the friendly feeling which they called forth in response both from teachers and fellow-pupils; and where everything was done in kindness, and all restraints were known to be reasonable, and most were imposed in the interests of the children themselves, there was little temptation to disobedience. Such at any rate was the theory on which the schools were governed; and by the general testimony of those who saw the system in action, children so amiable and gentle were never seen before.

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[1] Report of Factory Committee of 1816, pp. 40, 66, 91, 92.

As regards the formal work of education, the object aimed at was to make every subject as attractive as possible; to teach as much as possible by conversation and by maps, pictures, and natural objects; and never to allow the attention to become wearied. With that end no lesson was allowed to exceed three-quarters of an hour in duration.

In deference to the wishes of the parents, the children began to learn reading at a very early age. Owen, in this following Rousseau, would have wished to defer such instruction until the children should have learnt to value the artificial signs of written language not for themselves, but as a means of wider knowledge. A great difficulty was to find books suited for the youthful readers. Miss Edgeworth's tales were judged to be among the best; "but even those contain too much of praise and blame to admit of their being regarded as unexceptionable." Much use was made, too, of voyages and travels. These were illustrated by maps and interspersed with anecdotes, and the children were questioned on what they read, and were thus taught in all cases to look on the art of reading as a means to an end, rather than as an end in itself. In deference, again, to the wishes of the parents, and of Owen's partners, the children at an early age were taught to read the Bible and the Catechism of the Scotch Church.

In writing, the same general principles were observed. The children as soon as possible deserted copies for current handwriting; and the sentences written were made wherever practicable to have some reference to their other studies, so as to retain their interest.

Arithmetic was at the outset taught on the plan generally adopted at that time in Scotland; but later, Dale Owen tells us, Pestalozzi's system of mental arithmetic was introduced.[1]

But the characteristic feature of the system of education at New Lanark was the lecture on natural science, geography or history. The class attending these lectures would consist of forty or fifty children. The lecture would be illustrated, as far as the subject would admit, by maps, pictures, diagrams, etc., and occasionally adorned by moral lessons. The lecture would be short, so as not to weary the attention of the youthful audience; and the children would be questioned by the lecturer, and would be encouraged themselves to ask questions in turn.

In this manner the study of geography, to many of the less favoured children of a later day the dreariest remembrance of their childhood, was made interesting and attractive by frequent reference to the large coloured maps hung on the walls, by descriptions of the natural scenery and climatic conditions of each region, of the inhabitants and their appearance, their dress, manners and customs, and mode of life. But the study of geography was also made to point with peculiar emphasis a valuable moral lesson. For—

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[1] Pestalozzi's system was founded on sense-impression. The child learnt the elementary processes of arithmetic from a *Table of Units*, in which each unit was represented by a line. He was thus enabled to *see* the results of addition, subtraction, etc. In the same way he learnt to understand fractions by studying tables of squares, in which the squares were divided into two, three, or more equal parts. Their knowledge of figures being thus firmly based upon concrete sense-impressions, Pestalozzi's pupils are said to have attained extraordinary facility in mental arithmetic (see De Guimps's *Life of Pestalozzi*, translated by John Russell, 1890, pp. 230, 413, etc.).

"In this manner are circumstances which induce national peculiarities and national vices exhibited to them; and the question will naturally arise in their minds: 'Is it not highly probable that we ourselves, had we lived in such a country, should have escaped neither its peculiarities, nor its vices—that we should have adopted the notions and prejudices there prevalent? In fact is it not evident that we might have been cannibals or Hindoos, just as the circumstances of our birth should have placed us in Hindostan, where the killing of an animal becomes a heinous crime; or amongst some savage tribe where to torture a fellow creature, and to feast on his dead body, is accounted a glorious action?' A child who has once felt what the true answer to such a question must be, cannot remain uncharitable or intolerant."[1]

It was perhaps because of the moral significance thus made to attach to it, that the study of geography formed so prominent a part of the education at New Lanark, especially with the younger children. Here is Robert Owen's account of the manner in which the study was pursued.

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[1] *Outlines of Education at New Lanark*, p. 48.

"Their lessons in geography were no less amusing to the children themselves and interesting to strangers. At a very early age they were instructed in classes on maps of the four quarters of the world, and after becoming expert in a knowledge of these, all the classes were united in one large class- and lecture-room, to go through these exercises on a map of the world so large as almost to cover the end of the room. On this map were delineated the usual divisions of the best maps, except that there were no names of countries or cities or towns; but for the cities and towns were small but distinct circles to denote their places—the classes united for this purpose generally consisted of about one hundred and fifty, forming as large a circle as could be placed to see the map. A light white wand was provided, sufficiently long to point to the highest part of the map by the youngest child. The lesson commenced by one of the children taking the wand to point with. Then one of them would ask him to point to such a district, place, island, city, or town. This would be done generally many times in succession; but when the holder of the wand was at fault, and could not point to the place asked for, he had to resign the wand to his questioner, who had to go through the same process. This by degrees became most amusing to the children, who soon learned to ask for the least-thought-of districts and places that they might puzzle the holder of the wand, and obtain it from him. This was at once a good lesson for one hundred and fifty—keeping the attention of all alive during the lesson. The lookers-on were as much amused, and many as much instructed as the children, who thus at an early age became so efficient, that one of our Admirals, who had sailed round the world, said he could not answer many of the questions which some of these children not six years old readily replied to, giving the places most correctly." [1]

Even in the study of history, ancient and modern, the same method was pursued, and the eye was called upon to aid the ear. "Seven large maps or tables, laid out on the principle of the Stream of Time, and which were originally purchased from Miss Whitwell, a lady who formerly conducted a respectable seminary in London, are hung round the spacious room. These being made of canvass, may be rolled up at pleasure. On the Streams, each of which is differently coloured, and represents a nation, are painted the principal events which occur in the history of those nations. Each century is closed by a horizontal line, drawn across the map. By means of these maps, the children are taught the outlines of Ancient and Modern History, with ease to themselves, and without being liable to confound different events, or different nations. On hearing of any two events, for instance, the child has but to recollect the situation on the tables of the paintings, by which those are represented, in order to be furnished at once with their chronological relation to each other. If the events are contemporary, he will instantly perceive it." [2]

In addition to the formal literary education described, the children were taught to sing and to dance, and were drilled in a few simple military evolutions. It was these exercises, which formed part of the daily education of the children from their earliest years, which most impressed the visitors to New Lanark, as will be seen from the extracts quoted below. The children, it should be added, were given a distinctive dress, which is thus described by Robert Dale Owen: "The dress worn by the children in the day school, both boys and girls, is composed of strong white cotton cloth of the best quality which can be procured. It is formed in the shape of a Roman tunic, and reaches in the boys' dresses to the knee, and in those of the girls to the ancle. These dresses are changed three times a week, that they may be kept perfectly clean and neat."[1]

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 144.

[2] *Outline of the System of Education at New Lanark*, p. 50.

Such in outline was the system of education at New Lanark under Owen's guidance. In order to complete the picture, I will quote a few extracts from some of the accounts left on record by the numerous visitors to the place in the period from 1816 to 1826.

In March, 1818, John Griscom, Professor of Chemistry and Natural Philosophy in the New York Institute, in the course of a tour in Europe, in which he inspected the poor colonies in Holland and other social experiments of the kind, came to New Lanark and stayed a night with Owen. He was most favourably impressed with all that he saw in the establishment. Of his host he writes: "I know no man of equal celebrity, whose manners are less imposing, and who has more of the candour and openness of a child." Professor Griscom gives a detailed account of the whole school, from which I extract a passage relating to the infant school.

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[1] *Outline of the System of Education at New Lanark*, p. 33. An anonymous writer who visited New Lanark in August, 1822, describes the whole dress of the boys as consisting of a shirt, and a plaid jacket reaching almost to the knees. Other writers mention a tartan kilt as forming a conspicuous part of the boys' dress. Possibly the cotton tunic was only for summer wear (see *New Existence*, Part V., p. xxviii).

"One apartment of the school afforded a novel and pleasing spectacle. It consisted of a great number of children, from one to three or four years of age. They are assembled in a large room, under the care of a judicious female, who allows them to amuse themselves with various selected toys, and occasionally collects the oldest into a class, and teaches them their letters. They appeared perfectly happy, and as we entered the little creatures ran in groups to seize their benefactor by the hand, or to pull him by the coat, with the most artless simplicity. This baby school is of great consequence to the establishment, for it enables the mothers to shut up their houses in security, and to attend to their duties in the factory, without concern for their families."[1]

Another writer, who visited New Lanark in 1822, says that "the moment Owen came into the court where the infants were assembled, they ran in crowds to meet their benefactor, and stretched out their little hands to welcome him or looked up with looks of gratitude as he passed. There were some too young to walk alone, and these were seen endeavouring with the greatest anxiety to get forward by the assistance of the wall, or whoever would help them."[2]

At a later date we have an account from another American visitor. The following description is taken from the editorial correspondence of the *New York*

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[1] *A Year in Europe*, by John Griscom, Vol. II., p. 385. New York, 1823.

[2] Account of a visit in August, 1822, published in the *Dublin Report* quoted in *New Existence*, Part V., p. xxxi.

Statesman, May 20, 1826.[1] The date of the visit was November, 1825. Owen at the time was in America, and the visitor was shown round the establishment by the superintendent.

" He first introduced us into a large hall, containing much of the apparatus used in Mr. Owen's system of education. Among other articles were large historical charts, covering the walls of the apartment,—a folio volume of topographical delineations of the principal towns in Scotland,—a terrestrial globe six feet in diameter, —and a suite of emblems designed to illustrate the principles of English grammar. The last invention has at least the merit of being ingenious. It consists in personifying the parts of speech, and in assigning to each its relative importance according to the military system. General Noun figures in his cocked hat, sword, and double epaulettes. By his side stands Colonel Verb, and so on down to Corporal Adverb.

" From this vestibule of the establishment the superintendent took us upstairs to the large dancing-hall, which opens precisely at seven o'clock every morning. Here we found some eighty or a hundred children of both sexes, at an average age of about ten, paraded on the floor, under the charge of a dancing-master, and moving in measured steps to the music of an orchestra. They were all in uniform—the boys wearing Highland kilts of plaid, and the girls ginghams of a different figure. Both sexes met the floor with naked feet. After undergoing sundry drill in marches and counter-marches, they were directed to take partners for cotillons, to

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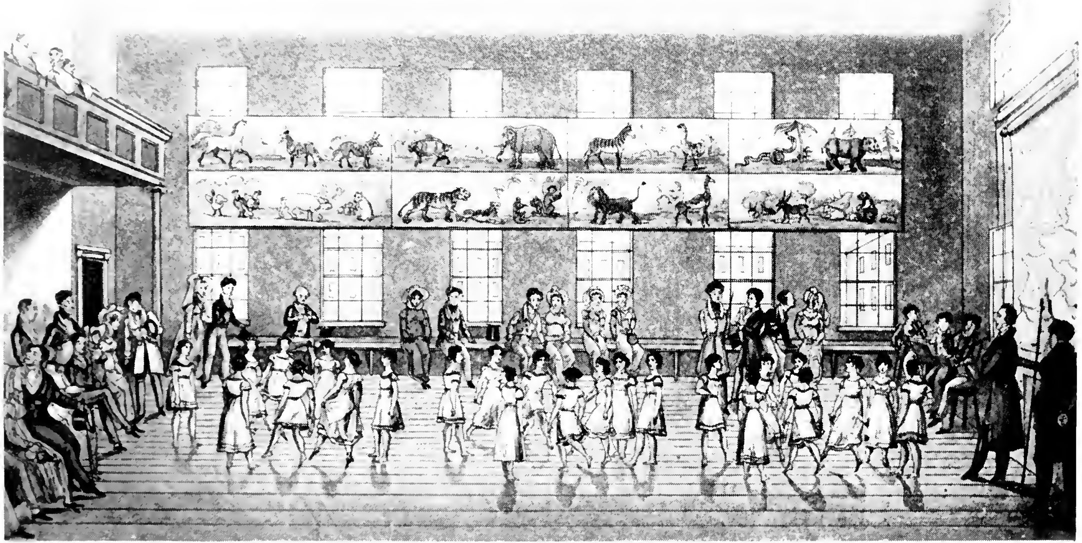
[1] Quoted in *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 317, and in *New Existence*, Part V., pp. xl., xli.



From a contemporary coloured engraving in the possession of Mr. Sidney Ball, of St. John's College, Oxford.

MR. OWEN'S INSTITUTION, NEW LANARK.

which were added strathspeys, reels, and other national dances.

"Next came a concert of music. The children were paraded in battalia, and sang half a dozen of the finest Scotch songs in full chorus. So far as I am a judge, they made no discords, and the effect was certainly pleasing as well as imposing. Music is learned upon the Lancasterian plan,[1] from a large roll many yards in extent, containing the gamut, with the addition of select tunes. It is placed in a conspicuous part of the room, where the notes can be distinctly seen at the same moment by every pupil. The words are committed to memory from printed cards, embracing a selection of the best songs. Perfect order, decorum and good feeling seemed to prevail among the children, who are taken promiscuously from the families of the labourers.

"From the ball-room, we proceeded to the other departments of the school, and heard classes go through with their recitations in geography and botany. The former is taught entirely by maps, and the latter by transparent plates. In both the children answered with surprising promptness and accuracy. Girls of twelve years old appear to be perfectly versed in the Linnæan system of classification, and able at a glance, not only to give the technical names of the parts of a plant, but to reduce it to its genus and species. How far such knowledge is acquired by rote; what effect the discipline has upon the mind; and whether some of the branches taught are relatively the most important, are questions upon the discussion of which I am not disposed to enter. My general impression, however, was, that while Mr. Owen's system is calculated to divest large manufacturing establishments of their terrors, by removing gross ignorance, vulgarity of manners, and vicious habits, and by substituting in their places the decencies and refinements of good society, it is somewhat deficient in those branches which qualify the young mind for the more serious duties and avocations of life."

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[1] The plan according to Owen was not Lancasterian (*New Existence*, Part V., p. xliii.). But by this date the regulations of January, 1824, had presumably come into force, and the master would in that case be a Lancasterian. See below.

In quoting this account in the Appendix to Part V. of *The New Existence of Man upon Earth*, Owen explains that the writer had evidently not comprehended the whole scheme of instruction of New Lanark, which included not merely reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing, knitting, etc., but also practical instruction in the arrangement and management of domestic concerns, and in various useful arts, as well as the moral education which formed the backbone of the whole scheme.

As regards the general effect of the New Lanark system of education on the conduct and character of the children, we have some very striking testimony.

Thus James Smith, in his *Excursions in Scotland in* 1820:[1]

"It has been a great object with Robert Owen to extinguish the government by fear; and in the attainment of this he has been very successful, even with the youngest of his flock. It was singularly gratifying to observe, wherever we met with any of the children, with what delighted looks they received him. I may further state that in all my observations on the children, in the schools, at their play, or elsewhere, I did not see one angry look or gesture. There was, on the contrary, a harmony in all their intercourse, of which I can scarcely speak too highly."

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[1] Published in 1824. Quoted in *New Existence*, Part V., p. xxxvii.

I will conclude by quoting from two reports of a more representative character testifying to the excellent results of the training afforded to the children "in this happy village," as the first report styles it.

In 1819 the Guardians of the Poor in the township of Leeds appointed a deputation to report upon the system of education pursued at New Lanark. The deputation, which consisted of three men, Edward Baines, of the Leeds *Mercury*, Robert Oastler and John Cawood, visited New Lanark in August. They found that the number of children between two and ten years of age was 380; and they reported that—

"These latter are receiving daily instructions in the schools; and by showing to them a spirit of kindness and impressing them with a sense of their duty (without the hope of reward or the fear of punishment), they are making satisfactory progress in reading, writing, and accounts, as well as in music and dancing, in addition to which the girls are taught to sew.

"In the education of the children the thing that is most remarkable is the general spirit of kindness and affection which is shown towards them, and the entire absence of everything that is likely to give them bad habits, with the presence of whatever is calculated to inspire them with good ones; the consequence is, that they appear like one well-regulated family, united together by the ties of the closest affection. We heard no quarrels from the youngest to the eldest; and so strongly impressed are they with the conviction that their interest and duty are the same, and that to be happy themselves it is necessary to make those happy by whom they are surrounded, that they had no strife but in offices of kindness. With such dispositions, and with their young minds well stored with useful knowledge, it appeared to us that if it should be their destiny to go out to service or to be apprenticed, the families in which they are fixed would find them an acquisition instead of a burden; and we could not avoid the expression of a wish that the orphan children in our Workhouses had the same advantage of moral and religious instruction, and the same prospect of being made happy themselves and useful to the families in which they are placed."

Of the children who had already passed through the schools and were now employed in the mills through the day, with the opportunity, if they wished, of attending school for 1½ hours in the evening, the deputation writes:

"The deportment of these young people, owing probably to the advantages of their early training, is very exemplary. In business they are regular and diligent, and in their manners they are mild and engaging."[1]

The Duke of Kent, father of Queen Victoria, was one of Owen's warmest friends and patrons. In this same year, 1819, he deputed his physician, Dr. H. Grey Macnab, to visit New Lanark and report upon the whole establishment there. Owen's outspoken denunciation of all religions had created strong antagonism to him in many quarters. Macnab himself, as he explains in his book, was somewhat prejudiced against Owen because of the want of judgment and proportion shown in his writings. He was not even convinced of Owen's sincerity, and was by no means prepared to take his success as a practical reformer on his own uncorroborated testimony. The Duke, who knew Owen's real worth, no doubt promoted the enquiry less for his own satisfaction than as a means of dispelling the public prejudice.

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[1] Quoted in *New Existence*, Part V., pp. xxiv, xxv.

Macnab, a man perhaps of too kindly and emotional a temperament for the exercise of dispassionate criticism, found all his doubts dissolve away under the genial influence of the place, and blessed the undertaking altogether. Of the school and the children he can scarcely trust himself to speak :—

"The children and youth in this delightful colony are superior in point of conduct and character to all the children and youth I have ever seen. The maxim of our poet, that nature unadorned is most adorned, is recalled to the mind on being amongst these promising candidates for honour and happiness. I shall not attempt to give a faithful description of the beautiful fruits of the social affections displayed in the young, innocent, and fascinating countenances of these happy children and youths.

"The pen of a Milton and the pencil of a Rubens could not do justice to such a picture ; all, therefore, I shall say here is, that the first two days I was at New Lanark were days of pure enjoyment. The effects produced on my mind were such, that during that time I was actually disqualified for examining coolly and deliberately the very objects of my visit : and it is a fact, that my stay at New Lanark was prolonged chiefly owing to this circumstance."

Of the character of the inhabitants as a whole he writes that he found at New Lanark "more of the social virtues and less of the reigning vices . . . than will be found in any community of the same population in any part of the civilised world."[1]

From this brief statement it is not difficult to infer that Owen's inspiration, as already said, was derived mainly from Rousseau.[2] A return to Nature has been the cry of all educational reformers. But Owen's return to Nature, in the abolition of all rewards and punishments, and the replacement of these arbitrary incentives to virtue by a demonstration of the natural consequences of social and unsocial conduct, was more radical than that of any other reformer save Rousseau. We can almost hear the tones of the instructor of the infant Emile. From Rousseau also came the principle that knowledge of the things themselves should precede knowledge of their signs in written or printed language. Rousseau would have had Emile learn to read and write only when he was twelve years old. Owen, in a passage already quoted, would have preferred to postpone this branch of instruction at any rate until the child was ten years old. But in this matter he was forced, like others who have endeavoured to put educational reforms into practice, to reckon with the parents. Owen probably had to contend also with his partners, who were no doubt of opinion that the full benefit of the Scriptures could only be gathered by the youthful student who could read them for himself.

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[1] *The New Views of Mr. Owen of Lanark, impartially considered, etc.*, by Henry Grey Macnab, M.D. London, 1819.

[2] How much of the details of his system Owen derived from Rousseau's most prominent disciples, and his own contemporaries, Oberlin and Pestalozzi, it is difficult to say. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Oberlin had made geography a prominent feature in his course. He had also started infant schools long before Owen. But Owen foreshadowed his infant school in his *New View of Society*, and actually opened it in 1816, the year before what was apparently his only visit to Oberlin's establishment. Whether he had previously heard of Oberlin's experiment does not appear: and the point is, any way, of no great importance. At any rate Owen was the first to establish an infant school in these islands. Thus S. Wilderspin writes: "The first Infant School that was heard of in this country (*sc.* England) was established at Westminster in the year 1819: the master of that institution is J. Buchanan, who came from Mr. Owen's establishment at New Lanark, where an Infant School had previously been founded by that gentleman" (*Importance of Educating the Infant Poor*, second edition 1824, p. 23). Dr. Thomas Pole (*Observations on Infant Schools*, Bristol, 1823) writes to a similar effect. Subsequently Brougham, *more suo*,

There is one point of some weight in which Owen's system of education appears to have been lacking. Rousseau had insisted upon the importance of finding work for the hands, especially of young children. Pestalozzi had always seen the importance of manual exercises. At Stanz he had tried "to connect study with

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seems to have claimed the honour for the Westminster School referred to, on the ground that Owen's infant school being attached to a manufactory, did not count (see *Practical Educationists*, by James Leitch, Glasgow 1876, p. 166). But in later utterances Brougham gave full credit to Owen. There are several points in which Owen's practice resembles Pestalozzi. Thus singing played an important part in Pestalozzi's system of training. The children in his schools learnt to sing as they learned to talk, by imitation (De Guimps, *Life of Pestalozzi*, translated by J. Russell, p. 415). In this connection it is interesting to note that it was one of Pestalozzi's methods to make the children repeat statements in chorus so as to fix facts in their memory. One of the visitors to New Lanark notes that the children there would answer the lecturer's questions simultaneously, and this "simultaneous answering," he notes, was "executed by so many with great precision" (*New Existence*, Part V., p. xxvii). Military exercises, again, formed part of the regular curriculum at Yverdun. (It is to be noted, however, that in the Third *Essay on the Formation of Character*, Owen had dwelt upon the importance of drilling the boys, both as discipline, and as a first step in military training (*Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 303).) We have already seen that at a later period Owen borrowed Pestalozzi's method of mental arithmetic.

manual labour, the school with the workshop"; at Yverdun drawing formed an important feature in the course; the pupils were also taught to construct geometrical solids in cardboard, to make clay models of the neighbouring river-valley, and so on. But Owen seems to have paid little attention to this particular requirement. The claims of eye and ear were abundantly satisfied; the voice found employment in singing and speaking; the bodies of the children were exercised in drilling and dancing. But no provision seems to have been made for drawing, modelling or constructive work of any kind. We hear, indeed, of toys and games for the younger children; but not of any systematic employment. No doubt the time was not yet fully ripe for the idea. Froebel's first Kindergarten was not opened until 1837. Possibly also Owen may have thought the numerous calls of domestic life and, later, the work of the mills, would provide all the manual exercise required. The girls were taught sewing and knitting: but to teach drawing, modelling, or any mechanical art, except by way of apprenticeship to a trade, would no doubt have involved expense, both for staff and materials, which his partners might have been unwilling to sanction.

For the rest, whatever part of Owen's system may have been due to inspiration from other minds, whatever defects we may find in the execution of the scheme, the two things needful for the results achieved were all his own—the spirit of unwearied loving-kindness, and the strong simplicity which was able to keep its regard fixed on the highest issues of life and character.

So matters went on for about eight years. From the outset there had been difficulties between Owen and his partners. As already said, the most active of them were devout Quakers, of whom two, William Allen and Joseph Fox, had taken a prominent part in supporting the Lancasterian Association, afterwards the British and Foreign Schools Society. On the committee of that Society they had fought hard and continuously for the full representation of their religious views; they had indeed at one time persuaded the committee to pass a rule that no reading lesson should be given in the schools, except from the Bible.[1]

To men of this stamp Owen's religious views were monstrous and intolerable. It is probable that at the outset they had not fully realised the thorough-going nature of his "infidelity." But enlightenment on this point came very early in the history of the partnership. In August, 1814, Allen dined at Braxfield and had "much painful conversation on the subject of Owen's peculiar opinions";[2] and misunderstanding was no longer possible after the declaration of August 21, 1817, in the London Tavern. The partners nevertheless continued for some years longer to give Owen a very free hand in his educational reforms. But, as we read in Allen's diary, there were constant searchings of heart. The Bible and Catechism were, no doubt, as prescribed by the articles of partnership, regularly read and taught in the schools both on weekdays and Sundays. But Owen was without wisdom of the worldly kind; he made no secret of his opinions, and could not, probably, be withheld from preaching them at all seasons and to all men. In one respect, indeed, the Quakers seem to have done Owen an injustice. As fanatical in his belief as they in theirs, he was gifted with a tolerance, the direct outcome of his opinions, which was outside the comprehension of men like Fox and Allen. It probably did not need the urgency of his partners to permit the reading of the Bible and other religious teaching in his schools. The fact that the parents generally wished it, and would have been uneasy and mistrustful if such teaching had been omitted, would no doubt have been sufficient inducement. But Allen and Fox may well have feared that even the Shorter Catechism might prove too frail a defence against the daily spectacle of infidelity in high places. Moreover, there were other features in the scheme which were objectionable. Singing, dancing, and military drill were all abhorrent to the religious views of the Society of Friends. They may even be pardoned if they took exception to the lectures on geography, with their accompanying moral lessons.

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[1] *Life of Francis Place*, by Graham Wallas, p. 105.

[2] *Life of William Allen*, Vol. I., p. 209.

Lastly, the New Lanark establishment for eight years had been a place of pilgrimage for royalties, statesmen, philanthropists, reformers, socialists, and humanitarian enthusiasts of all kinds. The pilgrims had come from every country, to the number, it is said, of thirty a day for months at a time.[1] Such a constant influx of visitors, each of whom would require to be shown over the whole establishment, was no doubt bad for business. It was very likely, also, bad for the children themselves; and it would tend to warp the scheme of education and to thrust the purely spectacular parts, the singing, dancing, and drilling, into undue prominence.[1] Apart from the fact that these spectacular parts were precisely what the Quakers objected to, the whole business afforded an advertisement to Owen's rationalist views which must have been peculiarly distasteful to sincere if somewhat fanatical Christians. That men of such opposite views should have sunk their differences for the common good, and have worked together in some kind of harmony for so many years is surely creditable to the common sense and humanity of both parties. But the end was bound to come.

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[1] *New Existence*, Part. V., p. xxxviii.

There had been, as said, sharp differences of opinion from the outset. Thus Allen writes in his diary for the month of September, 1814: "Sat down with R. Owen and J. Fox to a most important discussion of several points in the articles of partnership, particularly those relating to the training of the children and the use of the Holy Scriptures. This latter Fox and I made a *sine qua non*, at least as far as we are concerned, and Owen at length yielded."[2]

In 1818 Allen and Foster visited Lanark "to discover whether any attempt is making there to weaken the faith of the people in divine revelation."[3] They found that Owen had at first refused leave to the people to found a Bible Society; it was, however, established later, and Mrs. Owen and the family subscribed to it. From two ministers in the town the partners received a good report of the morality and sobriety of the people at New Lanark, and the cheering intelligence that Owen's principles appeared to have taken no root in the population. Allen tells us that he asked one of these gentlemen to visit the schools periodically and to let him know if the Scripture reading were neglected. The same evening Allen relieved his mind by addressing the people for three-quarters of an hour at a meeting in the large room of the Institution.[1]

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[1] Aiton, in the work already quoted, criticises the results of Owen's educational system, and endeavours to show that owing to the scant attention paid to reading, writing and arithmetic, the children forgot these accomplishments within a few years of leaving school.

[2] *Life of William Allen*, Vol. I., p. 209.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 344, letter to William Wilberforce.

In July, 1822, the London proprietors seem again to have become uneasy, and appointed Allen, Foster, and Gibbs to investigate the state of New Lanark. They reported that the people read the Bible and many other religious books regularly, but that the system of education stood much in need of revision. Allen himself was rendered "so miserable by the manner in which the important business of education had been carried on that he had decided on withdrawing," unless it could be set right.[2] He told Owen that he and the other partners were determined "to prevent him from making New Lanark an infidel establishment."[3] Thereafter discussions and negotiations for the reform of the schools proceeded for some months between Owen and his London partners, and finally, on January 21, 1824, the Firm of Robert Owen and Co. put their signatures to a series of resolutions, providing for the dismissal of some of the old teachers, and the appointment of a new master, John Daniel, who was to instruct the children from the age of six years old and upwards according to the system of education practised by the British and Foreign Schools Society. Dancing was no longer to be taught at the expense of the company, nor singing and music "with the exception of instruction in psalmody." There was also to be a public reading of the Holy Scriptures "and other religious exercises" on one evening a week. Allen was a lecturer on natural and experimental philosophy at Guy's Hospital, and it was doubtless owing to his influence that provision was still to be made for the teaching of natural science. There was to be a lecture twice a week in the evening, at which the whole population could attend, on chemistry, mechanics, and other branches of "Experimental Philosophy and Natural History"; and suitable apparatus was to be provided for illustrating these lectures. But there was to be no more moral geography. And even the national dress of Scotland fell under the Quaker ban. One resolution reads:

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[1] *Life of William Allen*, Vol. I., p. 346.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 237.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 363.

"That having considered the dress of the children, we are of opinion that decency requires that all males as they arrive at the age of six years should wear trousers or drawers; we agree, therefore, that they shall be required to be so clothed."[1]

Such was the ending of a great educational experiment. But perhaps a juster verdict would substitute transformation for ending. Owen's partners were, like himself, men of views too liberal for general acceptance by their contemporaries; they were as sincere as he in their desire to give education to all; and perhaps they did not greatly differ as to the means. In some respects it is likely that their views were sounder, because more moderate, than Owen's.[1]

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[1] *New Existence*, Part. V., p. viii.

At all events the schools at New Lanark continued to flourish, first under the original partners, later under the successor of one of them, John Walker, until the institution of Board Schools in Scotland in 1872. And dancing was still permitted, and still apparently taught, though whether at the company's expense or not does not appear. When I visited New Lanark for the first time in the spring of 1903, my guide, John Campbell Melrose, told me that in his boyhood, some thirty years back, he and the other children still danced every morning from 7.15 to 8 a.m. The dancing-room was one of the upper rooms in the old building, and the name of the last dancing-master was David Dunn. According to my guide, the paintings and maps were only taken down when the school gave place to a Board School. A number of large cardboard plates of flowers and plants were still to be seen at the time of my visit; a few geometrical models and other things; and especially four of the original linen rolls, which used to be hung on the walls, wound on rollers like a map. They were three or four feet wide and the largest was perhaps forty feet in length. Two of these rolls were filled with musical notation and tunes. The other two were covered with pictures, painted in oils, illustrating various members of the animal kingdom. There were zoophytes, worms, shells, crustacea, insects of the several orders, batrachia, reptiles, and at the torn end of one roll a tiger rampant in his jungle.

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[1] The new rules of January, 1824, were apparently not carried into effect very promptly, or else the new system differed in effect but little from the old; for the writer in the *New York Statesman* (see the account quoted above in the text) describes a visit paid in November, 1825, at which he witnessed singing, dancing, drilling—and kilts!

A correspondent writing to Owen on August 27, 1831, says: "On Saturday last I made a pilgrimage to New Lanark, and was delighted with the place. The Institution is still conducted upon principles superior to those of any other establishment in the Kingdom: but the inhabitants are less happy than they were, and with one voice they lament the absence of their great benefactor" (letter from Massey Dawson, Manchester Collection).

A writer in the *Glasgow Free Press* in 1833 (quoted in *The Crisis*, Vol. III., p. 29) gives a similar account, and mentions in particular that singing and dancing were still taught, and that visitors still came in great numbers to see the factory and the schools.

And between the town of Old Lanark and the mills I passed a Board School, and saw some hundred little Scotch laddies—having, alas ! boots and knickerbockers in place of bare feet and kilts—formed in fours and marching in quick time round the school-yard. So that in this, at all events, Owen's foresight has been justified.

Owen's experiment at New Lanark bore early fruit in another direction. Among his friends at the time was Henry Brougham, afterwards Lord Chancellor. Brougham was much impressed by the success of the infant schools at New Lanark, and thought that an Institution of the kind might do still better service amongst the poor in a crowded city. He therefore formed a committee which included, amongst others, Owen's partner, John Walker, Henry Hase, Lord Lansdowne, Thomas Babington and Zachary Macaulay, and in 1819 an infant school was opened at Brewers' Green, Westminster. Owen cordially co-operated with the committee, and gave them the best help in his power by sending down from New Lanark the weaver, James Buchanan, whom he had selected and trained to act as master of his own school. Owen himself, on his first visit to the Westminster school, was by no means favourably impressed. He found that Buchanan had lost his influence over the children, and that Mrs. Buchanan had been called in, to terrify them with a whip. However that may be, the Westminster school grew and flourished, and was the parent of many more. Samuel Wilderspin visited the school and pondered over all that he saw there. A few years later, in 1824, the London Infant School Society was founded, and Wilderspin was engaged to lecture on the movement, and to assist in founding similar schools throughout the Metropolis.[1]

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[1] See Owen's *Life*, Vol. I., p. 152, etc. *Observations on Infant Schools*, by Thomas Pole, Bristol, 1823. *Importance of Educating the Infant Poor*, by S. Wilderspin, London, 1824. *Practical Educationists*, by James Leitch, Glasgow, 1876, pp. 166 *seqq*.

CHAPTER VIII

NEW LANARK (*continued*)

THE Institution for the Formation of Character, and the schools carried on in connection with it, formed the most conspicuous and probably the most important part of Owen's work at New Lanark. But, as already intimated, he carried out many other reforms with most beneficial results to the health and morals of the people. Owing to the difficulties which he experienced in persuading his earlier partners to devote any share of their profits to unproductive expenditure of any kind, his measures could in the first years of his management only be carried out piecemeal, as occasion served, and it was not until after 1813 that he was really given a free hand. It is not always possible to discover from the accounts left to us, how far the reforms which he contemplated had actually been carried into effect before 1816; and it will be convenient, therefore, briefly to summarise, from his own later statements, and from various descriptions written by visitors to the mills in the period from 1816 onwards, the final results of his labours. Of the schools, and the lectures and other entertainments given in the evenings, enough has been already said in the last chapter. But it should perhaps be mentioned that the schools were open freely, not only to the children of the New Lanark operatives, but to any children from the Old Town whose parents chose to take advantage of Owen's liberality.

Hours of Labour.—In Dale's time, and Dale, as already said, was probably the most humane employer of his day, the work had been spread over thirteen hours, from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., with intervals of half an hour for breakfast and three-quarters of an hour for dinner, leaving eleven and three-quarter hours of actual work. During some part of the period between 1800 and 1813 Owen seems to have been compelled by his partners to raise the hours to fourteen a day.[1] They had been again reduced to thirteen before 1816, and on the 1st of January of that year they were still further cut down to twelve, with the same meal intervals as before, leaving ten and three-quarter hours of actual work.[2] Even these shortened hours were in Owen's view too long. As he told the Committee of 1816, he would have preferred that there should be at most ten working hours in the day.

When the hours of labour were shortened, the wages of the operatives were left unchanged. But as about half the work in the mills was piece-work, the measure had the effect, at first at any rate, of reducing the earnings of the piece-workers.[3] That nevertheless the measure was cordially welcomed by the operatives is proved by the fact that a year after its introduction, in January,

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[1] Owen's *Evidence before the Factory Committee of* 1816, p. 39.

[2] In the debate in the House of Commons on the Factory Act of 1819, the hours at New Lanark are generally referred to as ten and a half, and it seems possible that they were later actually reduced to that amount.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

1817, they tendered an address of thanks to Owen and proposed further to present him with a piece of plate. This latter, however, he refused to accept, and the money subscribed was accordingly handed over for charitable purposes. Again, in the following year, a petition was presented in the House of Commons from the operatives at New Lanark, in favour of the Factory Bill then before the House. In this petition the workers claimed that they did more work in ten and three-quarter hours than others in twelve or thirteen, because of their increased zeal and activity.[1] Of the actual effect of the shortened hours on production Owen gives us no precise information. He expresses, indeed, to the Committee of 1816 his conviction that manufacturers would not lose by reason of shortened hours of production; that such shortened hours would "hardly make a perceptible difference in the prime cost of any article." But he had no figures to give: and it is clear that he reckoned any slight increase in the cost of production as insignificant in comparison with the improved health and enlarged opportunities of instruction afforded to the workers.[2]

Fortunately there is a document in the Manchester Collection which throws some light upon the effect on production of the shortened hours of labour. In 1822 Owen's son Robert, at his father's request, prepared a statement, which is given below, of the total wages and produce of the mills for the eight years from 1814 to 1821. It will be seen that in the year 1816—the first year of the shortened hours—the gross wages of the operatives show an increase of about three per cent., whilst the wages of the mechanics and the salaries of the superintendents, etc., have risen in a much higher proportion. During the same period the produce has actually fallen in weight to the extent of nearly eight per cent., though, as a finer quality of yarn was produced, the actual fall in value was probably much less. In the following year, 1817, the gross wages of the operatives have again risen, to the extent of two and a half per cent. On the other hand, the wages of superintendence have decreased and the produce shows a much larger proportionate increase, so that much of the loss on the previous year's working appears to have been made good. We must share Robert Dale Owen's regret that time did not permit of the value of the produce being included in the statement, for the money value would probably have afforded a more precise measure than either pounds or hanks of the productiveness of labour under the new conditions. I have added an analysis of the table showing for each year the amount in pounds and hanks represented by £1 sterling of the operatives' and of the gross wages respectively.

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[1] *Hansard*, Vol. 37, p. 1182.

[2] *Evidence*, p. 21.

STATEMENT OF WAGES AND PRODUCE IN THE YEARS 1814 TO 1821.

YEAR.	MILL WAGES.	MECH. WAGES.	SALARY ACCOUNT.	TOTAL OF WAGES.	LB.	HANKS.
	£	£	£	£		
1814	22,096	2,627	2,747	27,471	1,385,390	34,675,088
1815	22,811	3,051	2,710	28,572	1,451,947	35,696,543
1816	23,509	3,570	3,131	30,211	1,339,434	35,582.271
1817	24,171	3,661	2,933	30,766	1,424,513	36,834.150
1818	23,472	3,495	2,953	29,921	1,457,096	35,213,114
1819	24,596	3,674	2,957	31,228	1,465,445	36,511,553
1820	25,292	3,860	3,124	32,277	1,459,094	39,799,479
1821	23,675	3,382	2,940	29,997	1,377,580	37,184,722

ANALYSIS OF STATEMENT OF WAGES AND PRODUCE IN THE YEARS 1814 TO 1821.

YEAR.	£1 OF MILL WAGES PRODUCES		£1 OF TOTAL WAGES PRODUCES	
	LB.	HANKS.	LB.	HANKS.
1814	62·7	1569·3	50·4	1262·2
1815	63·6	1564·9	50·8	1249·4
1816	56·9	1513·1	44·3	1177·8
1817	58·9	1523·9	46·3	1197·2
1818	62·1	1500·2	48·7	1176·9
1819	59·6	1484·4	46·9	1169·2
1820[1]	57·7	1573·6	45·2	1233·1
1821[1]	58·2	1579·1	45·9	1239·6

Child Labour.—As already said, Owen raised the lower limit of age for the employment of children to ten years. He would have preferred that no children should be employed in the mills until twelve, and allowed any children whose parents wished it to remain in the schools until that age. But the privilege was rarely if ever taken advantage of; the parents were no doubt unable to forego the children's earnings.

Wages.—The deputation despatched in 1819 by the Guardians of the Poor at Leeds comment in their report on the lowness of the wages paid. The average *weekly* wages at New Lanark for youths under eighteen was 4*s.* 3*d.*, and for girls under eighteen 3*s.* 5*d.* For men the average was 9*s.* 11*d.* a week and for women 6*s.* The average earnings of piece-workers were 25 to 50 per cent. higher in each case. Macnab points out[2] that Owen paid his workpeople lower wages than were commonly paid in similar establishments elsewhere.

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[1] One of the mills was burnt down at the end of November, 1819.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

And Owen himself before the Committee of 1816 gives testimony to the same effect.[1] Owen cites the case of a man who had been earning 18*s.* a week at New Lanark, and left to earn a guinea a week in some mills at Glasgow. Shortly afterwards he applied to be taken on again at New Lanark; and, his old place having been filled up, he was glad to accept an inferior position at only 14*s.* a week.

There was also the public store, established originally by Dale, but enlarged and improved under Owen's management. Provisions, clothing, etc., of all the best qualities were purchased wholesale, and retailed at prices some twenty per cent. or more below that charged at ordinary shops for articles of inferior quality. The profit realised by the sales amounted nevertheless to about £700 a year—sufficient, as Owen told the Committee of 1816, to defray the entire cost of the schools.[2]

The working classes of Scotland, it may be hazarded, are not more given to sobriety than the working classes of other nations. Nor were the people of Lanark before Owen's advent in any way superior in this respect to their fellow-countrymen generally. The worthy gentleman who wrote a report on Lanark for Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland* puts the matter in delicate and scarcely ambiguous language. The people of Lanark, he says, "are naturally generous, hospitable and fond of strangers, which induces them sometimes to make free with the bottle," and he adds that whilst "drunkenness among the better class of inhabitants is of late rather unusual, it is less so among the others." Owen, as we have already seen, recognised the evil, and showed equal courage and sagacity in the methods which he adopted for remedying it. He found that the people got their supplies of food and also of spirits from several small retail shops.[1] Owen felt, no doubt, that it would be impracticable to enforce total abstinence among his people. He boldly accepted the situation, therefore, and included whiskey amongst the articles to be obtained at the public store. Probably, as Macnab suggests, he trusted largely to the effects of publicity to shame the workers into sobriety. Possibly also there was some restriction as to the hours of sale and as to the amount to be purchased. From a passage in evidence before the Committee of 1816, it appears that the amount of whiskey purchased was entered in the purchaser's pass-book[2]—no doubt in order that payment might be deducted from the wages. It is unlikely that whiskey was treated exceptionally in this respect, so that it seems probable that all article could thus be obtained on short credit at the stores; and the use of money would thus be avoided, whilst a check would readily be instituted on undue consumption of intoxicants.

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[1] *Evidence*, pp. 22, 23. Before the same Committee Adam Bogle, partner in a Glasgow firm of cotton-spinners, gave evidence that in their mule-twist factory the average wages (men, women and children) per head were 9*s.* 8*d.* a week. He does not say how many children were included in the total, but probably not less than half (*Report*, p. 166).

[2] That is, exclusive of rent. Writing in 1849, however, Owen estimated the cost of the schools to the company at £1,200 a year. See *New Existence*, Part V., p. 62.

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[1] *Life*, Vol. I., p. 65. Robert Dale Owen (*Threading my Way*, p. 70) says that in Dale's time no grog-shops were permitted in the village, but that the people got their drink from the Old Town. This account of the matter is perhaps not inconsistent with the statement in the text; the small shops referred to may have been in Old Lanark. At any rate there is general agreement that drunkenness was very prevalent in Dale's time.

[2] *Report*, p. 167. The person referred to, a woman, had left New Lanark after three years' employment there, ostensibly because she did not like dancing. But inspection of her pass-book suggested another explanation. For the first six months of her employment her expenditure on whiskey was only 1*s*. 10*d*.; in the last six months it had risen to 22*s*.

But Owen did not, at any rate in the earlier years of the experiment, trust exclusively to measures of this kind for repressing intemperance. He employed watchmen to patrol the streets and report any case of drunkenness. The offenders were fined for the first and second offence, and were liable to dismissal on the third occasion.[1] By general testimony his efforts met with complete success, and New Lanark appears to have been the soberest village in Scotland. It was also one of the most moral. We have unfortunately no statistics of the number of illegitimate births at New Lanark in Dale's time, but it is certain that Dale did his best to repress immorality. Owen, however, tells us that on his first coming he found the number of illegitimate children considerable, and that "they increased for two or three years."[2] He then instituted a system of fines, and made the father in each case contribute 2*s.* and the mother 1*s.* weekly to a Poor Fund. By this and other means the number of births out of wedlock was greatly diminished. In 1819 the Leeds Deputation state that 'the moral habits of the people are very exemplary," and furnish confirmation of the statement in the fact that during the previous nine and a half years, with 1,380 women, there had been only twenty-eight illegitimate births, and the father was in most cases non-resident.[1]

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[1] *Threading my Way*, p. 70.

[2] *Report*, p. 40. The statement in inverted commas probably does not mean that the rate of illegitimate births increased.

Amongst minor benefits Owen provided medical attendance for all at New Lanark.[2] There was also a Sick Fund, which the workpeople themselves maintained, each person contributing for the purpose a sixtieth part of his wages;[3] and a Savings Bank, the deposits in which during the year 1818 amounted to over £3,000.[4] Owen had also contemplated establishing public kitchens and eating-rooms, and had designed to set aside part of the old school-buildings for the purpose. He estimated that the workpeople would save £4,000 or £5,000 a year by this means.[5]

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[1] According to Aiton (*op. cit.*, p. 22) the Lanark Presbytery in 1823 reported that the moral state of New Lanark was no better under Owen than under "the late excellent Mr. Dale." But the testimony is a mere vague expression of belief: and the witnesses can hardly be held impartial.

[2] *Robert Owen at New Lanark*, p. 13; *Macnab*, p. 99.

[3] *Life*, Vol. I., p. 281. The management of this Sick Fund in the later years of Owen's residence at New Lanark appears to have caused some friction. In November, 1823, some of the workpeople appealed to the London partners in the following terms: "That you (the other partners) be solicited to inform us whether a friendly invitation or a determined compulsion shall hereafter constitute the Society. That you be presented with a statement of the whole proceedings—by perusing which you will readily perceive our fundamental grievance. . . . Mr. Owen's usurpation of managing the Society agreeably to his own views, in opposition to what he certainly knows to be ours. And further we view it as a grievance of considerable magnitude to be compelled by Mr. Owen to adopt what measures soever he may be pleased to suggest on matters that entirely belong to us. Such a course of procedure is most repugnant to our minds as men, and degrading to our characters as free-born sons of highly favoured Britain" (quoted by Aiton, *op. cit.*, p. 37). The benevolence of the most benevolent of despots will not always reconcile his subjects to the loss of freedom.

[4] *Report of the Leeds Deputation.*

[5] Griscom, *A Year in Europe*, Vol. II., p. 384. Griscom's visit was paid in 1819.

But it does not appear that the intention was ever carried out.[1]

Among other material benefits conferred upon the population during Owen's management must be mentioned the improvement in the dwelling-houses and in the general hygiene of the village mentioned in Chapter V., the throwing open of the woods near the village, and the construction of walks through them.

But all these tangible gifts formed the lesser part of the debt which the inhabitants of New Lanark owed to their employer's paternal government. There was something else than the cash nexus to bind the community together. The sincerity and benevolence of Owen's character were reflected in all around. It was not only the cleanliness, sobriety, and order of the village which impressed the frequent visitors; but the spirit of happiness and good-will which prevailed everywhere. The Leeds Deputation gives straightforward testimony to this effect :—

"Mr. Owen's establishment is essentially a manufacturing establishment, conducted in a manner superior to any other the deputation ever witnessed, and dispensing more happiness than perhaps any other institution in the kingdom where so many poor persons are employed; and is founded on an admirable system of moral regulation. . . . Public-houses and other resorts of the vicious are nowhere to be found in this happy village; and the absence of their contaminating influence is strikingly exemplified in the contrast of manners and of conduct between the inhabitants of New Lanark, and of most (we fear we may say all) other manufacturing places. . . . In the adult inhabitants of New Lanark we saw much to commend. In general they appeared clean, healthy, and sober. Intoxication, the parent of so many vices and so much misery, is indeed almost unknown here. The consequence is that they are well-clad, and well-fed, and their dwellings are inviting. . . .

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[1] The scheme is still spoken of in the future tense by a visitor to New Lanark in 1822 (see the account quoted from the "Dublin Report" in *New Existence*, Part V., p. xxx.), and the agreement of 1824 mentions the public kitchens as still uncompleted.

"In this well-regulated colony, where almost everything is made, wanted by either the manufactory or its inhabitants, no cursing or swearing is anywhere to be heard. There are no quarrelsome men or brawling women. . . . The Scotch character has in it, no doubt, something that disposes to a more exemplary observance of the Sabbath than is generally to be met with in England ; but this circumstance apart, it is quite manifest that the New Lanark system has a tendency to improve the religious character ; and so groundless are the apprehensions expressed on the score of religion suffering injury by the prevalence of these establishments, that we accord with Mr. Owen in his assertion that the inhabitants of that place form a more religious community than any manufacturing establishment in the United Kingdom. This effect arises out of the circumstances by which they are surrounded, and is wholly independent of any sentiment on religious subjects entertained by Mr. Owen himself."[1]

To this last clause we may add the testimony of Sir William de Crespigny, who described at a meeting of the British and Foreign Philanthropic Society on June 1, 1822, a visit which he had paid to New Lanark. After dwelling on the obvious health and happiness of the children, he went on to speak of the reading of the Bible in the schools, and of the diligence of the inhabitants in attending public worship on Sunday, adding, "I never saw more propriety, good conduct and devotion in any place."[1]

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[1] *New Existence*, Part V., pp. xxiv-vi.

The publication, in 1813, of Owen's *Essays on the Formation of Character* had as already said made him acquainted with many of the leading men of the day—bishops, statesmen, economists, and philanthropists. Later, his evidence before the Committee of 1816 on Factory Children, his addresses at the "City of London Tavern" in 1817, and his incessant activity after that date in promulgating his plans for the regeneration of society, carried his name over all Europe. Every one who was interested in education or social reform came to New Lanark to see the great social experiment there in process. During the ten years from 1815 to 1825, when Owen practically severed his connection with the Scotch factory, the names recorded in the Visitors' Book numbered nearly 20,000.[2] To quote Owen's own catalogue, the visitors included "Princes John and Maximilian of Austria, Foreign Ambassadors—many Bishops and Clergy innumerable—almost all our own nobility—learned men of all professions from all countries—and wealthy travellers for pleasure or knowledge of every description." Not the least interesting amongst this crowd of pilgrims was the Grand Duke Nicholas, afterwards Nicholas I., Czar of Russia, who visited New Lanark with his suite in 1816, and stayed for a night as Owen's guest at his house, Braxfield. The village band met the Duke on the outskirts of the Old Town, and escorted him to the mills. The compliment, as we learn from Robert Dale Owen, was not appreciated, though the Duke himself was too well-bred to show that his ear had been irked by indifferent music.[1] The Duke, then in his twentieth year, made a very agreeable impression on Owen and his family. He went all round the mills, asking questions and seeming to be unaffectedly interested in all that he saw and heard. He even "listened with marked attention for two hours and more to an exposition by Robert Owen of his peculiar views for the improvement of mankind."

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[1] *New Existence*, Part V., p. xxxv. So that the verdict of the old Scotchwoman whom Bulwer Lytton interviewed at New Lanark, was as irrelevant as it was ungenerous. "'The Bairns,' said the old lady, 'turned out vera ill. They had never been taught *this*'—laying her hands on the Bible."—Lytton's *Life*, Vol. I., p. 303 (quoted by S. Walpole, *History*, Vol. IV., p. 377).

[2] *Threading my Way*, p. 115.

With one of Owen's younger sons, David Dale, at that time nine or ten years old, he was so favourably impressed that he intimated a desire to take him to Russia and find him a place at his Court. He gave a more striking practical proof of the pleasure he had derived from his visit, and of his approval of his host's methods for reforming the world. For, knowing of the then prevalent apprehension amongst British statesmen and economists that our little islands were over-peopled, he suggested that Owen himself should come to Russia and bring two millions of the surplus population with him. Both offers were gratefully declined.

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[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 116. The date of the visit was December 26. The Grand Duke left on the following day for Moffat (see the *Times*, January 1, 1817). There is a brief account of the visit in the Russian State archives, which my friend M. Petrovo-Solovovo has kindly searched for me.

One trifling incident connected with the Duke's visit is worth recording here, as illustrating Owen's character.

"The crest of our family," writes Owen's son, "two eagles' heads, had been, as is customary, engraved on our service of plate. At supper, one of the Duke's suite, handing a silver fork to him, called his attention to the engraving as being almost an exact copy of the double eagle, part of the blazon of the Russian coat of arms. Some jest as to right of property having passed in connection with the matter, and attracted my father's attention, it suggested a gift to his guest. Accordingly, next morning, "he had a silver dessert-set packed up, and handed, just as the party were starting off, to one of the attendants, together with a letter begging the Duke's acceptance of it as a memento of his visit to New Lanark.

"My mother, good sensible matron, took exception to any such proceeding. In the case of a friend to whom we owed kindness or gratitude, or to any one who would value the offering for the donor's sake, she would not have grudged her nice forks and spoons, but to the possessor of thousands, a two days' acquaintance, who was not likely to bestow a second thought on the things!—in all which I cordially agreed with her, especially when I found William Sheddon, our butler, lamenting over his empty cases, the glittering contents of which had often excited my childish admiration."[1]

Before we leave New Lanark some account of Owen's home life there—the only place where after childhood he ever found a home—may appropriately be given. On their first coming to New Lanark, Owen and his young wife had settled in the cottage situated in the centre of the village—the same in which Caroline Dale and her sisters had been wont to spend their summers before her marriage. The winters, in the early years of married life, were spent in Mr. Dale's house in Charlotte Street, Glasgow; Owen himself when necessary riding between Glasgow and New Lanark. In a few years, however, as his establishment outgrew the modest dimensions of the cottage, Owen tells that he took on lease from Lord Braxfield,[1] one of the Lords of Sessions, a large house situated about two furlongs from the mills, called Braxfield House, still continuing to live in Charlotte Street during the winter.

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[1] *Threading my Way*, pp. 119, 120.

Braxfield House stands in the midst of large and well-wooded grounds on the banks of the river. In front the grounds slope gently down to the water. Behind the house, the woods rise at a sharper angle to the table-land above. Here Owen lived for many years with his family; and here he was wont to entertain the distinguished visitors who came from all parts of the earth to see New Lanark. His family consisted of four sons—Robert Dale, William Dale, David Dale, and Richard—and three daughters, Anne Caroline, Jane Dale, and Mary.[2] Besides these Mrs. Owen's four younger sisters, after their father's death, for many years made their home at Braxfield, residing there when they were not at school in London.

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[1] Robert Macqueen, the famous Lord Justice Clerk, died in May, 1799, so that Owen's lease must have been granted by Lord Braxfield's representatives.

[2] Another son, the first-born, had died in infancy.

The eldest son, Robert Dale Owen, born on Nov. 7, 1801, has in his Autobiography,[1] from which we have already had frequent occasion to quote, given a delightful picture of the family life at Braxfield. Unlike some who have set out to reform the world, Robert Owen carried out his principles in the family circle. Though his wife used laughingly to tax him with loving the children at the mill better than his own, there seems to have been affection enough to go round. His unvarying kindness to all seems to have been the dominant feature of his character. He was lenient even to trespassers. His son tells us how he and his father, strolling one Sunday near the river in front of Braxfield, came upon two of the mill hands—a young man and woman—who had trespassed on Owen's private grounds, and how Owen turned away rather than disturb an innocent courtship. An anonymous writer who had been brought up in New Lanark from boyhood, and ultimately became a teacher in the schools, gives another instance to the same effect. As a boy he had gone with a young companion to the Braxfield wood to cut shinties (sticks) for themselves. Whilst intent upon their lawless proceedings they felt a touch upon the shoulder. "Who can tell the perturbed state of our minds when, suddenly turning round, we found it to be none other than Mr. Owen himself! We dropped our knives, hung down our heads, and made no reply. To run away was out of the question, for he knew us both. He, however, broke silence by thus addressing us: 'Now if you had been early trained by precept, but more especially by a strict and rigorous example, to know

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[1] *Threading my Way*. London, 1874.

Photo by Davidson & Sons, New Lanark.

BRAXFIELD HOUSE, NEW LANARK.

and feel that your present conduct was bad, I should not now have found you thus employed; but the blame is not justly yours, but is attached to your parents, and those more advanced in years, who by their example lead you on to think and act in a similar way to themselves. I shall say no more to you; take the branches with you that you have cut, and should you again stand in need of anything of this kind for your amusement, first make application to me, and having gained my consent, you will then have nothing to fear from my presence.' Such was the purport of this short lecture to the two little culprits in the midst of his woods, and having said so, he left us."[1]

But Owen was always consistent in his views. Neither men nor babies are the proper subjects of praise and blame: and therefore babies must not be whipped into obedience. When the infant Robert screamed, as he frequently did, in a fit of temper, his father desired that he should not be slapped or shaken or even scolded, but should be set down on the nursery floor and left to scream himself out. So it was done; and the cure proved effectual. No blow was ever struck in anger in that house. There was no punishment in the Braxfield nursery, but also no praise. Children, like men, were the creatures of circumstance, and should not be praised any more than blamed, for doing what they could not help. Approval was testified only by a smile or a caress. The effect of this austere régime was that the first words of praise received from an outsider produced in the youthful Robert an overwhelming effect. But the boy had his father's good sense, and the effect on the whole seems to have been salutary.[1]

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[1] *Robert Owen at New Lanark*, p. 8. Perhaps the reader will think that to be compelled to listen to such a portentous homily was punishment enough. The writer has fairly caught the trick of Robert Owen's style: but no doubt the actual speech is Thucydidean—in all but brevity.

Robert Owen throughout his life, partly as we have already seen from necessity, partly no doubt from taste, was studiously simple in his eating and drinking. A like simplicity was enforced upon his children. The breakfast was of porridge and milk only, the supper of bread and milk ; the dinner consisted of one helping of meat, one of pudding, and as much oatmeal cake as they wanted. They were allowed neither tea, coffee, nor of course, wine or beer. Their great weekly feast, the young Robert tells us, was in the housekeeper's room on Sunday. That kindly lady, Miss Wilson, invited the children each week to a banquet, where the table was spread with toast and sweet biscuits, and tea suitably diluted was served for drink. Hence, amongst the junior members of the Owen family, Sunday was known as the *toast-biscuit-tea-day*. Robert tells us much of Miss Wilson and her kindness to the children ; of the one-armed postman who brought the letters, and taught the children to blow soap-bubbles from a clay pipe ; of the wicked boot-boy Sandy who maliciously broke the pipe ; and how the punishment which was meant for Sandy descended upon Miss Wilson's innocent head. He tells us too of his own exploits in driving and shooting crows, and riding to hounds ; of the mimic combats between his younger brother and himself, enacting respectively the rôles of Hector and Ajax ; of the dancing-master who taught them Scotch reels and the cotillon, and who tried to teach them the minuet; of the handsome young French prisoner of war, Monsieur Levasseur, who taught the two older boys French, and dared to aspire to the hand of their Aunt Mary, Mrs. Owen's sister; of fox-hunting parsons; of Miss Edgeworth's brother and other interesting visitors. All these histories of a child's life nearly a century ago are told with that winning simplicity which was part of Robert Dale Owen's inheritance from his father. He gives us a picture of a happy home and a family united by ties of the closest affection, which was proof even against religious differences.

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[1] *Threading my Way*, p. 47.

Owen throughout his adult life professed some form of Deism; and the question of theology naturally presented difficulties in the domestic circle. But these were smoothed over to a great extent by his large-hearted tolerance. We have already seen how, in the management of the schools, he respected the religious views of the parents. Griscom relates that on the first morning after his arrival at Braxfield the servant brought in a Bible with the hot water.[1] So with his father-in-law, Mr. Dale, despite their profound differences in matters of opinion, Owen seems to have lived on terms not merely of tolerance but of mutual respect and warm affection. They had, he tells us, many prolonged discussions, in which each failed to move the other, but learnt to respect his antagonist's strength and sincerity. At most, Dale would allow himself to say to Owen, in affectionate banter, "Thou needest be very right, for thou art very positive."[2]

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[1] *A Year in Europe*, Vol. II., p. 382.

[2] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 72.

Dale's daughter naturally inherited her father's faith, and remained a devout Presbyterian throughout her life. Owen left the education of the children in her hands, and loyally withheld from them, as long as he could, his own differing views. Thus Robert Dale Owen writes:

"I recollect, one day when he had been explaining to me how seeds produced plants and trees, that I asked him where the very, *very* first seeds came from, and that his answer did not go to shake my faith in the Mosaic account of the Creation. I remember, too, that on another occasion, fresh from my mother's lesson on the almighty and all-pervading power of the Creator, who made the sun to shine and all things to live and grow, I inquired of my father whether God went under the roots of the trees and pushed them up. But my father, in reply, only smiled and said he did not know how it was done."[1]

But the son's eyes were soon afterwards opened to the father's "infidelity" by hearing him, in a discussion with a bishop who chanced to be their guest, controvert the doctrine of man's natural depravity. The youthful Robert came to the assistance of the Church militant, receiving at the time some ill-judged praise from his ally, and the next morning a severe rebuke from his mother on the sinfulness of self-sufficiency in small boys. But as soon as the boy realised the nature of his father's opinions, he was filled with an earnest desire for his conversion. A true son of his father, young Robert at the age of eleven had a firm belief in his mission, and unbounded confidence in the efficacy of arguments, and his own arguments in particular, for the conversion of opinion and the influencing of conduct.

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[1] *Threading my Way*, p. 54.

So, nothing doubting, he set about to teach his father the error of his ways:

"I recollect, to this day, the spot on which I commenced my long-projected undertaking. It was on a path which skirted, on the farther side, the lawn in front of our house and led to the garden. I could point out the very tree we were passing when—with some misgivings, now that it was to be put to the test—I sounded my father by first asking him what he thought about Jesus Christ. His reply was to the effect that I would do well to heed His teachings, especially those relating to charity and to our loving one another.

"This was well enough, as far as it went; but it did not at all satisfy me. So, with some trepidation, I put the question direct, whether my father disbelieved that Christ was the Son of God?

"He looked a little surprised and did not answer immediately.

"'Why do you ask that question, my son?' he said at last.

"'Because I am sure—' I began eagerly.

"'That He *is* God's Son?' asked my father, smiling.

"'Yes, I am.'

"'Did you ever hear of the Mahometans?' said my father, while I had paused to collect my proofs.

"I replied that I had heard of such a people who lived somewhere, far off.

"'Do you know what their religion is?'

"'No.'

"'They believe that Christ is not the Son of God, but that another person, called Mahomet, was God's chosen prophet.'

"'Do they not believe the Bible?' asked I, somewhat aghast.

"'No. Mahomet wrote a book called the Koran; and Mahometans believe it to be the word of God. That book tells them that God sent Mahomet to preach the gospel to them, and to save their souls.'

"Wonders crowded fast upon me. A rival Bible and a rival Saviour! Could it be? I asked, 'Are you quite sure this is true, papa?'

"'Yes, my dear, I am quite sure.'

"'But I suppose there are very few Mahometans: not near—*near* so many of them as of Christians.'

"'Do you call Catholics Christians, Robert?'

"'O no, papa. The Pope is Antichrist.'

"My father smiled. 'Then by Christians you mean Protestants?'

"'Yes.'

"'Well, there are many more Mahometans than Protestants in the world: about a hundred and forty million Mahometans, and less than a hundred million Protestants.'

"'I thought almost everybody believed in Christ, as mamma does.'

"'There are probably twelve hundred millions of people in the world. So, out of every twelve persons only one is a Protestant. Are you *quite* sure that the one is right and the eleven wrong?'

"My creed, based on authority, was toppling. I had no answer ready. During the rest of the walk I remained almost silent, engrossed with new ideas, and replying chiefly in monosyllables when spoken to.

"And so ended this notable scheme of mine for my father's conversion."[1]

Ultimately Robert Dale Owen came to share his father's views on religious and social questions, and for some years worked with him as his staunchest disciple and ally.

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[1] *Threading my Way*, pp. 60, 61.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST FACTORY ACT

OWEN had whilst still quite a young man won a name in the cotton trade for the fineness and excellence of the yarns spun under his management. At a somewhat later date we find him taking a prominent place in the councils of the trade. In 1803 he was a member of the Committee of Management of the Board representing the Cotton industry; and at a meeting of the Committee on February 2 of that year he presented a report entitled "Observations on the Cotton Trade of Great Britain and on the late Duties on the Importation of Cotton Wool." There was at the time much dissatisfaction amongst the cotton lords. The import duties on raw cotton which had been in force since 1798 had been repealed in 1801, and again imposed, with additions, in 1802. Owen's paper begins by setting out briefly some statistics of the trade, with an estimate that the wages paid during the previous year amounted to no less than thirteen million pounds sterling. From these figures he deduces the importance of the industry to the country at large, and the serious results which must ensue on any diminution in its prosperity. He concludes with a temperate and carefully reasoned argument demonstrating the impolicy of a tax upon raw material and the risk that the trade would thereby be driven into foreign countries, some of which were already in a position to obtain labour, and now also raw material, at a cheaper rate than Great Britain.

Owen's argument was no doubt sound. But probably the Government felt that the cotton-spinners were making such enormous profits that even a tax upon raw material which amounted in some cases, according to Owen's calculations, to as much as 20 per cent.,[1] could not do them much harm, and must bring in something to the coffers of a nation impoverished by long war. At any rate they were not influenced by Owen's reasoning, for in the course of this same year, 1803, the duties were raised by more than 50 per cent.[2]

Twelve years later the duties on raw cotton, wherever originating, were 16*s.* 11*d.* the 100 lb., and a meeting was summoned by the Lord Provost of Glasgow at the end of January, 1815, to agitate for a repeal of this heavy taxation. Owen spoke at the meeting, which

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[1] The highest duty on cotton in 1802 was 15*s.* the 100 lb., the lowest price quoted about 10*d.* a lb.—which would represent a duty of 18 per cent. *ad valorem.* (See the Tables given in Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, pp. 313, 326.)

[2] Duties on Raw Cotton.

	1802.	1803.
Imported from East Indies	£4 16*s.* per cent. *ad val.*	16*s.* 8*d.* per 100 lb.
" " Turkey and United States	7*s.* 10*d.* per 100 lb.	
" " British plantations ...	10*s.* 6*d.* " "	
" " Any other place ...	15*s.* " "	25*s.* per 100 lb.

Baines, *loc cit.*

Half of the new duties levied in 1803 consisted of a special war tax, 8*s.* 4*d.* the 100 lb. on British, American, and Turkish cotton, and 12*s.* 6*d.* on all other cotton, imposed by the Act 43 George III. c. 70.

was held in the Tontine Hall, and as his remarks met with a reception not altogether favourable, he repeated them a day or two later in the form of a letter to the the *Glasgow Chronicle.* In this later pronouncement he begins by restating the arguments which he had used twelve years before, setting forth the importance of the cotton trade to the nation, and the imprudence, in view of the keen competition with other countries, of imposing a heavy tax upon the raw material. So far, as he tells us in his *Autobiography*, his speech met with the full assent of the meeting.

But he failed to carry the meeting with him when he went on to draw their attention to another aspect of the question. The cotton manufacture with its vast profits was not, he pointed out, of unmixed benefit to the nation : "I know from personal experience that the labouring classes were much more happy in their agricultural pursuits, than they can be while engaged, as they now are, in most branches of the cotton manufacture. The lamentable results, however, can be known only by experience ; and now the experience is acquired, it is too late to retrace our steps. Were we inclined, we cannot now return to our former state ; for without the cotton trade, our increased population cannot be supported, the interest of the national debt paid, nor the expenses of our fleets and armies defrayed. Our existence as an independent power, now, I regret to say, depends on the continuance of this trade, because no other can be substituted in its place. True indeed it is, that the main pillar and prop of the political greatness of our country is a manufacture which, as it is now carried on, is destructive of the health, morals, and social comforts of the mass of the people engaged in it. It is only since the introduction of the cotton trade, that children at an age before they have acquired strength of body or mental instruction, have been forced into cotton-mills—those receptacles, in too many cases, for living human skeletons, almost disrobed of intellect, where, as the business is often now conducted, they linger out a few years of miserable existence, acquiring every bad habit, which they disseminate throughout Society. It is only since the introduction of this trade, that children, and even grown people, were required to labour more than twelve hours in the day, including the time allotted for meals. It is only since the introduction of this trade that the sole recreation of the labourer is to be found in the pot-house or gin-shop. It is only since the introduction of this baneful trade that poverty, crime, and misery have made rapid and fearful strides throughout the community."[1]

He concluded by urging those present, in approaching the Legislature with an appeal for the remission of the tax, not to forget the interests of those by whom their profits were made. He suggested that statutory powers should be sought—

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA., pp. 16, 17. Owen of course exaggerated the extent of the change for the worse. He shared the common illusion of Socialists, who have always seen the vision of a golden age in the past—a vision which continually recedes as we seek to examine it more closely. There had been poverty, drink, and crime in these islands before the inventions of Crompton and Arkwright; men, women, and children had laboured beyond their strength before the coming of the factory system. But Owen was nevertheless substantially in the right. The long hours and excessive toil had become systematised, and had received toleration, if not actual legal recognition, for the first time under the great industry. Moreover, in the past the children for the most part had worked together with their parents, under their parents' roof, in a common cause and for a bare livelihood: the new system saw the passionless oppression of children forced to labour in the house of a stranger—and to heap up profits in which they had no share.

(1) To prevent children from being employed in cotton-mills until twelve years of age.

(2) To fix the hours of work at twelve a day, including intervals of one and a half hours for meals—*i.e.* ten and a half hours actual work.

(3) For an educational test before the admission of a child to the mills.

Later in the same year, in a pamphlet, *Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System*, Owen expanded the argument of the address. He begins by sketching the rapid development of the industrial system of the country, and the changes it had worked in the conditions of labour and the relations generally between rich and poor. Only a generation ago, he writes, the poorest parents thought the age of fourteen was early enough for their children to begin work, and even that work was performed under reasonable human conditions, which permitted of leisure, recreation, and the enjoyment of home life. Then, too, the old feudal relations between rich and poor still subsisted ; they shared to some extent the same surroundings, even the same amusements, and neither could be indifferent to the welfare and happiness of the other. Now all is changed. The poor man "sees all around him hurrying forward, at a mail-coach speed, to acquire individual wealth, regardless of him, his comforts, his wants, or even his sufferings, except by way of a *degrading parish charity*, fitted only to steel the heart of man against his fellows, or to form the tyrant and the slave. To-day he labours for one master, to-morrow for a second, then for a third and a fourth, until all ties between employers and employed are frittered down to the consideration of what immediate gain each can derive from the other. The employer regards the employed as mere instruments of gain, while these acquire a gross ferocity of character, which, if legislative measures shall not be judiciously devised to prevent its increase, and ameliorate the condition of this class, will sooner or later plunge the country into a formidable and perhaps inextricable state of danger."[1]

As a remedy for the state thus pictured he suggests an Act of Parliament to regulate the conditions of child labour in factories. The provisions of the suggested Act are identical with those already indicated in his speech at the Tontine, except that he now proposes that between ten and twelve years of age children might be employed for six hours a day in the factory, the remaining hours to be spent in school—the modern system of half-timers.

In the pursuance of his campaign, Owen sent copies of his proposals to all the members of both Houses of Parliament,[2] and subsequently came up to London to interview members of the Government and others. On the question of taxation he was referred to Mr. Nicholas Vansittart (afterwards Lord Bexley), who was then

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. Ia., pp. 40, 41.

[2] Owen states (*Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 114) that the document thus distributed was the address read at the Glasgow meeting; but it seems more probable that it was the pamphlet published afterwards. The later document is a formal and reasoned appeal for legislation on behalf of the operatives; whereas the address, which deals also with the effects of the tax, was obviously composed with an eye to the particular audience before whom it purports to have been delivered, and contains some rhetorical passages which were omitted from the pamphlet.

Chancellor of the Exchequer. Owen tell us that Vansittart questioned him on the cotton trade, and that the minister "blushed like a sensitive maiden" at some remark which betrayed his own ignorance of the subject—a likely enough incident, for Vansittart by common consent was not a strong finance minister. Owen adds: "The tax was fourpence per pound, and he said he would remit the whole, except to the amount of a small portion of a penny, which he said would be retained for some Government object or arrangement."[1] This statement is not quite accurate. The tax at the beginning of 1815 was 16*s.* 11*d.* per 100 lb. (or just 2*d.* a pound), with an extra 3*d.* which perhaps stood for registration duty; and it was reduced in the course of the year to 8*s.* 7*d.* for cotton imported in British ships, or 1*d.* the pound + 3*d.* In other words the special war tax of 8*s.* 4*d.* the 100 lb. which had been imposed in 1803 was remitted.[2]

Owen's efforts on behalf of the children were not so immediately fruitful. The Government expressed themselves as sympathetic, but they would not take up the measure. Owen found much support, however, amongst members of both Houses, amongst whom Lord Lascelles, the eldest son of Lord Harewood, is specially named as having ably seconded Owen's efforts.[3] It was ultimately agreed to ask Sir Robert Peel to take charge of the Bill, and he consented. The choice was a fortunate one. Sir Robert Peel, father of the well-known statesman of that name, and himself the son of a yeoman, had amassed a large fortune from cotton-spinning. In consequence of some abuses which had come to light in his own factory some sixteen or seventeen years before, and which had caused much scandal, he had in 1802 introduced and succeeded in passing into law the "Health and Morals of Apprentices Act" (42 George III. c. 73). The Act applied only to apprentices, *i.e.* children apprenticed from the workhouse—the children of the State—and its chief provisions were to prohibit nightwork and to limit the hours of labour to twelve a day. The Act also made provision for the teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetic, for religious instruction, and for the periodical whitewashing of factories.

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 115.

[2] See the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech in the House of Commons March 15, 1815, from which it appears that the war duties were continued on every article except cotton.

[3] Lord Lascelles afterwards saw reason to change his mind. For in the debates in the House of Commons in 1818 he is one of the most prominent opponents of the Bill.

The Bill to which Sir Robert Peel, at Owen's instance, undertook to act as foster-father was of much wider scope. First and chiefly, it was to apply, not only to those children who were the special charge of the State, but to all children alike.

It provided (*a*) that no child should be employed in a mill or factory below the age of ten.

(*b*) That no person under eighteen should be employed for more than 12½ hours in the day, of which no more than 10½ might be given to actual work, leaving 1½ for meals and ½ for instruction.

(*c*) The 12½ hours were to be comprised between 5 a.m and 9 p.m.

(*d*) Instruction was to be given for half an hour a day for the first four years.

(*e*) The justices were empowered to appoint duly qualified inspectors and to pay them for their services.[1]

The Bill was introduced on June 6, 1815, and Peel, in moving the first reading, explained that it was only an experimental measure, not intended to pass that Session. His object in bringing it forward at this time was that it might be printed and circulated for the purposes of discussion and consideration.

Nothing more was done that year, but on April 3 of the following year, 1816, Sir Robert Peel returned to the subject, and moved the appointment of a Committee to take evidence and report upon the state of children employed in manufactories. The motion was accepted, the Committee was appointed, and set itself at once to hear evidence.

In the interval between the introduction of the Bill and the appointment of the Committee in the following year, Owen had proceeded on a tour of inspection throughout England and Scotland, visiting the mills in each town to which he came, for the purpose apparently of collecting evidence to show the need for legislation. On this journey he was accompanied by his eldest son, then a boy of about fifteen. Young Owen was profoundly and permanently impressed by his experiences on this journey;[2]

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[1] I have taken this summary of the chief provisions of the Bill from the draft printed in full in Vol. IA of Owen's Autobiography, pp. 23 *seqq*. But Sir R. Peel in introducing the Bill into the House of Commons is reported (Hansard) as describing provision for 12½ hours, of which ten were to be given to work, and 2½ to meals and instruction.

[2] See *Threading my Way*, pp. 101, 102. Robert Dale Owen says the journey was undertaken in the summer of 1815, and Owen himself refers (*Evidence*, p. 24) to the journey as having taken place in the previous year, *i.e.* 1815. But he seems to have visited Sidgwick's mill, near Skipton, in April, 1816. (See *Evidence*, p. 381).

and no doubt the travellers, even in this brief visit, saw and heard enough to justify, in the eyes of a more reasonable posterity, the intervention of the strong arm of the law, to enforce what ordinary humanity had failed to persuade. But tactically the journey was probably a mistake. Owen's position as a witness on his own ground was unique and practically unassailable. He had demonstrated in his own factory—and that factory worked under conditions generally reckoned the most adverse, with water, that is, and not steam as the motive-power—that it was possible to shorten the hours of labour and to restrict the employment of young children, and yet to make profits sufficient even for avarice. But for a master manufacturer, however pure his motives, to play the spy on the conditions of working in other factories was an invidious business. And after all, the evidence he collected was of little value for the purpose which he had in view—if indeed he had designed to place it before the Committee of the House of Commons. He could give only the general impressions which he had formed in a hurried inspection of the health or ill-health of the children, the temperature of the rooms, the ages of those employed. And on the last point, and also as regards the hours worked, he was necessarily dependent almost entirely on hearsay evidence.

Owen was the most important witness examined by the Committee of 1816, having appeared before it no fewer than six times, whilst his evidence occupies as much as twenty-four pages of the Blue-book. Much of this evidence has already been cited in previous chapters, and need here only be summarised. He told the Committee that he employed no children under ten, and would prefer to raise the age of entrance to twelve, allowing the children, however, to work half-time between ten and twelve. The hours worked at New Lanark were ten and three-quarters exclusive of meal-times, and he would like to have them fixed at ten or at most ten and a half a day. Before the age of ten, and for half their time between ten and twelve, he would have the childen attend school; and to ensure their doing so, he would insist upon an adequate educational test—in reading, writing, and arithmetic and, for girls, in sewing also—as a condition of admission to work in a cotton-factory. He did not anticipate, as suggested by various members of the Committee, if the children were not allowed to work until ten years of age, and were called upon to work only ten and a half hours a days after that period, that their abundant leisure would necessarily lead them to become hopelessly idle and vicious. Nor did he regard working-class parents as deficient in natural affections, or admit that the limitation by law of ages and hours of labour for children carried with it that implication.

There is unfortunately no indication of the particular members of the Committee who asked each question; but it is obvious from the character of the examination that some of the members were strongly hostile to Owen's views, and that he was unscrupulously plied with question after question, in the hope of putting him to confusion. Sometimes it would seem that his opponents succeeded in their aim; but on the other hand, he occasionally surprises us by replies of unexpected pungency. Thus, when repeatedly and unfairly pressed as to the number of children under ten years of age then employed in manufactories throughout the Kingdom—a point upon which he of necessity disclaimed any accurate information—he ultimately replied, "I conceive the number would be in exact (*sc.* inverse) proportion to the knowledge which the proprietors have of their own interest, and the interest of the children" (p. 86). Again, after having emphatically expressed his opinion that the health of the children and young people was injured by the long hours which they were compelled to work, he was asked :

"Do you not conceive that it is injurious to the manufacturer to hazard, by overwork, the health of the people he employs ?" His reply is brief and to the point : "If those persons were purchased by the manufacturer I should say decisively, 'yes' ; but as they are not purchased by the manufacturer, and the country must bear all the loss of their strength and their energy, it does not appear, at first sight, to be the interest of the manufacturer to do so," *i.e.* to spare them (p. 28).

But Owen was by no means an ideal witness for the cause which he had at heart. There was more than one weak point in his armour, of which his enemies did not fail to take advantage. The evidence which he had collected in the tour of inspection above referred to was not of a kind which would stand critical examination by a committee of experts. His statement, for instance, that he observed a "marked and decided difference in the countenances and conduct of the children" in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where they did not begin work until twelve or fourteen, as compared with the children in Manchester, who had gone to the mills when six or seven years of age, may or may not have been well-founded, but was not calculated to impress the Committee. And in one case a definite statement of Owen's was authoritatively contradicted. Owen asserted, as a fact within his knowledge, that on the first introduction, in the previous year, of the Bill a number of children under ten years of age had been discharged from mills throughout the country. Pressed to give a particular instance, he named Mr. Sidgwick's mills at Skipton, and stated that he had received information to that effect from the lips of Sidgwick's nephew. At a later date he repeated this statement (pp. 86 and 113). Mr. William Sidgwick, junior, in his examination, read to the Committee contemporary notes of his interview with Owen, written for the information of his uncle, who was absent at the time of Owen's visit. In these notes it is recorded that only one child under ten years of age was at the time of Owen's visit employed at the mill, and no mention is made of any children having been discharged. In his further evidence Mr. Sidgwick expressly denied that any statement to that effect was made by him to Owen, or that any children had been discharged as suggested (pp. 381, 382). It would appear probable, therefore, either that Owen misunderstood something said by Mr. Sidgwick, or that, relying as he apparently did on his memory, he had attached the incident to the wrong place and person—a thing which might easily happen in the course of a tour of some weeks. But the episode no doubt had a damaging effect.[1]

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[1] The charge in itself was probable enough. There were ugly stories two or three years later of sickly and deformed youths having been hurriedly dismissed from certain Manchester cotton-mills; of the children having been cleaned up and the men ordered to shave; the rooms scoured

Owen was also open to attack in another quarter. His religious views were by this time becoming notorious, and his enemies did not scruple to use the weapon thus placed in their hands. He was questioned as to the religious instruction given to the children at New Lanark; as to their attendance at Sunday school and at church; as to their examination in the Bible and Catechism; and as to his own private religious opinions. Little of this examination appears in the published minutes of evidence (see p. 26). But Owen tells us that he had to submit to a long and vindictive cross-examination from Mr. (afterwards Sir George) Philips, one of the wealthy cotton-spinners on the Committee, on his private opinions and beliefs. The animus was so manifest, and the tone of the questioner so insolent, that Owen's son, who accompanied his father to the meetings of the Committee, was unable to hold back his tears. It appears that on the motion of Lord Brougham the record of this impertinent episode was expunged from the minutes.[1]

The part of his evidence, however, which aroused the keenest interest at the time, and later, in the debates in both Houses on the Bill and in the warfare by newspapers and pamphlets outside, gave rise to the most

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and the windows opened to reduce the temperature—all in preparation for an inspection of the factories by some medical man selected for the purpose by the proprietors. (See *Evidence before the Lords' Committee of* 1819, pp. 181-216.)

[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 121. *Threading my Way*, p. 103. Owen adds that the opponents of the Bill sent emissaries down to New Lanark to interview the parish minister and other persons, with a view of obtaining damaging evidence as to his "infidelity" and other unpopular opinions. Owen probably exaggerated the importance of the enterprise, which in any case seems legitimate enough in political warfare of this kind. At any rate nothing came of it. (See *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 117-20.)

embittered controversy, was that which dealt with the economic effect of the shortened hours of labour. Owen's statements on this point are not very explicit. He moved in a different world from that of the wealthy cotton-spinners who tried to browbeat him before the Committee. Neither he nor his later partners were concerned exclusively with money-getting and the risks of foreign competition. He was profoundly impressed with the evils which the mad race for wealth had already brought upon the workers, and in his publication of January, 1815, already referred to, he had written—"Perish the cotton trade, perish even the political superiority of our country (if it depends on the cotton trade), rather than they shall be upheld by the sacrifice of everything valuable in life by those who are the means of supporting them."[1]

When therefore the Committee asked him whether the manufacturers would not be likely to suffer loss in consequence of the shortened hours, he replied with cheerful and indifferent optimism. When questioned, further, what benefits he expected from the measure, he made answer, "A very considerable improvement in the health of the operatives, both young and old; a very considerable improvement in the instruction of the rising generation; and a very considerable diminution in the poor rates of the country."[2] A man who could so lightly contemplate interference with England's monopoly of the world's markets, for the sake of anything so irrelevant as the honour of the country, or the education

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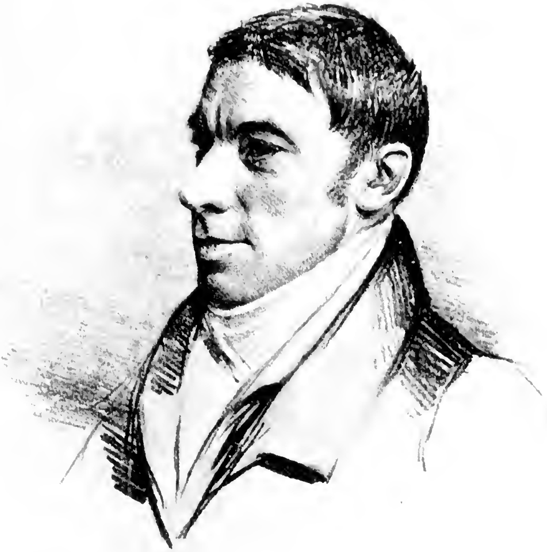
[1] From the speech at the Glasgow Meeting, *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 18.

[2] See *Evidence*, p. 21.



Robert Owen

a Sketch by J. Comerford

Taken at the request of A H R

From a lithograph in the British Museum (undated).

ROBERT OWEN.

and well-being of the children of the poor, was clearly dangerous in the eyes of men who had long ago, in Lord Salisbury's phrase, written these things off their books as unmarketable commodities. At any rate the Committee seem to have judged it best after the last answer to let him alone for the time.

Later, however, they returned to the subject, and Owen was closely questioned as to the exact effects of the shortened hours upon the product of his own mills. The hours at New Lanark had been reduced, it will be remembered, from eleven and three-quarters to ten and three-quarters a day on January 1, 1816, so that at the time of this examination, May 7 of the same year, the new arrangement had only been working for about four months. Owen explained in answer to questions that the difference in the amount produced was much less in proportion than the difference in the hours worked, and according to his calculations "the present loss is not more than one farthing in twenty pence." He added that a daily return of the actual quantity of yarn spun had been kept for years past, and that these returns showed a gradual increase in the produce from January 1 up to the date at which he was speaking. Owen spoke from memory, as he had not got these returns by him at the time, and unfortunately they were not afterwards put in as evidence. Asked how he accounted for the fact that the falling off in the daily product was less proportionately than the reduction in hours of working, he replied that he attributed it to the effect of the shortened hours on the physical and moral well-being of the operatives. Coming to details, he explained that the machinery would be worked at a higher rate, in proportion as the workpeople were more active and attentive to their duties. He was unable to say whether as a matter of fact the pace of the machinery at New Lanark had been quickened since the beginning of the year. Even without such quickening, however, he considered that "a larger quantity may be produced by a greater attention of the hands while the machinery is at work, in preventing breakage and by not losing any time in commencing in the morning, at meals, or when stopping at night; from the greater desire of the individuals to perform their duty conscientiously; from the great wish to make up for any supposed or probable loss that the proprietors might sustain in consequence of giving this amelioration to the workpeople; such conduct to workpeople is the most likely to make them conscientious, and to obtain more from them than when they are forced to do their duty."[1]

The impression produced by his answers is that he had not thought out this aspect of the subject: that he was in fact tolerably indifferent, singular as such a perversion of sentiment must have appeared to his brother manufacturers, to economic niceties of the kind. The mills at any rate produced, and were likely to continue to produce, a surplus sufficiently large to satisfy himself and his new partners; and they were content that the workers should share in the benefit, without enquiring too closely into the balance of profit and loss.[2]

The Committee of 1816 presented no report to the House, and no further action was taken on the Bill until

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[1] *Evidence*, p. 94.

[2] Some later figures showing the effect of the shortened hours on production are quoted above pp. 164, 165.

1818, when it was again introduced by Sir Robert Peel. Owen ascribes this untimely delay to Sir Robert's desire to conciliate his brother manufacturers; and Samuel Kydd takes the same view.[1] Sir Robert Peel himself explained the delay as due to his own ill-health; and it is perhaps not inconsistent with the view held by Owen and Kydd that the opponents of the Bill professed themselves unwilling to accept the plea of ill-health as an adequate explanation of the delay in proceeding with the measure.[2] At any rate the Bill ultimately passed through the House of Commons in the Session of 1818, the second reading being carried by a majority of 91 to 26.

But when the Bill reached the Upper House their Lordships professed themselves not satisfied that the need for any such restrictive legislation had been made out, and proceeded after some delay to appoint a Committee of their own, which sat and heard evidence in 1818 and the following year.

It is not necessary for our present purpose to enter at length into the history of this piece of legislation, or to analyse the evidence adduced before the Lords' Committee of 1818 and 1819. Owen's personal efforts on behalf of the Bill came to an end with the Committee of 1816, his activities after that year, as will appear in subsequent chapters, being diverted into other channels.[3]

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[1] Owen's *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 116; *History of the Factory Movement*, by "Alfred," Vol. I., p. 44.

[2] Remarks were made in the House of Commons to this effect. See also Lord Lauderdale's speech in the House of Lords on May 14, 1818.

[3] In March, 1818, however, he published two letters, addressed respectively to Lord Liverpool and to British master manufacturers, on the Employment of Children in Factories (*Life*, Vol. IA, pp. 185, 197), in which he recapitulated his arguments. His work in this connection was, however, as he tells us, taken up by Gould, Oastler, and others after 1816.

And in any case Owen could give no evidence of value as to the existence of the abuses which the Bill was intended to remedy. The passage of the Bill was stubbornly contested in both Houses and in the outside Press. The arguments of its opponents may be briefly summed up under five main heads.

(1) That no case had been made out for the Bill, and that the majority of masters were already doing of their own free will all that the Bill required.

As regards the prohibition of night-duty, this was probably true. Since the introduction of the steam-engine there was no longer the same necessity for economising the motive-power. Moreover, mills were more commonly erected in large towns, and all-night working had ceased to be fashionable. Owen's neighbour, Finlay, a well-known Glasgow mill-owner, replying to Sir Robert Peel's motion for the appointment of the Committee of 1816, said that in Scotch mills the children did not begin work until ten years of age. But they certainly began much earlier in Lancashire. As to the healthiness of the cotton-factories, the evidence adduced by the masters proved too much. The death-rate in Finlay's mill, for instance, was given as a little over two per thousand. As Peel the younger said in the House, if we were to accept such statistics as relevant, the logical issue would be for the Government to build cotton-mills to act as sanatoria—for the average mill seemed at least six times as healthy as what had hitherto been deemed the most salubrious spots in the Kingdom.[1]

(2) The Bill sought to establish a new principle, by intervening between parent and child. It must then

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[1] *Hansard*, April 27, 1818.

necessarily weaken the authority of the parents, and cast an undeserved stigma upon them, by accusing them indirectly of avarice and cruelty.[1]

(3) England's predominance in the markets of the world would be endangered.

(4) Wages must be reduced *pari passu* with the proposed reduction of the hours—or at an even greater rate to allow of the capitalist recouping himself for the diminished returns from his capital expenditure[2]—and hence increased poverty and wretchedness would be the direct result of this short-sighted measure.

(5) "All experience proves that in the lower orders the deterioration of morals increases with the quantity of unemployed time of which they have the command." Thus by shortening the hours of labour, the Bill "necessarily tends to produce immorality and crime among the adults." Nay, these tender-hearted employers were much concerned for the future of the children themselves, if they should be left in idleness and vice until the mature age of ten, instead of being placed from their earliest years under the wholesome discipline of the factory.[3]

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[1] "The Bill went to say that poor parents were not to be entrusted with the management of their own children."—Mr. Curwen in the House of Commons.

The Bill would bring disunion between master and workman and between parent and child—"What effect must it have upon a child to perceive that those to whom his interests ought to be most dear were not considered by the Legislature as fit to be trusted with the regulation of his conduct."—Lord Stanley in the House of Commons, April, 27, 1818.

[2] *Evidence* of 1816, p. 167.

[3] Thus Owen is asked by the Committee of 1816 (*Report*, p. 23), "Would not there be a danger [if the children are not employed in the mills before ten] of their acquiring by that time vicious habits, for want of regular occupation?" This and the other arguments summarised in the text are reproduced

The arguments under the headings (2), (3), and (4) had, it must be admitted, some weight. Everything depended, therefore, upon the evidence adduced to show the need for legislative restriction, and that evidence, to the dispassionate enquirer of a later date, seems conclusive.

(*a*) As to the age at which the children were employed, a Committee of Manchester mill-owners put before the Lords' Committee of 1818 lists of all the persons employed in their mills, showing in each case the age at the time of the census, the age at entry, and the state of health, etc., of the person employed. These lists, prepared in the interests of the masters, may be supposed to show the case at any rate not at the worst. From an analysis of the figures it appears that of the 4,938 persons employed in these selected mills at the time of the census (about April, 1818), 80 were under nine years of age, 764 between nine and eleven; and 2,896, or nearly three-fifths of the whole number, were still under twenty years of age. Further, of these 4,938 persons, no fewer than 1,658, or one-third of the whole number, had begun work in a cotton-mill below nine years of age, and another third between that age and eleven.[1]

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again and again in the debates and in the pamphlet literature of the period. The quotation in the text under heading (5) is from an anonymous pamphlet published in London in 1818 entitled *An Inquiry into the Principles and Tendency of the Bill*, etc., which gives an able and exhaustive statement of the arguments and evidence relied upon by the opponents of legislation.

[1] The figures themselves are given in the appendices to the evidence taken before the Committee of 1818: the summary and analysis given in the text are quoted from an anonymous pamphlet, *Observations as to ages of persons employed in the Cotton Mills in Manchester*, 1819.

(*b*) As to the hours of duty, Sir Robert Peel stated in moving the appointment of the Committee of 1816, that the hours of work were often fifteen or sixteen a day,[1] and the evidence taken before that and subsequent Committees abundantly confirmed this statement.

In view of these two salient facts—the tender age at which children habitually began to work, and the long hours of confinement in close rooms at a high temperature day after day and year after year, medical evidence as to the effects on health and physique would seem hardly necessary. Nevertheless there were many medical men found to testify, in the interests of the masters, to the healthy nature of the employment. One medical man, Dr. Edward Holme, stated before the Committee of 1818 that he could not say that it would be more injurious for a child to work in the mills by night than in the daytime; nor that the health of young children would be likely to suffer from standing twelve hours a day at their work; nor from eating their meals whilst so standing and working.

Another, Thomas Wilson, did not think it likely to be injurious to the health of a thinly clad child, after working twelve hours in a room at a temperature of seventy-six degrees, to come out into a winter night; nor that the health of the children was likely to suffer from constantly breathing and taking their meals in an atmosphere heavily charged with cotton-fluff; nor that the continual spitting to get rid of the fluff was likely to prove prejudicial.

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[1] *Hansard*, April 3, 1816. In fairness to the masters it should be stated that the fifteen or sixteen hours' daily attendance at the factory usually included certain intervals for meals, at any rate for adults. The children were frequently left to clean the machinery in the dinner hour.

More than one witness deposed that the children employed under such conditions in the cotton-mills were as healthy, or healthier than children in any other occupation, not excepting agriculture.[1]

But it is scarcely necessary to pursue the subject, or to repeat the evidence in favour of the Bill. An outline of the nature of the facts brought forward in 1816 to prove the injurious effect of the long hours and general conditions of the work upon the health of the children has been already given in Chapter IV. Additional facts and figures of a like nature were adduced before the Committees of 1818 and 1819, to strengthen a case already sufficiently damning. The accumulation of evidence was at length sufficient to satisfy the House of Lords that there was need of legislation. The Bill finally passed into law in the summer of 1819; but its original provisions had been whittled down to conciliate the forces of the opposition. The draft measure of 1815 was intended to apply to "cotton, woollen, flax and other mills." But the Act of 1819 applied to cotton-mills only. The lower limit of age for the employment of children was in the event fixed at nine years, instead of ten, and the children ceased to be "young persons" at sixteen instead of eighteen years of age. The hours of labour of such young persons were to be twelve instead of ten and a half a day, exclusive of meal times. The provision for education was cut out altogether. The masters generally had no desire to work their mills at night, and so the principle of working by day only was allowed to pass unchallenged. The hours within which work was permitted were fixed at 5 a.m. to 9 p.m.

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[1] See especially the first sixty pages of evidence tendered before the Lords' Committee of 1818, and evidence of Bingley and Keighley doctors quoted before the Committee of 1816 (*Report*, p. 15).

But perhaps the most serious alteration from the original draft was in the provision for enforcing the due observance of the law. It was notorious that the Act of 1802 had been in many parts of Great Britain a dead letter, because of the inadequate provision for inspection and the inadequate penalties prescribed. The duty of seeing that the law was obeyed had by that Act been imposed upon visitors appointed by the justices of the peace, one of whom should be a justice and one a clergyman. Naturally many of the mill-owners themselves sat on the bench, and the visiting justice and clergyman were not likely to be too hard on their friends and neighbours, especially as they received no payment for their rather unpleasant duties.

In Scotland the magistrates had gone so far as to disregard the Act of 1802 altogether—the only excuse tendered for non-compliance with the law being that Epiphany and Midsummer, the dates mentioned for the appointment of visitors and the returns, were terms unknown in Scottish procedure. The one exception was Owen's own county of Lanark, and that exception applied only to a single year. In June, 1810, the Quarter Sessions of the Lower Ward of Lanarkshire appointed a visiting committee of eight, who reported a year later that they had inspected several mills, and found that the requirements of the Act as regards periodical whitewashing, the exhibition of a copy of the Act, the hours of labour, and the attendance at divine service, were not being observed. Thereupon the clerk of the peace was duly empowered, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, to levy upon the offending owners, each of whom was probably making a profit reckoned by thousands or tens of thousands a year, a fine of two guineas![1]

In order that this legislative farce might not be repeated, a clause was inserted in the original draft of 1815 empowering the justices in quarter sessions to appoint any duly qualified persons, not having an interest in the mills, to act as inspectors, and to pay them for their services. In introducing the Bill in 1815 Peel explained to the House that the inspection made under the Act of 1802 had been very remiss, and laid stress upon the necessity for appointing properly qualified and paid inspectors. But in the Act finally passed in 1819 no provision whatever was made for inspection, and the recovery of the penalties prescribed was left to the common informer.

With the sting thus taken out, the Act of 1819 appears to have been little more effective than its predecessor. It was not until 1833, when, under the Act of that year, provision was made for the appointment by the Government of paid inspectors, that it was found practicable to give full effect to the intentions of the Legislature. But the Act of 1819 marks the first—and the most important—step in the long procession of Factory Acts. Under it for the first time the State assumed the rights of parent and guardian to the children of the free, and took upon itself to prescribe their hours of work and the general conditions of their labour. Of the long struggle that followed, decade after decade almost down to our own day, there is no need to speak here. Owen had no share in the later legislation.

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[1] *Account of Cotton and Woollen Mills and Factories . . . entered at the Epiphany Sessions in each year from* 1803 *to* 1818, H. L., 1819, Vol. XIII.

But it may be claimed for him that he first forced the State to open its eyes to the new duties which the changing circumstances of the time were thrusting upon it: that he was in fact the pioneer of factory legislation in this country. The record on this point is clear; though, as with his services to the cause of education, Owen's own later career has obscured the fame which is his due. We have seen, first, what measures he had taken, as soon as his hands were free, to lighten the labours of the children in his own mills at New Lanark. We have seen, next, that in his speech at Glasgow in January, 1815, and in his pamphlet published later in the same year, he proposed legislation on the precise lines afterwards embodied in the Bill introduced by Sir Robert Peel in the House of Commons in June, 1815. That Owen was directly responsible for the drafting of that Bill, and for its introduction by Peel, is sufficiently proved by the numerous references to him in the debates and in the outside press. The friends of the Bill were silent, indeed, except when directly challenged, on Owen's share in the matter; but its opponents were proportionately insistent upon giving him the credit of the measure.

The reason is obvious. When, in 1815, Owen first commenced the agitation on the subject, he was known to the world as a philanthropic mill-owner, and an enthusiast in the cause of popular education; a man who preached social reform, and who gave unsparingly of his time and means in order to practise what he preached. But when the Bill came before the House for serious consideration in 1818, Owen's name unfortunately stood for something more than this. He had shocked the conventionally religious by his fervid denunciation of all the creeds; and by the extravagance of his remedies for social evils he had repelled the sympathies of many whose religious prejudices were unaffected. Lord Lascelles, therefore, in opposing the Bill,[1] thought it well to remind the House that the measure did not originate with Sir Robert Peel, but with a gentleman who had for the last twelve months "made much noise in the public prints," and who had said, from his own experience at New Lanark, that a reduction in the hours of labour, so far from diminishing the product rather tended to increase it—a proposition beyond Lord Lascelles' powers of comprehension. Peel the younger in replying urged that Lascelles ought not to oppose the Bill because a gentleman with speculative opinions in political economy was supposed to have brought it forward. "Whether that gentleman was concerned in it or not was a matter of indifference to him (the speaker) and he called upon the House not to reject a judicious measure, because it might have the misfortune to be supported by an indiscreet advocate."[2]

Again, in the House of Lords on February 25, 1819, the Earl of Lauderdale, in opposing the Bill, said that

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[1] *Hansard* for April 27, 1818, p. 351.

[2] *Loc. cit.*, p. 352.

"Sir Robert Peel had never thought of this measure until Mr. Owen had recommended it to him."[1]

Again, the writer of a pamphlet against the Bill, already quoted, says: "Late years have been wonderfully prolific of ostentatious and useless schemes of philanthropy, from Member Evans and his nation of happy landholders, to Mr. Owen with the Millennium dawning over the ruins of Christianity in a cotton-mill." The Bill "is in truth a part of Mr. Owen's dreams; he was its father, though Sir Robert Peel has graciously become its god-father and taken upon himself the discharge of the parental duties. Such a descent might justify us in expecting a few extravagances in the child, but the reality has far exceeded our expectations."[2]

And though Owen in later years forsook the battlefield, and betook himself to a cloudy land where the laws of political economy do not operate, it should not be forgotten that the first victory in the long campaign was due to him, so far at least as any achievement of the kind can be credited to the efforts and example of any single man.[3]

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[1] *Hansard, loc. cit.*, p. 655.

[2] *An Inquiry into the Principles and Tendency of the Bill, etc.*, London, 1818, p. 31.

[3] Owen was actually the occasion of another minor piece of factory legislation. On November 26, 1819, one of the mills at New Lanark was burnt down (*Times*, December 2, 1819). On December 7, Sir R. Peel introduced a Bill to allow of working by night in cotton-factories so as to prevent loss of employment, after a fire or other accident. Lord A. Hamilton and Finlay both taunted the mover with introducing the Bill specially to meet Owen's case. The Bill passed into law in the following year (60 George III. c. 5).

CHAPTER X

FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

IN July, 1815, the long war came to an end. But peace did not at once bring plenty to these islands. Throughout the twenty years of war Great Britain had held the lion's share of the carrying trade and the commerce of the world. Her crafts and manufactures had thriven on the distress and poverty of the Continent: her wares had almost monopolised the European market. But now all this was changed. The Continental industries revived, and Britain's foreign trade was proportionately curtailed. Further, the island labour market was disturbed by the sudden disbandment of the huge military and naval forces, and the return to domestic industries of some 200,000 able-bodied men. Thus a shrinking market coincided with an enormous influx of unskilled labourers. It is not to be wondered at that wages rapidly fell and that distress and hunger were felt throughout the land for some years to come.

Wages fell most rapidly in agriculture and in the textile trades: in some cases they were reduced in a twelvemonth to less than half their former amount. Thus the wages of weavers in Bolton fell from 14*s.* in 1815 to 12*s.* in 1816 and 9*s.* in 1817; in Forfarshire they fell from 13*s.* in 1815 to 6*s.* in 1817; and in

Glasgow during the same period from 11*s.* 6*d.* to 5*s.* 6*d.* Exact particulars of the wages of agricultural labourers are more difficult to ascertain, because at this time the less than living wage paid by the farmer was commonly supplemented out of the poor rates. But near Glasgow the wages of labourers fell from 11*s.* a week in 1816 to 7*s.* 6*d.* in 1819; in Middlesex they remained at 15*s.* until 1818, and fell rapidly after that year until they stood at 10*s.* in 1822.[1] To add to the disturbance of industrial conditions and general distress which the conclusion of the war must inevitably have brought in its train, the summer of 1816 proved exceptionally wet, and the price of corn rose rapidly. It had stood at 63*s.* a quarter in 1815; it rose in 1816 to 76*s.*, and in the following year to 94*s.* Concurrently the gross amount of the poor rates, which had been, in round numbers, £5,400,000 in 1815, rose in 1817 to £6,900,000, and in 1818 to £7,870,000.[2] Numbers of people were thrown out of employment and reduced to penury and starvation. Owen tells us that though he was able to keep the mills at New Lanark working, he had to turn away daily many applicants for work whom he was unable to help.

In the private correspondence of the period, in debates in the House of Commons, in the evidence before the Poor Law Committee of 1817, we read of many parishes where considerably more than half the inhabitants were on the poor rates: of poor rates exceeding 20*s.* in the pound: of farms which no man would cultivate even rent free: of cottages abandoned, of whole parishes deserted, of homeless people worn with hunger wandering over the country in search of work.

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[1] See the tables given in Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, edition of 1851, pp. 444, 445.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

There were disturbances, demonstrations, rick-burnings, and smashing of machinery throughout the country. Five men were hanged in 1816 for riots at Ely. At the end of the same year there was a turbulent meeting in Spa Fields. The mob broke into a gunsmith's shop in Snow Hill, possessed themselves of the fire-arms, and threatened the city. The riot was suppressed by the police; the ringleaders were tried for high treason and acquitted. Meanwhile the newly christened Radicals, led by Major Cartwright, Cobbett, Hone, Wooler, Hunt and others, were demanding universal suffrage, annual parliaments, and reform of the parliamentary machinery generally. The Government became alarmed at the disturbed state of the country and the general agitation for reform; at the growth of the Hampden and the Spencean Clubs, and other political organisations. Select Committees of both Houses of Parliament sat early in 1817 to consider the state of the country. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended and several repressive Acts were passed, of which the chief aimed at suppressing as far as possible the right of public meeting.

Such, then, was the state of the country and the temper of the public mind in 1816 and 1817, when Robert Owen first promulgated his scheme of social salvation. He was known to the world as a successful manufacturer, who had done much to improve the processes of fine-cotton spinning: a hard-headed man of business, who had for a score of years conducted large industrial concerns at enormous profit to himself and his partners. He stood high, too, in the business world as a man of sterling honesty, who was unwilling to be too sharp in a bargain, or to take advantage of a customer's ignorance. Macnab tells us that it was Owen's habitual practice when he foresaw a fall in the price of yarn, to ask his customers whether they would not wish any orders which might be in hand to be deferred so that they might take advantage of the lower prices; and in the same way, he would write to his correspondents before a rise, and urge them to buy.[1]

Further he was known as a man of liberal views who had given much of his time and money to improving the condition of those who worked under him. And he was this very year, 1816, giving important evidence before two Commitees of the House of Commons, on popular education and on the state of children in factories. Such a man was sure of a respectful hearing for any views which he might put forward.

In the summer of 1816 a public meeting was convened by the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor, under the presidency of the Duke of York, to consider measures for the relief of the prevalent distress. Owen had breakfasted on the day of the meeting with one of his episcopal friends, Bathurst, Bishop of Norwich, and was entrusted by his host, who was unable himself to attend the meeting, with a subscription of ten pounds for the fund which was to be raised. The meeting appointed a committee, under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to consider practical measures of relief, and Owen's name was naturally placed on the list of members.

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[1] *Macnab*, p. 131.

The committee met next day, and, after many economists and public men had spoken on the subject, the chairman, who, as we have already seen, was acquainted with Owen and his views, invited him also to address the meeting. Owen having at that time little experience in public speaking, felt, as he tells us, considerable reluctance in complying with the request. But he had reflected to some purpose on the subject, and he seems to have acquitted himself well. His speech insisted upon two points: that the immediate occasion of the distress was the sudden cessation of the extraordinary demand created by the war, or in his own words —"on the day on which peace was signed the great customer of the producers died":[1] and that the permanent underlying cause was the displacement, within the past generation, of human labour by machinery. Pressed to state his remedy for this state of things, Owen consented to draw up a report and present it to a later meeting of the committee. The report was completed in the spring of the following year, and Owen duly presented it to the Archbishop's committee, and outlined the nature of his proposals. In the meantime, however, a Select Committee, under the chairmanship of Sturges Bourne, had been appointed by the House of Commons to report on the administration of the Poor Laws, and had actually commenced to take evidence in February, 1817. The subject-matter of Owen's report appeared more germane to the enquiries of the Select Committee, and Owen was requested to present it to that body. He accordingly offered himself, through Brougham, who was himself a member, as a witness before the Committee. A day, as he tells us, was appointed for his examination : but after long deliberation the Committee finally decided not to take his evidence.

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 124.

This Report, which was presented to the Select Committee in a covering letter dated 49, Bedford Square,[1] London, March 12, 1817, contains the first sketch of Robert Owen's celebrated "Plan" for the regeneration of the world. It purports to be simply a development of the proposals already put forward in the *New View of Society* for the provision by the State of useful work for the unemployed. But it is, as will be seen, a development on lines which could scarcely have been foreseen by any reader of the earlier essays.

The Report begins by enlarging the argument of Owen's speech before the Archbishop's committee. The ultimate cause of the distress, he claimed, was the displacement of human labour by machinery. In Great Britain alone, he contended, machinery represented the labour of more than a hundred millions "of the most industrious human beings" ; and as machinery was far cheaper in the working, it must, in the nature of things, continually tend to displace more and more the merely human labourer. Either therefore we must curtail the use of machinery, or we must suffer millions of our fellow-countrymen to starve to death ; or, finally, "Advantageous occupation must be found for the poor and unemployed working classes, to whose labour mechanism must be rendered subservient, instead of being applied, as at present, to supersede it."[2]

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[1] The town-house of Owen's partner, Mr. Walker (see *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 180).

[2] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 55.

The poor, however, are, he points out, already seriously demoralised by enforced ignorance and idleness; and any plan devised for the permanent amelioration of their condition must include measures for educating all, and especially the children, in good and useful habits. Such a plan must, then, "combine means to prevent their children from acquiring bad habits, and to give them good ones—to provide useful training and instruction for them—to provide proper labour for the adults—to direct their labour and expenditure so as to produce the greatest benefit to themselves and to society; and to place them under such circumstances as shall remove them from unnecessary temptations, and closely unite their interest and duty."[1]

Obviously, to secure superintendence which should be at once effective and economical, the establishment must not be very small, for then the cost of superintendence would be relatively high; nor very large, for then it would cease to be effective. In practice an establishment consisting of from 500 to 1,500 persons would, Owen indicates, be most suitable.

The Report was accompanied by a drawing, to which the attention of the Committee was to have been directed, representing one of the proposed establishments, with its appendages and a suitable quantity of land. The main building is represented as a large quadrangle, of which three sides were to be occupied by tenements or flats, of four rooms each, each room to accommodate a married couple and two children. The fourth side comprised dormitories for all the children above three years of age,

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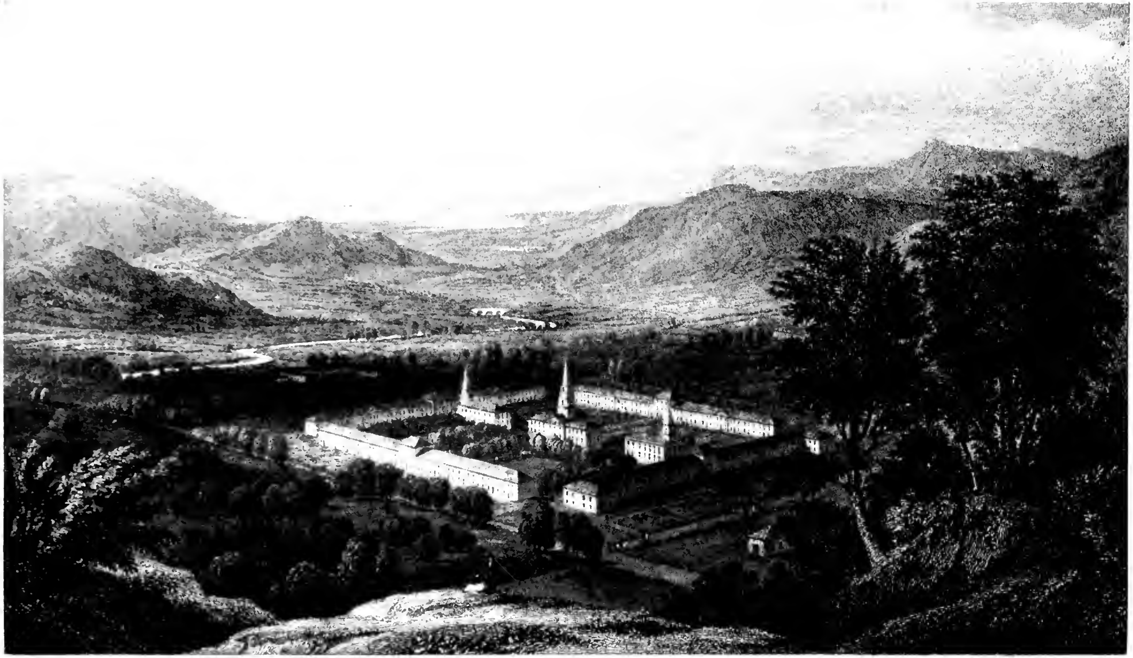
[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 57.



From an engraving after a drawing by R. R. Reinagle, R.A.

A VIEW OF ONE OF MR. OWEN'S VILLAGES OF UNION.

an infirmary, and a guest-house. The buildings in the middle of each of the other three sides of the quadrangle contained apartments for the superintendents, schoolmasters, clergymen, surgeons, and for store-rooms, etc. A row of buildings in the centre, dividing the quadrangle into two equal parts, contained accommodation for kitchens, dining-rooms, schools, lecture-room, and a place for public worship. The space within the quadrangle was to be planted with trees and laid out as gardens and playgrounds.

Other gardens surrounded the quadrangle on the outside, and beyond these were the stables, laundries, manufactories, and farm buildings, all duly represented on the plan. This model establishment was designed to accommodate 1,200 persons, "men, women, and children, of all ages, capacities, and dispositions; most of them very ignorant; many with bad and vicious habits, possessing only the ordinary bodily and mental faculties of human beings, and who require to be supported out of the funds appropriated to the maintenance of the poor—individuals who are at present not only useless and a direct burden on the public, but whose moral influence is highly pernicious. . . ."[1]

It was intended that the community should be, as far as possible, self-sufficing; and for this purpose its members were to engage in various branches of manufacture as well as in agriculture. All were to work at suitable tasks, according to their ability, except that the children were to attend school the first few years of life, and only gradually take part in manual labour, working as half-timers in the first instance.

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 59.

The estimated expenditure is shown in the following table—

SCHEDULE OF EXPENSES FOR FORMING AN ESTABLISHMENT FOR 1,200 MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN.

If the land be purchased.

	£
1,200 acres of land at £30 per acre	36,000
Lodging apartments for 1,200 persons	17,000
Three public buildings within the square . . .	11,000
Manufactory, slaughter-house, and washing-house .	8,000
Furnishing 300 lodging-rooms, at £8 each . . .	2,400
Furnishing kitchen, schools, and dormitories . .	3,000
Two farming establishments, with corn-mill, and malting and brewing appendages	5,000
Making the interior of the square and roads . .	3,000
Stock for the farm under spade cultivation . .	4,000
Contingencies and extras	6,600
	£96,000.[1]

Or the land might be rented, in which case a capital sum of £60,000 would suffice. The necessary capital might be furnished by private subscription; or, by the parochial authorities; or, best of all, by the central Government. Of the financial success of such establishments Owen had no doubt, though he dismisses the point in an airy sentence—"Thus the unemployed poor may be put in a condition to maintain themselves and, as may be easily conceived, quickly to repay the capital advanced, if thought necessary."

The adoption of the plan is urged upon the Government as the best solution of the problem of the unemployed; as the simplest and most effectual method for giving a real education to the children of the poor; as a means of enabling a much greater population to be supported in a given area than under any other conditions; and finally as being "so easy, that it may be put into practice with less ability and exertion than are necessary to establish a new manufacture in a new situation."[1]

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 60.

Such is the famous "Plan" as originally sketched out in the Report offered to the committee on the Poor Laws. It will be seen that it purports to be little more than a scheme for finding employment for those who could not find it for themselves; and for educating the children of those who could not themselves pay the cost of schooling. In other words it aimed at carrying out what appears to have been the intention of the Elizabethan Poor Laws.[2] As a great part of the Select Committee's Report is given up to showing the disastrous results which must follow from the State undertaking the duty of finding work for all, their reluctance to entertain a scheme of this nature, holding out such magnificent promises, and so careless of the cost of their fulfilment, can be readily understood.

Frustrated in the attempt to gain publicity for his views through the Committee, Owen had recourse to the press. The Report was printed in full in No. XXV. of the *Philanthropist*, a periodical edited by his partner William Allen. It also appeared in the *Times* and the *Morning Post* of April 9, 1817, occupying in each case several columns of the paper. The *Times* refers to the scheme as a substitute for the system of English Poor Laws, and expresses doubt of its practicability on the ground of the expense involved. On May 29 the *Times* published a further letter from Owen vindicating his proposals. The tone of the editorial on this occasion is decidedly more encouraging. The writer points out that "Mr. Owen is not a theorist only, but a man long and practically familiarised to the management of the poor: we are most desirous that a trial should be made of his plan in at least one instance." The *Morning Post* is even more friendly. It refers to Owen as "a real patriot and exemplary philanthropist," and in its issue of May 5, contrasts Owen's scheme favourably with a proposal put forward by Mr. Curwen, M.P., for the establishment of universal Savings Banks. On July 24 a small meeting of rich merchants and others was summoned by special invitation to the "George and Vulture," a City tavern, to hear Owen expound his plans for the employment of the poor; and a committee was formed to consider the scheme and collect subscriptions.[1] On the day following the meeting Owen began to write a long letter, which was published in the *Times* on the 30th of that month, and occupies just over five columns of close print in that journal. A short leader calling attention to the letter deprecates the illiberal attacks of a personal nature which had been made upon "this ardent philanthropist." These attacks, which appear to have been directed against his religious views, were barely noticed by Owen.[2] But he sets himself to answer in detail other objections which had been or might be made to the scheme, by means of an imaginary cross-examination, in which he naturally rides triumphant over all the arguments of his adversary. But the ghostly catechist does not put the one question which must have first suggested itself to any critic of flesh and blood—what will the scheme cost? There is no reference to this crucial point beyond a few casual assurances to encourage the doubters, such as "they will then [*sc.*, after establishing their own material and moral welfare] proceed to create that surplus which will be necessary to repay the interest of the capital expended in the purchase of the establishment," and again, "every shilling . . . will return five per cent. interest for the capital expended."

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 64.

[2] See *Report of the Select Committee* of 1817, pp. 16-18.

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[1] See the report in the *Times*, July 25, 1817.

[2] In his letter published in the *Times* of May 29, Owen had mentioned that his friend Mr. Southey had attacked his plan as not being founded on religion. Owen in reply contents himself with saying that "he understands true religion to be devoid of all sectarian notions," and that in his proposed establishments there would be full liberty for each to worship as he chose.

But apart from this noteworthy omission—noteworthy, above all, in one who had proved himself a successful man of business—Owen states fairly enough the main objections commonly urged against such a scheme as his, and his answers, if not convincing to the average sensual man, are informed with a kind of celestial common sense which was certainly more inspiring than the classical economy of the period; and, perhaps, in the last analysis not much more remote from the facts of human nature.

Thus when the ghostly catechist asks:—"But will men in a community of mutual and combined interests be as industrious as when employed for their individual gain?" Owen replies that where the experiment has been tried men have been found to work with more enthusiasm for their common interest, than for the sole profit of a master; and further that it would be easy on his method to instil into the children the principles of industry and zeal for the common good.

Again, the catechist asks, "Will not your model village of co-operation produce a dull uniformity of character?" And Owen replies, "No, for men brought up from birth in circumstances so favourable would become not a dull uniform race, but beings full of health, activity, and energy, with ample leisure, and such freedom from petty cares and restrictions as would enable them to develop to the full their noblest powers."

Again, the question is asked, "But should many of these villages be founded, will they not increase the products of agricultural and manufacturing labour, which are already too abundant, until no market can be found for them, and thus injure the present agriculture, manufactures, and commerce of the country?"

And the reply is given: "Is it possible that there can be too many productions desirable and useful to society? and is it not to the interest of all, that they should be produced with the least expense and labour, and with the smallest degree of misery and moral degradation to the working classes; and, of course, in the greatest abundance to the higher classes, in return for their wealth? It is surely to the interest of all, that everything should be produced with the least expense of labour, and so as to realise the largest portion of comfort to the producing classes."

Once more the catechist asks, "Will not these establishments tend to increase population, beyond the means of subsistence, too rapidly for the well-being of society?"

Owen's reply to this, the most searching objection, probably, of all which he had to meet, is in effect that the fear of population overtaking the means of subsistence is a chimera, arising entirely out of the faulty arrangements of existing society. Land, labour, and capital under proper direction may be made to produce fourfold what they do at present. Each labourer could readily produce food which would amount to more than ten times his own consumption, and the fear of over-population might be deferred until such time as the whole surface of the earth is one cultured garden-plot.[1]

In a postscript to this letter, already of portentous length, Owen describes a visit which he had paid the previous day (July 25, 1817) to Newgate. He was much impressed with the effect produced by the labours of Elizabeth Fry and her associates on the female inmates. Amongst the women he found order, cleanliness, good habits, and even some degree of comfort and cheerfulness. On the male side, where no such beneficent influence had been exerted, he finds the men and boys hopeless, degraded, and looked upon by all who had to do with them as utterly irreclaimable. And yet a few months before his visit the women, as he was assured by the prison officials, had seemed as completely lost to all sense of decency, as completely wanting in the ordinary social instincts, as wretched and as hopeless as the men.

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[1] It has been stated by G. J. Holyoake (*Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, Vol. I., p. 129) that Owen at a later period changed his views on the population question and became an advocate of prudential restriction on families. Holyoake gives no reference to Owen's published writings in support of his statement, and I can find no evidence for it. It is certain that when he wrote the *Book of the New Moral World*, some twenty years later, Owen still held the view that restrictions on the growth of population were unnecessary (*see* below, Chapter xxi.). Robert Dale Owen, however, became noted as an exponent of neo-Malthusian views.

Owen draws the obvious moral, that human nature is plastic to good influences as well as to bad ones: and that if these wretched prisoners had sinned, the blame is not theirs but that of the community. Here, said he, I saw a boy only sixteen years of age, in double irons. A great crime had been committed, but—my Lord Sidmouth[1] will forgive me—it is he who ought to have been double-ironed in place of the boy.

In a second letter, which occupied one entire page of the *Times* on August 9, Owen contrasts in detail the numerous advantages of life in his proposed villages as compared with the present conditions of existence of the poor in manufacturing towns, leading up to the conclusion "that the manufacturing towns are the abode of poverty, vice, crime and misery, while the proposed villages will ever be the abode of abundance, active intelligence, correct conduct, and happiness."[2]

These two letters preluded an address delivered in the "City of London Tavern" on August 14, 1817, in which Owen further developed and defended his plan. The address is remarkable for the extraordinary confidence which the speaker displays that by his way, and by his way only, can social salvation be found. Never was inspired prophet more sure of the faith that was in him: and never, it may be added, did prophet display a more exasperating tolerance towards those who differed from him.

"The principles and plan are even now so fixed and permanent, that hereafter the combined power of the world will be found utterly incompetent to extract them from the public mind. It will from this hour go on with an increasing celerity. 'Silence will not retard its course, and opposition will give increased celerity to its movements.'"[1]

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[1] Then Home Secretary.

[2] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 92.

In concluding his address he moved a series of resolutions proposing the appointment of a committee to investigate the plan, and calling for subscriptions to start an experimental colony forthwith. In order to encourage the rest, he added that he had just received from a donor who wished to remain anonymous, the offer of 1,500 acres of land suitable for the purposes of a colony.

Such is the famous Plan, the promulgation of which marks the beginning of modern Socialism. It is to be noted that, as originally presented in the Report to the Select Committee on the Poor Laws, Owen's scheme purported to aim simply at finding productive work for the unemployed poor. From the two letters, however, published in the newspapers on July 30 and August 9 respectively, and from the address delivered in the "London Tavern" a few days later, it is apparent that Owen's views have developed. He is now confident that when the experiment had once fairly started, the whole civilised world would gladly barter the cumbrous machinery of modern social life for the chance of living in these happy villages: "When Society shall discover its true interests it will permit these new establishments gradually to supersede" all other arrangements (p. 74). He himself looks forward to ending his days as "an undistinguished member of one of these happy villages," living upon twenty pounds a year and earning it.[1] The change will be effected easily and naturally. "No difficulty or obstacle of magnitude will be found in the whole progress. *The world knows and feels the existing evil: it will look at the new order of things proposed—approve—will the change—and it is done*" (p. 84).

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[1] *Autobiography* Vol. IA, p. 101.

But though Owen no longer conceals his belief that such an entire social reconstruction is inevitable in the near future, in more than one passage he deprecates any undue haste in carrying out the plan, or premature disturbance of existing institutions. Thus, "To accomplish, however, this great end, without injury to any one, it is absolutely necessary that all the existing institutions should be supported for a time, as they are; to enable them to protect, and beneficially to direct and control, the mighty change which is coming rapidly upon us and upon all nations; from which it is utterly impossible for us to escape; and from which, when it shall be properly understood, not one of us shall desire to escape" (p. 87).

Owen expressly disclaims originality for his plan—and indeed the attempt to apportion credit for originality in new ideas of any kind is apt to be unprofitable. Nevertheless an enquiry into the pedigree of ideas is always interesting, and often leads to results historically valuable. It is clear, to begin with, that Owen's scheme for regenerating mankind by dividing them into small communities, of about one thousand to two thousand persons apiece, and subjecting them to a wise paternal government, had its roots deep in his own personal history. New Lanark was for him the microcosm in which the discerning eye might trace the outlines of the larger cosmos. In his original report, he writes of the plan—

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 102.

"I beg to submit it as the result of daily experience among the poor and working classes, on an extensive scale, for twenty-five years" (p. 51).

There were not wanting precedents at that time for solving the problem of the poor by means of parochial houses of industry. Several schemes of the kind are described in the Report of the Committee of 1817. Thus the paupers of the Isle of Wight were collected into a House of Industry at Newport, which had some seventy acres of garden, arable, and grass land attached, the whole of which was cultivated by the labours of the paupers themselves. All the vegetables used were supplied by the garden; but the corn was sold in the outside market, as the most economical arrangement. There was further a small manufactory attached to the poorhouse: the paupers made all their own clothes, shoes, and linen, and manufactured also sacks and other articles the sale of which produced a net profit of £150 to £200 a year.[1] We hear also of similar Houses of Industry in Suffolk, with land attached to them,[2] and we have a detailed account of two parochial farms in Kent, at Benenden and Cranbrook. In the latter case, the farm, which consisted of 448 acres, had been in the occupation of the parish authorities for more than 21 years. Wheat, hops, potatoes, and turnips were grown, and part of the land was laid down in grass. There was a fair amount of live-stock. In October, 1816, there were 88 paupers in the farm-house, of whom 24 were children, and all who were able found work of one kind or another on the farm. The wheat grown was sufficient in good years to supply all the needs of the establishment; the hogs yielded 400 stone of pork a year; and generally, the farm supplied nearly the whole subsistence of the people.[1]

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[1] *Report*, pp. 95-102.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 165.

So widespread, indeed, at this time was the belief that it was the duty of those who administered the poor rates to provide productive employment for all those who could not obtain it in the outside market, that, as already said, the Committee of 1817 found it necessary to argue against such an interpretation of the Statutes. The circumstances of the time thus made it natural that Owen should look to the organisation of small self-sufficing communities working on the land as the proper solution of the problem of the unemployed.

Again, the parochial occupation of the land had been brought prominently before the public for many years from another quarter. Thomas Spence,[2] born at Aberdeen in 1750, was in 1775 earning his living as a schoolmaster in Newcastle-on-Tyne. It happened in that year that the Corporation of Newcastle had enclosed part of the Town Moor and let it off in small farms. The freemen of the borough claimed the rent as their property, carried their claim to the law courts, and were successful. This victory set Spence thinking, and in the November of this same year, 1775, he read a paper before the Newcastle Philosophical Society, "On the mode of administering the landed estates of the Nation as a Joint Stock property in Parochial Partnership by dividing the rent." In this paper Spence sought to demonstrate that the land belonged by inalienable right to all the inhabitants of the country ; and that the people might most conveniently resume possession of their inheritance through the existing parochial machinery—each parish, after due notice, taking charge of the land within its boundaries and administering it as a common estate for the benefit of all the parishioners. Being expelled from the Philosophical Society, and apparently finding Newcastle too small to hold him and his views, Spence came up to London and started a bookseller's shop in Chancery Lane, the rest of his life being spent in disseminating the knowledge of his Plan, by means of copper tokens, pamphlets, and various periodicals, of which *Pig's Meat, or Lessons for the Swinish Multitude*, is the best known. Spence naturally during his life paid a good many visits to prison ; and after his death in 1814 fear of the Spencean Clubs, which were founded to carry on his propaganda, was one of the main causes which led the Government in 1817 to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act.

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[1] *Report*, pp. 163-5.

[2] See *Memoir of T. Spence*, from Mackenzie's *History of Newcastle*, 1826; *The Rights of Man, as exhibited in a lecture read to the Philosophical Society of Newcastle*, 4th edition, 1793; also *Land for the Landless: Spence and Spence's plan*, by J. Morrison Davidson, 1896; *Precursors of Henry George*, by the same, 1904.

Now though Spence's methods and premises were widely different from Owen's, and though the objects aimed at were by no means identical, for Spence desired to do justice to the whole people, not to dispense charity to the unemployed poor, yet there was sufficient similarity between the two plans to make it probable that the later reformer was to some extent indebted to his predecessor. The limits of Owen's ideal community were about those of a fair-sized village, and he constantly suggests that his community might conveniently be started by the action of the parish authorities. At any rate to contemporaries the resemblance was sufficiently striking for Owen's name to be generally coupled with that of Spence. Thus the editor of the *Black Dwarf*, in commenting on the address of August 14, hails Owen as the successor of Spence, and marvels that whilst poor old Spence had been put in prison, and some of his followers were even then sharing the same fate, Owen "advertises his Spencean plan throughout the country" and has the ministers on his committee.[1]

But Owen has himself indicated the examples which most directly influenced his views. He had been much impressed by the accounts which had reached England of the extraordinary material prosperity achieved by the celibate religious communities of America. Of one of the best-known of these sects, that of the Shakers, Owen published a Sketch in 1818, including with it in the same volume Bellers's tract referred to below, his own Report of March, 1817, and his subsequent letters and speeches on the subject.[2] Some account of a less-known community, that of the Rappites, in Pennsylvania, had also appeared in this country a year or two before. An American traveller, John Melish, had visited the settlement in 1810 or 1811 and had written a fervid description of the goodfellowship and material well-being which he found there. The book had been reviewed at length in the *Philanthropist* in 1815, and it is tolerably certain that Owen had seen the review, if he had not actually read Melish's book. In his letter to the *Times* of May 29, in defending his plan from the charge of being impracticable, he writes that the feasibility of such a scheme "is partly exemplified by the conduct of a large body of persons in the State of Pennsylvania[1] who became associated together on the principles of combined labour and expenditure, and who by their experience of about ten years have discovered that the benefits in practice far exceed their most sanguine expectations."

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[1] *Black Dwarf*, Vol. I. (1817), p. 468.

[2] *New View of Society: Tracts relative to this subject*, etc., by Robert Owen. London, 1818.

But it was a seventeenth-century English writer who furnished the actual model for the villages of co-operation and unity. In his letter of July 25, after disclaiming originality for the principles on which his plan was founded, on the ground that they had been advanced by great thinkers long before him, Owen adds, "I have no claim even to priority in regard to the combinations of these principles in theory ; this belongs as far as I know, to John Bellers, who published them, and most ably recommended them to be adopted in practice, in the year 1696."[2]

Bellers's pamphlet, which, as already said, was reprinted by Owen in 1818, bears the title "Proposals for raising A Colledge of Industry of all useful Trades and Husbandry, &c.," by John Bellers, London, 1696.[3] In the introduction the author defines his aim as threefold : "First, Profit for the rich, (which will be life to the rest).

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[1] Rapp's Colony had originally started in 1804 near Zehenople in Pennsylvania, and subsequently, in 1815, removed to the site in Indiana on the banks of the Wabash, which was afterwards known as New Harmony.

[2] *Autobiography*, Vol. Ia, p. 76 (*cf.* Vol. I., p. 240).

[3] It is reprinted in Owen's *Autobiography*, Vol. Ia, pp. 155-181. There is a copy of the tract in the British Museum.

Secondly, A plentiful living for the poor without difficulty. Thirdly, A good education for youth, that may tend to prepare their souls into the nature of the good ground." Broadly his proposal is to found a self-sufficing community, consisting in the first instance of some three hundred persons. The necessary land and capital, which he estimates for a community of that size at £18,000, is to be found by a joint stock association, each member of which should have a share in the profits, and a vote in the government, in proportion to his subscription. But while the government of the college was to be vested solely in the rich men who found the money, and all surplus profits were to be divided amongst them, the first charge on the estate should be the maintenance in comfort of the workers, and the education of their children. As to the first point, Bellers estimates that the labour of 200 men, women, and children would be sufficient to provide food, clothing, and whatever else might be required for all the 300 members, leaving the labour of the other 100 to supply the profit on the capital invested. In order to make the community self-sufficing he furnishes a table of the trades which should be included, and the number which should be assigned to each—thus, 3 tailors, 1 baker, 1 brewer, 4 cooks, 6 nurses, 3 ploughmen, 3 shepherds, 20 linen and 20 woollen spinners and carders, and so on. There will be no need of money in the community. "This colledge-fellowship will make labour, and not money, the standard to value all necessaries by; and though money hath its conveniences, in the common way of living, it being a pledge among men for want of credit; yet not without its mischiefs. . . . Money in the body politic, is what a crutch is to the natural body, crippled; but when the body is sound, the crutch is but troublesome: So when the particular interest is made a publick interest, in such a colledge money will be of little use there."

But though money will have no place within the college walls, the rich, in addition to receiving the interest on their capital, may if they so choose, live in the college, or they may buy a "colledge commons" for any child for whom they wish to provide a decent living. As to the poor, they will benefit by the scheme yet more abundantly: "From being poor, they will be made rich, by enjoying all things needful in health or sickness, single or married, wife and children; and if parents die, their children well educated, and preserved from misery, and their marrying incourag'd, which is now generally discourag'd."

To secure this safe competence and complete freedom from care, many workmen, Bellers thinks, would prefer life in the college to the prospect of much better wages outside.

Lastly, the children are to be educated. And on the question of education Bellers's views are remarkably sound, and curiously like Owen's own: "Tho' rules, as well as words, must be understood to make a complete scholar, yet considering words lie in the memory, and rules in the understanding; and that children have first memory before understanding; by that nature shows that memory is to be first used; and that in the learning of language, words should be first learned, and afterwards rules to put them together; children first learning the words of their mother-tongue, and then sentences; . . .

And therefore I think vocabulary and dictionary is to be learnt before accidence and grammar; and children's reading and discoursing one to another, give a deeper impression than reading to themselves." And again, "At four or five years old, besides reading, boys and girls might be taught to knit, spin, &c. and bigger boys, turning, &c.; and beginning young they would make the best artists; and by being upon business, tho' slight, it improves their reasons by sensible demonstration (which is sooner learned than any rational demonstration without it. . . .) . . . . Thus the hand employed brings profit, the reason used in it makes wise, and the will subdued makes them good."

Bellers does not enter into much detail as to the arrangement of the buildings in his proposed college. But he mentions that there must be four separate sleeping-wards—for the young men and boys, the young women and girls, the married folk, and the sick and lame. There is also to be a common dining-hall, where the boys and girls are to wait upon the men and women at meals. The tract concludes by citing a series of objections to the scheme and triumphantly refuting them.

It seems probable that this last feature in Bellers's tract suggested the similar recital of objections and their answers which forms the prominent feature of Owen's letter of the 25th July—his first production, apparently, after reading the earlier tract. And the enlargement in Owen's views between March and July may plausibly be traced to the same source. For Bellers's plan was not intended for a particular time of distress, or for the benefit of particular persons out of employment. He boldly advocates industrial communism as the royal solution of all the troubles and difficulties of the working classes, whilst he quaintly justifies the proposal to assign the surplus profits to the capitalists on the ground that "the rich have no other way of living, but by the labour of others; as the landlord by the labour of his tenants, and the merchants and tradesmen by the labour of the mechanics, except they turn levellers, and set the rich to work with the poor."

The resemblance in its broad lines between Bellers's "College of Industry" and Owen's village of co-operation is unmistakable, and as will be seen in the next chapter, Owen shortly proceeded still further to develop his Plan upon the lines laid down by Bellers.

Probably no reforms so drastic were ever put before the nation under such respectable patronage. Owen, as he tells us, received friendly encouragement from the Ministry, and was permitted to place on his committee the names of nearly all the great personages in Church and State.[1] The leading newspapers gladly opened their columns to him, praised his benevolence and his patriotism, and expressed the desire that his scheme should be fairly tried.

But the praise of the *Times* and other London journals was not perhaps altogether disinterested, for Owen tells us that he used to purchase thirty thousand copies of newspapers containing his letters and addresses and post them to the clergy of every parish in the kingdom, and that on one occasion the bulk of the additional newspapers was so great that the mail-coaches were delayed twenty minutes in starting from St. Martin's-le-Grand. These newspapers, Owen tells us, were franked by Lord Lascelles, who had helped in the preliminary negotiations for introducing the Factory Bill of 1819 into the House of Commons, and subsequently spoke against that measure.

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[1] According to the report in the *Times* of August 15, the committee proposed by Owen included the archbishops of England and Ireland, the ministers, the judges, the bishops, the Dukes of Rutland, Wellington, Bedford, and numerous other peers; Sir F. Burdett, Wilberforce, W. Smith, Thomas Babington, Coke of Norfolk (afterwards Earl of Leicester), Huskisson, Walter Scott, Dugald Stewart, Robert Southey, and many other well-known names.

As the *Times* and the *Morning Post* at that time, including the stamp duty, cost sevenpence a copy, Owen found little difficulty in the course of these two months, August and September, 1817, in spending the sum of four thousand pounds in securing publicity for his views.[1]

The insinuation made by Jonathan Wooler, the editor of the *Black Dwarf*, that this lavish expenditure was defrayed out of public funds, was probably quite unfounded. Wooler professed to believe that the ministers stood behind Owen, hoping that the publication of the plan might at least do something to allay public discontent—might serve, to employ his own simile, as a tub thrown to the whale. But if Wooler in making this charge allowed his better judgment to be overborne by his desire to discredit the hated Government, his criticism of Owen's proceedings is in other respects acute and by no means unfair. We have already seen that he classes Owen as a disciple of Thomas Spence, the bugbear of the Ministry. He goes on to pay a warm tribute of respect to Owen's sincerity and his "enthusiastic benevolence." But he points out that the plan aims, in plain terms, at establishing "a nursery for men," a kind of pauper barracks, where men, women and children would be reduced to mere automata; their feelings, passions and opinions measured out by rule; working in common, living in common, and having all things common except their wives; with abundance of food and clothing; but without liberty or hope of anything beyond.

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 156.

Again, the *Black Dwarf* not unfairly points out that Owen was quite unable to meet his opponents in argument. If any one criticised the scheme adversely, Owen's only reply was to accuse the critic of ignorance and inexperience. "With Mr. Owen it would be useless to argue. He is only calculated to represent his system. A defence of it is beyond his powers. He therefore wisely shuns the replication, and persists in asserting that his plan is the wisest, best and most admirable scheme that ever entered into any human comprehension. It is—because it is. 'See what a pretty plan I have drawn out *on paper*. At what equal distances I have placed such and such buildings. How imposing they are. There are all the offices, attached and detached, that could be wished. There are schools and lecture rooms, and Committee rooms and brew-houses and workhouses and granaries. There you will put the women, there the men and there the children. They will be called to dinner every day regularly, and they will be clothed and taught and not worked very much. Oh, how happy they must be! There is nothing to prevent it whatever. All the bad passions will be eradicated, and I should like to live there myself. Nobody that *understands* it can for a moment object to it. Why, there is to be a chapel in which only the *truth* is to be taught; and schools where nothing but *useful* knowledge is to be inculcated.' Such is the reasoning Mr. Owen condescends to use: and if he had to make the beings who are to inhabit his paradises, as well as to make the laws that should regulate them, there can be no doubt that he would manage everything extremely well."

That is how the plan impressed a contemporary, himself an ardent worker on the side of the people, and ready when the occasion came to suffer imprisonment in their cause. If we compare this utterance with the writer's venomous attacks on Sidmouth and the Government generally, we shall see that the criticism, though searching, is by no means unkindly. The *Black Dwarf's* final advice to Owen is to "*let the Poor alone.* The working bee can always find a hive"; and if the philanthropist yearns to fill his barracks, let him take the pampered sinecurists, the hungry placemen, the public pensioners and a few well-fed bishops. These gentlemen would scarcely do enough work to pay for their keep; but if they lived upon twenty pounds a head, they would at least free themselves from the gout, and the country from the cost of their maintenance.[1]

The other Reformers took much the same line. Thus Hone writes: "It is the Spencean plan doubly dipped"; and again, "Mr. Owen conceives that all human beings are so many plants which require to be reset. He accordingly proceeds to dibble them in squares, etc."[2] Cobbett finds the plan "nothing short of a species of monkery," and asks whether "the novices when once *confirmed* are to regard their character of Pauper as indelible?" and whether "the Sisterhood and Brotherhood are to form distinct bodies, or to live together promiscuously?"[1]

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[1] *Black Dwarf*, August 20, 1817.

[2] Hone's *Reformists' Register*, August 23 and 30, 1817.

The general trend of criticism on Owen's speech at the meeting of August 14, was to the same effect. The chief speaker was Major Torrens, who dwelt upon the difficulties which must ensue with a population relieved from the direct pressure of subsistence, but left free to multiply. Then followed several prominent members of the Reform party—Hunt, Wooler and Alderman Waithman, the latter moving an amendment to Owen's resolutions, calling upon the Legislature to reduce public expenditure and adopt other measures to relieve the present distress. No one spoke in favour of Owen's plan. Waithman's amendment was put to the meeting, but declared to be lost on a show of hands. The chairman's impartiality was, however, loudly questioned, and a vote of thanks to him proposed by Owen was lost. The *Times* report ends with the significant remark that Watson, Preston, and Thistlewood were present.[2]

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[1] Cobbett's *Weekly Political Pamphlet*, August 2, 1817. Cobbett was at this time in America, having fled from the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act and the general reign of terror. The letter from which the above extracts are taken is dated "North Hampstead, Long Island, June 13th, 1817," and the criticism, therefore, is obviously directed to Owen's first Report.

[2] *Times*, August 15, 1817. Watson, Preston, and Thistlewood had been amongst the ringleaders of the Spa Fields' Riot, mentioned on p. 214. Thistlewood was hanged in 1820 for his connection with the Cato Street Conspiracy.

CHAPTER XI

1817—1819

SUCH, then, was Owen's position in the middle of August, 1817. He found indeed little favour with the party of reform. They viewed his plans with half contemptuous tolerance, when they did not actively oppose them. They disapproved of the scheme on economic grounds; they disapproved still more of the undemocratic character of the government proposed for the colonies. Owen's personal experience had led him to regard a benevolent paternal despotism as the ideal constitution, and this element, as we have seen, was strongly repugnant to men of the type of Cobbett, Hone and Wooler. Moreover, Owen's friendly relations with the ministers were little likely to prepossess the Radicals in his favour. And in any case they felt that, even if a scheme of the kind proposed were feasible, it could but act as a temporary palliative, and must in the long run be harmful to the cause of progress, by diverting attention from the real remedies for the distress.

On the other hand Owen could count on sympathy and encouragement from many persons high in Church and State: he numbered several of the bishops amongst his friends; the most influential of the London journals had given flattering notices and had protested sympathy with his plans. Lord Liverpool had invited him to an interview and expressed his interest and approval. From the fact that Owen was allowed to nominate the members of the Ministry on his committee, it would almost seem that the Government were not without hopes that good might come of the scheme. The distress was real enough and serious enough ; and, like a patient suffering from an incurable disease, ministers may have thought their straits sufficiently desperate to justifiy resort even to quack remedies.

But again, whatever we may think of its later development, in its original form Owen's plan could scarcely be classed as a quack remedy. Farm colonies had already been tried with good results, as we have seen, in the Isle of Wight and in Kent. Similar colonies were started, with some measure of success, in Holland and Belgium a year or two later. And the hope of bringing together vacant land and unemployed labour has continued to inspire successive generations of social reformers down to the present day. Owen's plan, regarded merely as a scheme for the employment of the poor, was so far from being absurd or purely Utopian, that no less an authority than Ricardo was in favour of the experiment having a fair trial. At a public meeting to promote Owen's scheme held in June, 1819, Ricardo allowed his name to be placed on the committee, explaining that he did so because, though he did not go all the way with Owen, nor expect of the scheme all the good which Owen expected of it, yet in a limited degree he thought it likely to "succeed, and to produce, when it did succeed, considerable happiness, comfort and morality, by giving employment and instruction to the lower classes."[1]

Later in the same year, on Sir W. de Crespigny's motion for a Select Committee to enquire into Owen's plan, Ricardo voted with the small minority in favour of the motion.[2]

Briefly, then, up to the date of his second meeting on August 21, 1817, Owen had on his side the bulk of the respectable classes, and the more influential portion of the London press. He had, too, the cordial sympathy and respect of many amongst the political economists and reformers who were definitely opposed to his plan. His conspicuous goodwill to all mankind and his splendid record in the past spoke for him; and he probably does not greatly exaggerate the case when he says of himself, that at this time he was "beyond comparison the most generally popular character living."[3]

But Owen had other enemies besides the Reformers and the economists. Southey, as we have seen, had already discovered that the system was not founded on religious principles. Indeed, though Owen had refrained from defining his attitude precisely in the *Essays on the Formation of Character*, he had made it sufficiently clear that his own religious beliefs were far removed from orthodoxy. To a mind like Owen's the mere suppression, even from no ignoble motive, of unpopular opinions must have seemed like treason to the truth. He was troubled by no doubts as to the perfect reason-

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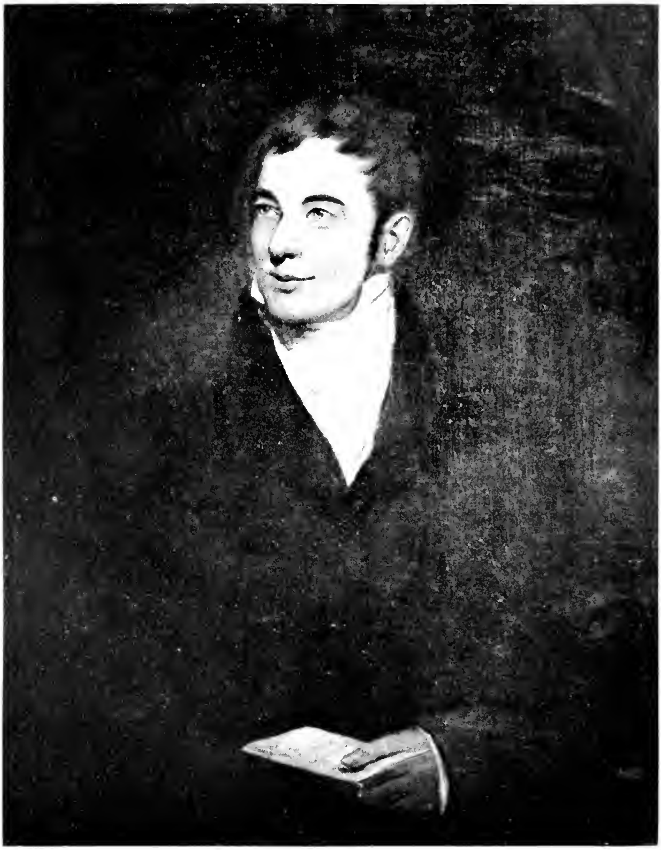
[1] Report of meeting in *Times* of June 28, 1819.

[2] *Hansard*, debate of December 16, 1819. On this occasion, however, Ricardo explained that he was at war with Owen's system, but wanted to know more about spade husbandry.

[3] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 189.



From the portrait by Pickersgill, in the possession of Mr. William Tebb. Painted in 1826.

ROBERT OWEN.

ableness of his own views on these matters; he probably saw no reason why any portion of the message with which he was charged should be any longer withheld. The attacks of the clerical party thus combined with his own instinctive aversion to reticence of any kind to impel him to speak out. *Truth*, as he said, *will prevail.*

He came, then, to the meeting of August 21 full of the high resolve boldly to confront his accusers, and to leave unspoken no jot or tittle of his message to mankind.[1] The first part of the address travelled over familiar ground, and was concerned mainly with demonstrating the immeasurable advantages possessed by his system over the present state of society, or of any scheme yet devised for its amendment. In a passage informed with sincere feeling he sought to show that when each man was a member of a huge family, and all worked together for the common good, even death would be robbed of more than half its terrors. The mourners would find "consolation in the certain knowledge that within their own immediate circle they have many, many others remaining; and around them on all sides, as far as the eye can reach, or imagination extend, thousands on thousands, in strict, intimate, and close union, are ready and willing to offer them aid and consolation. No orphan left without protectors; no insult or oppression can take place, nor any evil 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?'"[2]

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[1] The address, it should be remembered, was written out beforehand.

[2] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 114.

He then suddenly changed his tone. "It may now be asked, 'If the new arrangements proposed really possess all the advantages that have been stated, why have they not been adopted in universal practice during all the ages which have passed?'

"'Why should so many countless millions of our fellow-creatures, through each successive generation, have been the victims of ignorance, of superstition, of mental degradation, and of wretchedness?'

"My friends, a more important question has never yet 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 disunion, error, crime and misery?

"Behold that victim! On this day—in this hour—even now—shall those bonds be burst asunder, never more to reunite while the world shall last. What the consequences of this daring deed shall be to myself, I am as indifferent about as whether it shall rain or be fair to-morrow. Whatever may be the consequences, I will now perform my duty to you, and to the world; and should it be the last act of my life, I shall be well content, and know that I have lived for an important purpose.

"Then, my friends, I tell you, that hitherto you have been prevented from even knowing what happiness really is, solely in consequence of the errors—gross errors—that have been combined with the fundamental notions of every religion that has hitherto been taught to men. And, in consequence, they have made man the most inconsistent, and the most miserable being in existence. By the errors of these systems he has been made a weak, imbecile animal; a furious bigot and fanatic; or a miserable hypocrite; and should these qualities be carried, not only into the projected villages, but *into Paradise itself, a Paradise would be no longer found!* . . .

"Therefore, unless the world is now prepared to dismiss all its erroneous religious notions, and to feel the justice and necessity of publicly acknowledging the most unlimited religious freedom, it will be futile to erect villages of union and mutual co-operation; for it will be vain to look on this earth for inhabitants to occupy them, *who can understand how to live in the bond of peace and unity*; or who can love their neighbour as themselves, whether he be Jew or Gentile, Mahomedan or Pagan, Infidel or Christian. Any religion that creates one particle of feeling short of this, is *false*; and must prove a curse to the whole human race!"[1]

Such was the famous denunciation of all the religions of the world, to which Owen himself was accustomed to refer as the turning-point in his life.

In the debate which followed the address the religious question was scarcely referred to, the chief speakers being again Major Torrens, Wooler, Waithman and the veteran reformer Major Cartwright. In the event Owen's resolutions were lost, and Alderman Waithman's amendment—ascribing the distress to heavy taxation and bad Government and calling upon the Ministry for retrenchment and reform—which had been declared to be lost at the previous meeting, was again put to the vote and carried by a large majority.

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 115, 116.

But the effect of Owen's frankness was seen in the attitude of the press. The *Times*, which up to this point had continued to speak with enthusiasm of Owen's philanthropy, and had more than once expressed a desire to see his scheme fairly tried, opened its leader of August 22 with the significant words—"The curtain dropt yesterday upon Mr. Owen's drama, not soon, it is probable to be again lifted up. . . . Mr. Owen promised a Paradise to mankind, but, as far as we can understand, not such a Paradise as a sane mind would enjoy, or a disciple of Christianity could meditate without terror."

Owen tells us that on the day after the speech he met Brougham, who exclaimed, "How the devil, Owen, could you say what you did yesterday at your public meeting! If any of us" (meaning the Liberal party in the House of Commons) "had said half as much, we should have been burned alive—and here you are quietly walking as if nothing had occurred!"[1]

Again, two years later, in the debate in the House of Commons on December 16, 1819, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in opposing Sir W. de Crespigny's motion for a Select Committee to enquire into Owen's scheme, found his weightiest argument in the passage above quoted from the address of August 21.

There can be no doubt, then, that Owen's outspoken denunciation of current religious systems did much to alienate those of his friends who occupied high places in the world. But it is probable that his own extravagance and want of judgment did still more to discredit his cause with many who would have remained unaffected by the proof of his unorthodoxy. Owen had from the first shown himself incapable of answering or even apparently of understanding the objections urged against his scheme, especially the two cardinal objections—the enormous expenditure involved, and the danger of population, deprived of the natural checks, increasing beyond the limits of subsistence. In his letter of August 19, he dismisses the arguments brought forward by Major Torrens and others at the meeting a few days previously as "little to the purpose, futile and contrary to daily experience, and evincing much real ignorance of the subject," and compares his excited critics at the conclusion of the meeting to "so many individuals in a very ill-managed lunatic asylum." A final letter, published in the newspapers of September 10, 1817, begins, "The adjourned public meeting, to consider the plan I have proposed, has passed; and from its commencement to the end, it far more than satisfied all my wishes. Each prominent figure moved correctly to the wire that was touched for the purpose. The opposition to the measures recommended to these meetings for their concurrence has well accomplished the part assigned to it, and has thereby forwarded all my views, and brought the adoption of the plan in its whole extent some years nearer than otherwise could have been possible. My chief apprehension previous to the meeting was that there would not be a sufficiently decisive stand made by its opponents, to elicit all the arguments which could be urged against it; for I was anxious the public should discover all their fatuity and weakness."

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 164.

And again, "The gentlemen who opposed the plan at the public meetings, (for whom, however, I do not entertain one unsocial feeling,) did not surely imagine I wished to have the opinions of the ill-trained and uninformed on any of the measures intended for their relief and amelioration. No! On such subjects, until they shall be instruced in better habits, and made rationally intelligent, their advice can be of no value."[1]

Language of this character was clearly more calculated to alienate friends than to conciliate opponents. Nor was the unhappy impression produced by this arrogance mitigated by the nature of the proposals as still further developed in the letter of September 10. Owen now makes it clearer than before that he aimed at nothing less than an early and complete revolution of the social state. The persons for whom these villages of co-operation are designed are no longer simply the unemployed, for beyond these he enumerates three other categories, viz.; II. The able-bodied working class without property. III. The working class with property ranging from £100 apiece. IV. The rich, who are to live by employing the members of Class II. to work for them. This further development of the scheme is obviously borrowed from Bellers; and like Bellers, Owen enters into considerable detail as to the voting powers, the appointment of committees, and the general machinery of government for these self-sufficing communities. The letter concludes with an extraordinary schedule, showing how in the present state of society, divided as it is by religious and political differences, union and stability can be ensured by founding a sufficient number of communities to embrace at once every possible combination of religious belief and political conviction. Thus Community No. I. may consist exclusively of persons who are at once Arminian Methodists and violent Ministerialists, whilst No. 50 may consist of Jews who are moderate Reformers, and so on with all other possible combinations.[1] Finally, in an address dated September 19, he announced that the New State of Society Enrolment Office would shortly be opened at Temple Chambers, Fleet Street, and that meanwhile Books of Enrolment were to be found at Longman's and other leading publishers.[2]

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 119, 120.

After the publication of his final address of September 19, Owen seems to have rested for a time from his public labours. Probably his business and domestic affairs claimed his attention. In the following year, however, he published *A New View of Society: tracts relative to this subject*, which contains a reprint of Bellers's tract, the sketch of the Shaker communities already referred to, together with the Report of March, 1817, and the public addresses and letters to the newspapers of the same year. He also wrote in March, 1818, the two letters to Lord Liverpool and the Master Manufacturers respectively, on the Employment of Children in Factories; and in May of the same year he indited from New Lanark a long letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury on the Union of Churches and Schools.

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[1] This schedule was a most unfortunate production. An enemy who wished to caricature Owen's views could hardly have succeeded better. An enthusiastic admirer writing in warm praise of the three addresses, adds, "always excepted the abominable table of Sects . . . (it has) disgusted (*unnecessarily*) every one, and conciliated none." (Letter of April 30, 1818, Manchester Correspondence.)

[2] The address of September 19 (reprinted in *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 138-41) was not published in the *Times*. It appears, however, in No. III. of a series of contemporary broadsheets (undated). No. III. contains the Second Address (of August 21), the letter of September 10, and this short address, and bears on the outer cover an intimation that it was to be purchased from Dr. Wilkes, New State of Society Enrolment Office, Temple Chambers. I cannot ascertain whether this office was ever opened, or whether the *Mirror of Truth*, a fortnightly paper announced in the address of September 19, ever made its appearance.

It should be added that a postscript to the letter of September 10, explaining that Owen was not an enemy to true religion, but merely to all sectarian manifestations of the religious spirit, which appears in the *Autobiography*, (Vol. IA, p. 137), is not to be found in the original letter as published in the *Times*, nor in the contemporary broadsheet.

A great part of the summer and autumn of this year, 1818, was spent in a Continental tour, under the guidance for some months of Professor Pictet, himself a well-known savant, and member of a Genevan family distinguished for two or three generations in scientific investigation. Pictet introduced Owen to Cuvier, who was at the time in London, and they went to Paris together. Owen carried letters of introduction from the Duke of Kent to the Duke of Orleans (afterwards King Louis-Philippe), with whom he held a long and confidential conversation, and to other personages. In the company of Cuvier and Pictet he had frequent meetings with La Place, Humboldt and other men of science, paid a visit to the Academy, and conversed with many of the most distinguished men and women in Paris.

After six weeks Owen was joined by his sisters-in-law, and, accompanied by Pictet, the whole party set out for Geneva. They drove across the Jura, and Owen records one amusing little incident on the journey. The weather being fine, the whole party got out to walk, the young women in front, Owen and Pictet conversing at some distance behind. The two latter in passing a group of well-dressed young women at the door of a house, heard them making merry over the outlandish garb—riding habits and hats of the late Georgian era—worn by the English ladies. On rejoining his sisters-in-law Owen tell us that he was much amused to receive in turn their comments on the ridiculous costume worn by the natives whom they had just passed.

At Geneva Owen met Madame Neckar, Madmoiselle de Stael, Sismondi, and others. From thence he went on to pay the visits already mentioned [1] to the schools of Oberlin, Pestalozzi, and Fellenberg.

At Frankfort Owen wrote two Memorials—one dated September 20, 1818, to the Governments of Europe and America, the other dated October 22, to the Allied Powers assembled in Congress at Aix-la-Chapelle. He met there many prominent statesmen and politicians and expounded his system to the members of the Germanic Diet at a banquet given, as he tells us, in his honour. Here too he introduced himself to the Czar (Alexander I., elder brother of Owen's guest, the Grand Duke Nicholas) as the latter was leaving his hotel, and offered him a copy of the two Memorials. The Czar had no pocket big enough to hold the papers and refused to accept them at the moment, asking Owen to call on him that evening. The brusqueness of his tone offended Owen, and he refrained from accepting the invitation. Owen entrusted copies of his Memorial, however, to Lord Castlereagh, one of the British representatives at Aix-la-Chapelle, to present to the Congress, and he learnt afterwards from various sources that they were considered to be amongst the most important documents laid before that assembly.[2]

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[1] Above pages 126-8.

[2] *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 186, 188.

These Memorials recapitulated briefly the main points of the argument developed at length in the *Essays on the Formation of Character*, and the *Addresses* of 1817, in a series of three propositions:—

(1) That the introduction of machinery had rendered possible the production of riches enough and much more than enough for all human wants.

(2) That mankind now possessed the requisite means and knowledge to enable them to mould to their will the characters of the next generation.

(3) That it is to the interest of Governments and individuals to put that knowledge into practice without delay.

The Memorials were carefully and temperately worded. There is no mention of quadrangular villages, or the pernicious influence of religion; and the egotism which marked the addresses of 1817 is almost entirely absent. But nothing can repress Owen's optimism.

"Any attempt," he writes, "to stop or retard the introduction of these measures will be unavailing. Already the principles and consequent practice are placed effectually beyond the power of human assault. It will be found that silence cannot now retard their progress, and that opposition will give increased celerity to their movements."[1]

In 1819 Owen renewed his propaganda. In the early part of that year he wrote an Address to the Working Classes which was published at length in two London papers—the *Star*[2] and the *Examiner*.[3] In making an appeal to one particular section of the community, Owen is careful to explain that he does not seek to set class against class. He takes occasion to assure the working classes, from personal knowledge, that the rich are not animated by any ill-will against them, but like them are bound in the chains of traditional habits and sentiments. His message to the workers is that, properly understood, the interest of rich and poor is the same; that the prevalent ideas and existing social arrangements are destructive of the well-being of all alike; and that the true knowledge of human nature and its potentialities, now at length revealed, furnishes the means of a complete social revolution, to be effected without violence, with the help and good-will of all alike. The address ends with a characteristic sentence.

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 212.

[2] April 15, 1819.

[3] April 25, 1819.

"That the past ages of the world present the history of human irrationality only, and that we are but now advancing toward the dawn of reason, and to the period when the mind of man shall be born again."

The address seems to have excited little attention, though the *Examiner* had a friendly leader on the subject. But an effort was made by Owen's friends in the latter part of this year to bring his plans once more before the public. The most influential of these friends was the Duke of Kent, son of George III. and father of Queen Victoria. The Duke appears to have been genuinely impressed by Owen's character, and convinced of his power for good. The Duke, with his brother, the Duke of Sussex, was in the habit at this time, as Owen tells us, of coming to his house and discussing his social experiments with him. The two brothers would inspect the model of the new villages, and marvel at the set of eight cubes which Owen had caused to be made, illustrating the proportions of the different classes into which existing society was divided—the working classes being represented at the base by a cube of $3\frac{5}{16}$ inches a side, whilst the apex was formed by a cube, representing the Royal Family, the Lords spiritual and temporal, whose side measured only three-sixteenths of an inch.[1]

Further, it appeared that Owen had interested himself in the endeavour to straighten out the Duke's finances. The letters written by the Duke to Owen in this year show the terms upon which the two men stood to each other. Thus on September 13, 1819, the Duke wrote, in answer to a letter from Owen, "With regard to my own finances, I admit the justice of all you say," and then proceeded to recount his efforts to live within his income, and to explain the extreme difficulty, in his position, of effecting any substantial retrenchment in the expenses of his establishment.[2]

A few weeks later Owen invited the Duke and Duchess to accept his hospitality at New Lanark. The invitation came a few months after the birth of the infant

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[1] The series of cubes (nine in all, since they included a cube representing the whole population, $3\frac{15}{16}$ inches a side) was based upon Table No. 4, "An attempt to Exhibit a General view of Society," given in Colquhoun's *Resources of the British Empire*, first published in 1814. Owen gives at least two descriptions of the series of cubes, (1) in the *Millennial Gazette* for August 1, 1857, p. 77, where the numerical proportions are given, and (2) in *Robert Owen's Journal*, Vol. III., p. 191, where the sizes of the cubes are stated. The two tables do not quite agree with each other, and neither appears exactly to correspond with the figures given in Colquhoun's published work; but the essential point is that society is represented in a pyramidal form, the wealth and dignities and privileges of the few rich broadbased upon the millions of the industrious classes.

[2] The letter is given in full in the *Rational Quarterly Review*, p. 28.

Victoria,[1] and the Duke, in a letter dated October 8, excuses himself at the moment from accepting the invitation on account of the Duchess's health, adding, "but if, upon the Meeting of Parliament things take that turn which it is to be hoped they will do—viz: that your judicious plans to remedy the evil of the want of productive employment are taken up by the Government, or the majority of independent members, in such a manner as to ensure them a fair discussion, there will be no difficulty whatever, even if the Duchess should be unable to accompany me on account of the season of the year, for me to run over by myself and make myself so far master of the whole system, as to be able to deliver my sentiments upon it.

"With respect to myself, be assured that I consider the trouble and fatigue of the journey as *nothing: nor would the Duchess*, but for the critical moment for her health, immediately after nursing, which requires so much attention.

"With regard to the *plain and simple* accommodation you will have to offer us, I speak equally her feelings and my own, when I say it is *what we should prefer* to any other, accompanied by the sincerity of that welcome which we know Mrs. Owen and yourself would give us.

"For *my own* part I am already *convinced* that what I should see on the spot would *amply repay me* for any little trouble and expense the journey might occasion me; and the Duchess is as much prepossessed in favour of the thing as I am."[2]

Sir W. de Crespigny's motion was lost in the House of Commons, and no debate seems to have been initiated in the Lords, so that the opportunity never came for the Duke to fulfil his promise, and his sudden death in the following year, 1820, put an end to the project.

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[1] May 24, 1819.

[2] *Rational Quarterly Review*, p. 32.

Much of the correspondence with the Duke is occupied with the visits to New Lanark of General Desseaux, Sir W. de Crespigny and others, of the projected visit of "my illustrious relative, Prince Leopold," and of the advent of Dr. Grey Macnab, the Duke's own physician, whom he had despatched to New Lanark to examine and report upon the establishment. Macnab's enthusiastic account, already referred to, and the Duke's patronage no doubt did much to rehabilitate Owen's reputation amongst many who had been alienated by his proceedings in 1817.

But the Duke did more to help on the cause. On June 26 of this year 1819, a meeting was held under his presidency in the Freemasons' Hall, to appoint a committee to report upon Owen's plan. In his opening remarks the Duke dwelt upon the fact that, whatever Owen's private opinions might be, he allowed the fullest religious liberty to all at New Lanark. But he seems to have spoken in vain. The names of the Archbishop and several bishops were proposed for the committee, but in the final list of the committee published a few days later, the Lords Spiritual are not represented. For the rest, the committee included the Dukes of Kent and Sussex, Sir W. de Crespigny, Sir Robert Peel, John Smith and several other Members of Parliament, Major Torrens, and David Ricardo.

On August 11, the committee issued an appeal to the public for subscriptions, in order that an experimental establishment might be started. The amount needed for the experiment was £100,000. On August 23 they published an address, explaining and justifying their confidence in Owen's plan. The address begins by insisting upon Owen's long experience in the management of men and of business concerns, and describing in outline the results achieved at New Lanark under his direction. The only new point made here is that a certain portion of land at New Lanark was kept under garden cultivation by the mill operatives,[1] and that the proposed villages of co-operation would differ from New Lanark mainly in the proportions assigned to agriculture and manufactures respectively. The address then proceeded to state and answer certain objections which had been raised to the scheme. The first and greatest difficulty is presented by Owen's unfortunately notorious opinions in religious matters. On this the committee remark that Owen had never been known to interfere with the religious opinions of those in his employment; that he and his partners had for many years paid for the services of a Gaelic-speaking minister, to provide for the religious needs of the Highland workmen: "that Mr. Owen's own house is a house of daily prayer; that he is the father of a large and well-regulated moral family; that his conduct appears to be free from reproach, and that his character is distinguished by active benevolence, perfect sincerity, and undisturbed tranquillity of temper."

To the objection that Owen's plan involved a community of goods, the reply is made that, whatever Owen may have said or written about communism, he does not regard it as an essential feature of his plan, nor would he withhold his co-operation and superintendence from the experiment if communism were vetoed.[1] Further, there need be no anxiety on this score, since community of profits from land is not possible under the existing laws. The objection that the plan contemplates equalisation of ranks, and the still more serious objection to the proposed scheme on Malthusian principles, alike fall to the ground if there is to be no community of goods, but each man is to receive the reward of his own labour, and the due profit of his invested capital—neither less nor more.

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[1] The amount of land under cultivation at New Lanark was small. From the report of the Leeds Deputation we learn that it amounted to two hundred and forty acres, for a population of two thousand five hundred persons.

The proposal to have meals in common may seem to savour of communism ; but it is really, the committee explain, a matter simply of convenience and economy; a common table need not be insisted upon ; "the workmen might receive their wages in money, and the mode in which they dispose of them would be entirely at their own option."

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[1] Owen's original plan was purely communistic. The principle on which it was founded was that of "combined labour and expenditure"; the colonists were to labour in a "community of interests"; there would be no disputes about the division of property, because all could procure "the necessaries and comforts of life in abundance," and would no more wish to accumulate an excess of such goods, than they wish in the present state of society to take more than their share of water or air. Even the superintendents and governors were to work without salary (Report reprinted in *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 71, 72, etc.). Later, in his letter of September 6, in classifying the members of the proposed communities according to the property which they brought in with them, Owen departed from the simplicity of his original plan. Men who contributed capital were to have superior accommodation, in proportion to the amount of their capital ; and the workmen of the 2nd Class, by whose labour the rich were to be supported, were to receive at the end of five years £100, to invest in the community, or to enable them to start in the outside world if they wish to leave the communal life. But even here Owen does not apparently contemplate the actual payment of wages or that there would be any need for money within the community.

In brief, the committee contemplated a joint-stock enterprise on a large scale, which should pay interest and profit on capital and wages to labour ; an enterprise differing from ordinary commercial enterprises mainly in its novel combination of agricultural and manufacturing pursuits, and in the character of its labourers. The ordinary business house takes its labourers in the prime of life and takes the best it can get. This novel commercial enterprise, which repudiated the title of charitable, was to find its recruits amongst the ranks of the unemployed poor—the men and women who had so far failed in the battle of life. Owen's original scheme was no doubt Utopian in so far as it took too little account of the existing facts of human nature. Moreover, it was based on fundamentally false premises. Its author's imagination had been entirely dominated by the enormous multiplication of productive power in the region of manufactures brought about by the mechanical inventions of the past generation. And he seems tacitly to have assumed that new inventions would be forthcoming which would in like manner multiply the productiveness of human labour when applied to the soil. The spinning-jenny and the mule enabled the men of Owen's generation to spin fifty- or a hundred-fold the amount of yarn which their fathers could produce with their utmost toil ; the further progress of invention would no doubt enable their sons to extract from the earth tenfold or a hundredfold the present harvests. Implicitly this fallacious analogy dominated all Owen's reasonings, and formed the economic justification for his

Utopian schemes. But if his premises are granted, Owen's scheme can hardly be described as simply Utopian. For it insisted, as the first condition of the New Society, on the proper training of all its members; and it made its appeal to the nobler instincts of human nature. Owen said in effect, "You can, if you will, train man to be a social animal, and to obey only social instincts; and with men so trained a community such as I propose cannot fail of success."

The committee of 1819 did nothing to correct the fundamental fallacy of Owen's economic reasoning: they thrust almost out of sight the condition which he had insisted upon as an essential preliminary—the training of the children; and they made their appeal, not to the larger and finer nature which Owen hoped to evoke in his future colonists, but to the men and women of the market-place.

Such a scheme was open to many of the economic objections which could be urged against Owen's plan, and it lacked altogether Owen's wider outlook, and the almost prophetic fervour which had inspired his advocacy. The committee's appeal could inspire no man. Philanthropy plus 5 per cent. responded by offering less than eight thousand towards the hundred thousand pounds which was needed; and the committee met for the last time on December 1, 1819, to declare their failure, and to pass a vote of thanks to the Duke of Kent for his "condescending kindness" in presiding at their meetings.

Three other events of this year fall to be noted. In August a deputation of three gentlemen, Mr. Edward Baines, Mr. Robert Oastler and Mr. John Cawood, visited New Lanark for the purpose of reporting to the Guardians of the Poor at Leeds on the nature of the establishment, with the view of adopting Owen's plan for the employment of the poor. Their report, extracts from which have been given in a previous chapter, was entirely favourable. On December 16 Sir W. de Crespigny moved in the House of Commons for the appointment of a Select Committee to enquire into Owen's proposals for the amelioration of the condition of the lower classes. The motion was seconded by Lord Archibald Hamilton, and supported by Brougham, John Smith, Ricardo, and Alderman Wood. It was opposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Wilberforce. All the speakers paid tribute of respect to Owen's high character and to the excellence of his work at New Lanark. The opposition was based less on economic than on religious grounds. The Chancellor read to the House the extract quoted in the earlier part of the present chapter from the address of August 21, 1817, in which Owen had denounced all religions. And Wilberforce contended that all that was good in the state of New Lanark was due less to Owen's wise government than to "the good old system of Christianity." In the event the motion was lost by a hundred and forty-one to sixteen.

In the spring of the year Sir J. Buchanan Riddle, the member for the united boroughs of Lanark, Selkirk, Peebles and Linlithgow, died, and Owen declared himself a candidate for the vacant seat. In his address, dated April 24, 1819, and issued from 49, Bedford Square, London, he bases his claim to represent the boroughs on his extensive experience and his knowledge of the true remedies for the existing distress.[1] He was not elected, owing, as he tells us, to his many public engagements in London preventing the necessary prosecution of his candidature. At the general election which took place on the death of the King early in the following year he appears to have stood again, but with like want of success. His failure on this second occasion is attributed in his *Autobigraphy* to the fact that some of the old Lanark voters were won over by the bribes of his opponents. He was, however, assured beforehand of the support of the Magistrates and Town Council of Linlithgow; and on March 3, 1820, *i.e.* ten days before the dissolution of Parliament, he was entertained at a public dinner by the inhabitants of Lanark.[2]

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[1] See the address published in *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 332.

[2] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 334, 335. Owen's own account of his candidature (*Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 226 *seq*) is rather confused. But it seems clear, from the contemporary documents, that his *first* candidature occurred on the death of Sir J. B. Riddle, in April, 1819, and his second candidature probably took place at the General Election of the following year.

CHAPTER XII

REPORT TO THE COUNTY OF LANARK

HITHERTO Owen had dwelt mainly on the ethical aspect of the problem which he had set himself to solve. Through the lately won knowledge of the formation of character, human nature, he had proclaimed, could be fashioned anew: the vicious could be made well-disposed, the turbulent could be made peaceful, the idle industrious. The economic aspects of the problem had been almost completely left out of count. He had himself grown rich, and had seen other men grow rich, almost without effort or volition of their own; his own workpeople at New Lanark could at the present time produce more cotton than the whole county—perhaps the whole kingdom—could have produced when he was a child. He saw no reason to doubt that the mechanical inventions which had thus multiplied the productivity of human labour in the processes of manufacture could as readily multiply the produce of the same labour when applied to the soil. At New Lanark, as we have seen, a widow with many young children was a desirable prize in the marriage market. Owen was fully persuaded that there was enough and to spare for all, and that, as in the small corner of the world's market with which he was familiar, new mouths would all the world over continue to bring with them hands more than sufficient to provide for their wants.

Strong in this belief he felt that he could afford to laugh at Malthus, and to neglect nice calculations of supply and demand. So little indeed had he considered his new State of Society from the economic standpoint, that he had not even made it clear whether his villages of co-operation were to be self-sufficient, producing only for their own consumption, or whether they were to engage in commerce with other communities outside or even with the world at large. Probably he was too little versed in such matters to realise that the question had more than an academic interest. But his position had been definitely challenged by the economists at the meetings in 1817; and again on July 26, 1819, Major Torrens had renewed the attack. Torrens's speech at this last meeting was afterwards amplified into an article, which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* for October, and which fairly presents the case against Owen's scheme from the standpoint of the orthodox economy of the day.[1] The reviewer points out that Owen had apparently not made up his mind on what basis the villages were to stand—whether to consume all their own products and thus be self-sufficing, or whether to engage in commerce with the outside.[2] In the former event, the reviewer pointed out, since the number of workmen

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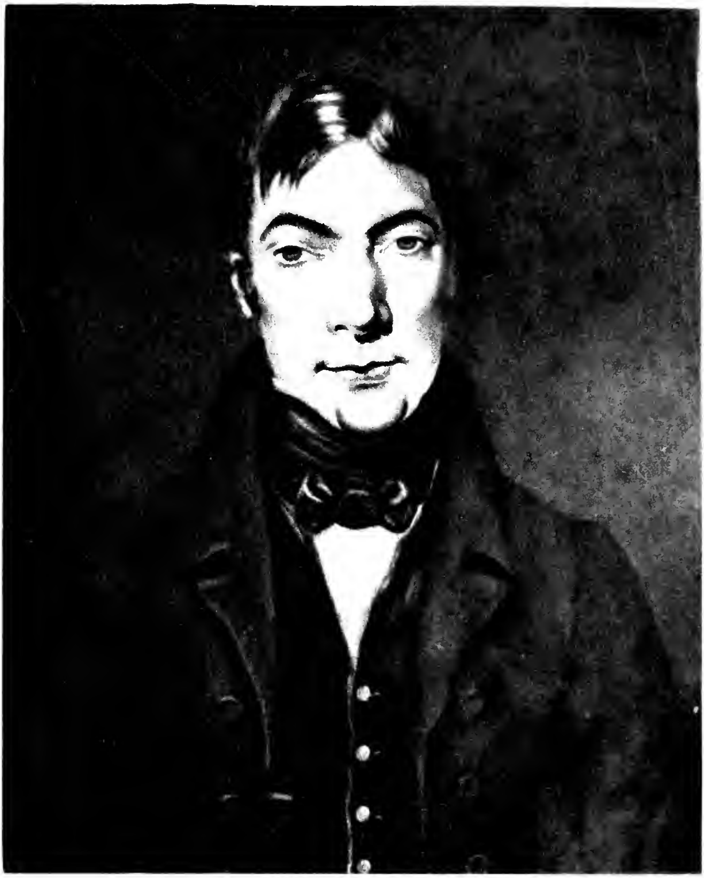
[1] The article in the *Edinburgh* was of course anonymous, but it reproduces so exactly not merely the arguments, but in many cases the very phrases used in Torrens's speech as reported in the *Times* (July 27, 1819), that it seems safe to attribute it to that gentleman.

[2] At the meeting of July 26, Torrens had actually asked the question "Are the commodities produced to be consumed in the villages, or sent to market?" and Owen had replied, "It is so arranged it may be one or the other" (*Times*, July 27, 1819).



IT IS OF ALL TRUTHS THE MOST IMPORTANT THAT THE CHARACTER OF MAN IS FORMED *FOR* AND NOT *BY* HIM.

Robert Owen.

From an early mezzotint portrait by an unknown artist

in a community would not permit of a proper subdivision of labour, such as that required by our present manufacturing processes, the cost of production would be much higher than in the outside world. If, however, the community gave up the ideal of being self-sufficing and set itself to procure some of the commodities needed for its own consumption by exchanging some of its own surplus products, then it would at once become subject to the very fluctuations and perturbations of the market from which it was Owen's aim to save his colonists. Moreover, if the community wished to exchange on equal terms, it must consider all such questions as position with regard to the market, facilities for conveyance, fitness of soil and climate for the particular kind of manufacture or agriculture the products of which it proposed to exchange.

Criticism of this kind apparently forced upon Owen the necessity of defining his position. An opportunity presented itself in the following year. In May, 1820, Owen drew up by request a long Report on his plan for relieving public distress, which was laid before a committee of the county of Lanark. The report is of value as setting forth for the first time a clear and comprehensive statement of his economic views, and of the industrial organisation of the proposed villages.

Owen begins with an attempt to justify the assumption already referred to, as underlying his whole position. He seeks to show by a particular instance how the product of the soil could be multiplied by mechanical inventions, as the product of the spinning-wheel had already been multiplied. In the report of their visit to New Lanark in August, 1819, which the Leeds deputation had presented to the Guardians of the Poor in that town, attention had been drawn to some experiments made by a Mr. Falla of Gateshead in substituting the spade for the plough as a means of breaking up the land and preparing it for sowing. Falla was a nursery gardener, and naturally therefore used the spade for cultivating his land. But being forced on occasion, for want of labour, to make use of the plough, he had been much struck by the inferiority of the results produced, and determined on a practical experiment. His neighbour's land, broken up by the plough and sown broadcast, produced in 1819 under favourable circumstances a crop of wheat representing about thirty-eight bushels to the acre. This was regarded as decidedly above the average. Falla's land, he tells us, was of slightly inferior quality, and not more highly manured. Nevertheless, by using the spade to work the soil, and sowing the seed in drills, he succeeded in two successive years, 1819 and 1820, in raising a crop which averaged between sixty-five and seventy bushels to the acre. As the cost in the case of spade labour but slightly exceeded, on Falla's calculation, the cost of working the land by the plough, the result was to raise the net profit by more than 50 per cent. The result is no doubt interesting as far as it goes; but of course no single experiment of the kind can be regarded as crucial, and the conditions of the particular experiment leave much to be desired. The land with which the comparison was made was not Falla's own; and he was hardly in a position therefore to institute an exact comparison of the amount of manure used, and other conditions of the experiment. And above all, no comparison of this kind instituted for a limited period can be other than fallacious ; for it leaves out of account what is, after all, the most important factor, the relative exhaustion of the soil by the two methods. The Rothamsted experiments have taught us that, in the long run, we take out from the soil in the form of grain a fairly exact equivalent for what we have put into it in the form of manure. And the farmers of England, who have had the results of Falla's observations before them for more than eighty years, have not yet discarded the plough in favour of the spade.[1]

Nevertheless it is on the result of this single and inconclusive experiment that Owen proceeds to base a new theory of agriculture. His readiness to generalise from such meagre data indicates perhaps that he had at length realised the need for justifying the economic assumptions which underlay his schemes. After giving a full account of Falla's experiment, and of the causes which contributed to the alleged superiority of the spade over the plough, Owen proceeds to explain that the cultivators of the soil have hitherto persisted in using the plough through ignorance and prejudice. Moreover spade husbandry requires higher qualities than our farmers at present possess : since the labour to be directed is that of men, not of animals, a knowledge of human nature and its attributes is required. "Closet theorists and inexperienced persons suppose that to exchange the plough for the spade would be to turn back in the road of improvement,—to give up a superior for an inferior implement of cultivation. Little do they imagine that the introduction of the spade, with the scientific arrangements it requires, will produce far greater improvements in agriculture, than the steam engine has effected in manufactures." It will prove more fruitful than all the inventions of Crompton and Arkwright. And this extraordinary change is even now at hand. "It will immediately take place; for the interest and well-being of all classes require it. Society cannot longer proceed another step in advance without it; and until it is adopted, civilisation must retrograde, and the working classes starve for want of employment."

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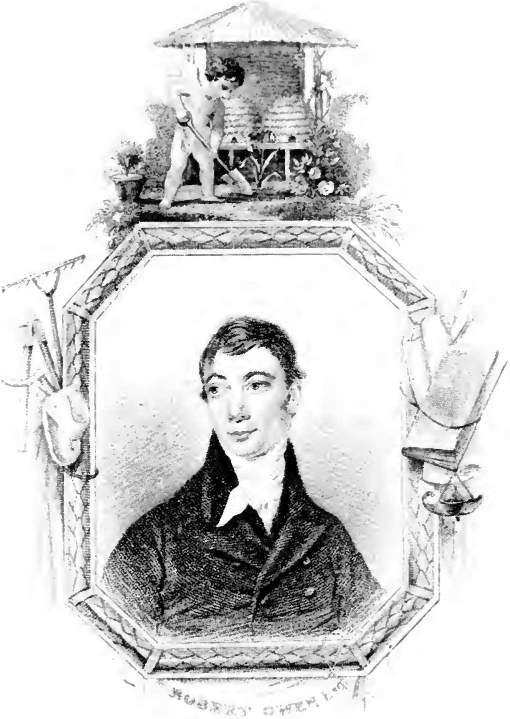
[1] A letter from Falla detailing the results of his experiments is appended to the *Report to the County of Lanark* (reprinted in *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 314-20).

Here then we have Owen's economic foresight vindicated, and the material well-being of the new colonist assured. It remains to consider how to dispose of the wealth which will be so abundantly produced under the new order of things.

It is now, Owen holds, sufficiently demonstrated that when their labours are wisely directed the inhabitants of the new colonies will without undue effort be able to produce much more than enough for their maintenance. Hence there will be little need for money or private property within the community. "It will be quite evident to all, that wealth of that kind which will alone be held in any estimation amongst them, may be so easily created to exceed all their wants, that every desire for individual accumulation will be extinguished. . . . As the easy, regular, healthy, rational employment of the individuals forming these societies will create a very large surplus of their own products, beyond what they will have any desire to consume, each may be freely


ROBERT OWEN Esq.

From an engraving after a picture by W. T. Fry published in 1821.

ROBERT OWEN.

permitted to receive from the general store of the community whatever they may require. This, in practice, will prove to be the greatest economy."

Part of the surplus will be devoted to the maintenance of the infants, the aged, and the sick ; part to the rich, who having advanced the necessary capital will not be expected to do any work themselves ; part will be needed by those whose work is not directly of a productive character ;[1] and part again will be required for paying taxes and public dues generally.[2] What still remains after these various claims have been satisfied, and after due provision has been made for the future—for each establishment will be provided with granaries and warehouses, where food may be stored against a season of famine[3]—will be exchanged with other like communities for part of the surplus of their special commodities ; and thus each colony will add to its luxuries by a kind of primitive foreign commerce. Precise details are given of the amount of land to be taken ; the mode of its cultivation ; the arrangement of the buildings in a square ; the provision for education ; the internal government of the colonies, and other matters. The only new point discussed, however, is that of the clothing. Owen favours a garb which should be as light and simple as possible, on the grounds of health, economy, beauty and sexual delicacy. He cites the national dress of the Romans and of the Scotch Highlanders as most nearly realising this ideal in practice. He adds, that the best fashion and material having once been settled, nobody will need to give a thought to questions of dress "for many years or perhaps centuries."[1]

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 282.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 304 *et seq.*

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

But the most interesting part of the Report is that dealing with the question of a standard of value. At the time when Owen wrote his Report the currency was the question of the hour. In 1797 an Act of Parliament had been passed to authorise the suspension by the Bank of England of cash payments. The suspension was, by the terms of the Act, to last until six months after the end of the war. The war had come to an end nearly five years ago; prices had long since fallen close to the normal; but the Government still hesitated to sanction the resumption of cash payments. In the previous year, however (1819), they had appointed a Committee under the presidency of Robert Peel the younger—the son of the rich manufacturer who had introduced the Factory Bill drafted by Owen—and in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee cash payments were to be resumed, not immediately, but by four successive stages. In May, 1820, the date of Owen's Report, the first of these stages had already been passed.

Every social reformer believes that he understands the part played by the currency, and those of the more thoroughgoing type are in substantial agreement in attributing famine, poverty and all other social evils to its agency. It was natural, therefore, especially at a time when currency questions occupied so much of men's thoughts, that Owen should find the secret of the national distress in the artificial standard of value accepted by civilised societies, and should foresee imminent aggravation of that distress if the proposals of Peel's Committee were carried out. His line of argument may roughly be paraphrased as follows: Even before the great mechanical inventions of the last generation, the labour of a man, properly directed, was more than sufficient to maintain himself; by those inventions his powers of production have been multiplied fifty- or a hundred-fold—and yet the people are starving. Since, then, the cause of that poverty does not consist in any lack of wealth, or of the means of production, there must be some obstruction to the proper circulation of the wealth produced. In short, the cause must be sought in the mechanism of distribution. Now distribution in civilised countries is no longer carried on by a simple process of barter. An intermediate term has been introduced into the process; that intermediate term is the standard of value—in other words money. It is the imperfection of the standard which is the real cause of the stagnation of wealth, and the consequent poverty of so many of our fellow-countrymen in the midst of riches. For gold and silver are a purely arbitrary standard by which to measure commodities; they are, moreover, absurdly inadequate as a medium of exchange, as the late Government found when they wisely substituted a more elastic paper currency in 1797. But even bank notes constitute but a palliative. The true remedy for the evil is more radical. One of the first measures required "to let prosperity loose on the country is a change in the standard of value"; and as a result of thirty years' study and experience Owen propounds the doctrine "*That the natural standard of value is, in principle, human labour, or the*

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 291, 292.

combined manual and mental powers of men called into action."

Let, then, he continues, a labour-unit be fixed, on the analogy of a foot-pound or "horse power" in mechanics; and let the price of all commodities be fixed in terms of that unit, in accordance with the actual amount of human labour required for their production. The adoption of this simple and natural device would remove all the evils from which civilised society now suffers. Human labour, no longer subject to the caprice of the market, would acquire a new dignity; prices would no longer fluctuate; all commercial restrictions would be removed, and all markets thrown open; every transaction would proceed smoothly; the whole process of bargaining and higgling, with all its demoralising accompaniments, would disappear; and wealth would find its level as inevitably as water.

The Report was printed for a general meeting of the county held at Lanark on May 1, 1820, and was referred for consideration to a committee consisting of the sheriff and six other gentlemen. In the following November the committee presented a brief report, in which, while refraining from committing themselves to any definite opinion upon Owen's scheme as a whole, they expressed the view that it would be desirable that further experiments should be made in spade culture. After the reading of the committee's report, Sir James Stewart brought before the meeting a proposal made by Mr. Hamilton of Dalzell to let to the county from five hundred to seven hundred acres of land, "with a view to facilitate the formation of an establishment on Mr. Owen's plan, which would supersede the necessity of erecting a Bridewell for the County." It was further proposed that the county should erect suitable buildings on the land, and that evildoers should be sent thither instead of to the Bridewell, and there transformed into respectable citizens. No action appears to have been taken on the proposal, or on Owen's Report.[1]

The year 1821 saw the publication of the *Economist*, a periodical designed to advocate Owen's views, and the actual starting, on a small scale, of a Co-operative and Economical Society, of which a fuller account will be given in a later chapter. In June of the same year Owen's plans were again brought before the House of Commons. Maxwell moved in a feeble and unimpressive speech for the appointment of a Commission to report upon the establishment at New Lanark. The debate was notable for a change in the attitude of the speakers. Opposition on religious grounds to any countenance of Owen's schemes was again a prominent feature of the debate. Wilberforce spoke once more, and was supported on this occasion by Lushington and Canning. But the opposition which counted for most came from another quarter. Lord Londonderry based his objections to the motion mainly on the paternal character of Owen's proposed government—"The state of discipline recommended by Mr. Owen might be applicable enough to poor-houses, but it was by no means agreeable to the feelings of a free nation." And Hume followed to the same effect: "If Mr. Owen's system produced so much happiness with so little care, the adoption of it would make us a race of beings little removed from the brutes, only ranging the four corners of a parallelogram, instead of the mazes of a forest." Other speakers ridiculed the "quadrangular paradises." In the event the motion was lost.[1]

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[1] *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 311-14. From a letter from Hamilton dated December 5, 1820, it appears that he proposed to let sixty acres at a nominal rent, and six hundred more at a rent of two-fifths of the produce. Further he promised a subscription of £1,000.

Owen himself did not come prominently before the public again until June of the following year, 1822. On the first of that month there was held a meeting of the British and Foreign Philanthropic Society, established, according to the *Times*,[2] mainly through Owen's exertions. The names of nearly all foreign ministers and ambassadors in the country, together with a long list of noblemen and other distinguished persons, appeared as vice-presidents. William Fry and Isaac Goldsmid were the treasurers. John Galt was one of the hon. secretaries, and the acting committee included Sir James Graham, T. W. Coke (afterwards Earl of Leicester), Brougham, Hume, and many other Members of Parliament, bankers, clergymen and philanthropists. The object of the Society was declared to be "to carry into effect measures for the permanent relief of the labouring classes, by Communities for mutual interest and co-operation, in which by means of education, example and employment, they will be gradually withdrawn from the evils induced by ignorance, bad habits, poverty and want of employment."[3]

At the first meeting, which took place in the Freemasons' Hall in London, the Earl of Blessington read the report of the committee, in which the establishment of communities on Owen's plan was recommended to the landed proprietor as "a safe and profitable mode of investing capital," and "as a practicable method of extinguishing the Poor's Rate in England." The secretaries announced a list of subscriptions amounting to about £50,000, including £10,000 from Owen, and £5,000 each from Hamilton of Dalzell, James Morrison and Henry Jones, of Cole House, Devon. The speakers, including James Maxwell, M.P., Sir W. de Crespigny, John Galt, the Earl of Blessington and Viscount Torrington, were enthusiastic in their testimony to the success of the establishment at New Lanark, and hopeful of the prospects of the similar experiment which the Society projected.

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[1] *Hansard*, June 26, 1821.

[2] Report of the meeting, June 4, 1822.

[3] Report in *Robert Owen's Journal*, Vol. I., p. 157.

Owen, in returning thanks, found occasion to say a word for "the respectable individuals now denominated political economists." Their amiable disposition and good intentions, he declared, no one could doubt, but experience showed that "their theories and their doctrines could produce only misery to the human race."

Notwithstanding the enthusiastic tone of the meeting, and the substantial sum promised in the subscription list, we hear no more of the British and Foreign Philanthropic Society or of its projected experiment in community-forming.[1]

In the autumn of this year, 1822, Owen went over to Ireland to spread the knowledge of his system there. He spent some months in a tour through the country accompanied by an agricultural expert and by Captain

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[1] The proceedings of this, the first (and only ?) meeting are reported in the *Times*, June 4, 1822, and at greater length in *Robert Owen's Journal*, Vols. I. and II.

Macdonald of the Engineers, an enthusiastic disciple who afterwards followed him to New Harmony. He visited Dublin and Belfast, Kilkenny, Waterford, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, King and Queen's Counties, Clare, Meath and Down, spending some months in the south and west, as those districts were at the time most disturbed, and suffering the deepest distress.[1] He was welcomed by many of the nobility and gentry, and by the clergy, both Protestant and Catholic. He was even invited to Maynooth and expounded his system before an audience of Roman Catholic divines.[2] He called upon the Lord-Lieutenant and expatiated upon his plans for an hour and a quarter. "I had a very favourable hearing: he has the plan now under consideration, and I am to see him again."[3]

In a letter dated March 1, 1823, addressed to the nobility, gentry, clergy and inhabitants of Ireland, Owen gave the result of his observations during this tour. He found a soil fertile beyond his expectations, a suitable climate, rivers, harbours and natural resources sufficient, if properly used, to maintain in abundance a population manyfold greater than the seven millions then inhabiting the island. And yet he found these same millions, from the highest to the lowest, living in squalor and discomfort; the landlords in constant anxiety lest the tenants should refuse to pay rent, and their own means of livelihood should thus disappear; the middle classes engaged in incessant struggle against poverty; the peasantry so poor that women were eager to be employed for two pence a day, and strong active men were glad of the chance of working fourteen hours for eightpence. The responsibility for all this poverty and suffering he traced to the misguided system under which the Irish people were living; the remedy he promised to declare at a public meeting to be held on the 18th of the month in Dublin. On the appointed day the Rotunda was filled with an expectant crowd. The Lord Mayor was in the chair, and amongst those who had come to hear and to give their support to Owen were the Duke and Duchess of Leinster, The Earl of Meath, Lord Cloncurry, and a number of clergy.

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[1] *Report of Select Committee on the Poor in Ireland* (1823), p. 70.

[2] *New Existence of Man upon Earth*, Part IV., pp. 12, 16.

[3] Letter to Mrs. Owen, October 31, 1822. In the same letter he mentioned dining on successive nights with the Bishop of Down and the Lord Mayor, and chronicles visits to Lord Cloncurry, Lord Carrick, the Duke of Leinster and the Bishop of Ossory.

In a speech which took three hours to deliver,[1] Owen sketched before the vast audience the outlines of the New System of Society. "I will now disclose to you," said he, "a secret, which till now has been hidden from mankind"—the secret that man's character is formed for him by circumstances, pre-natal and post-natal. The first part of the address is practically a re-statement of the argument in the *Essays on the Formation of Character*. In conclusion Owen briefly described his project of co-operative communities.

Owen's address is said to have been received with frequent applause. But the tone of the speakers in the discussion which followed was by no means friendly. The Protestant party was prominent. Three clergymen, Messrs. Dunne, Daly and Singer, opposed Owen's project on the ground that his system was contrary to revealed religion, immoral in its tendency, and generally subversive of the established order. It seems doubtful, however, whether these champions of the faith carried with them the sympathies of the audience. At any rate a further meeting, which was held in the same place on April 12, was well attended; the company, which again included peers and peeresses, and many persons eminent in literature and the sciences, being apparently not less distinguished than on the former occasion. At the second meeting a large painting illustrating one of the proposed communities was suspended above the orchestra; and the greater part of Owen's address was devoted to explaining the details of the arrangements in the proposed villages—the housing accommodation, the arrangements for warming and lighting, the clothing, the education of the children, and the organisation of the communal industry.

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[1] The report of the speech in the *Patriot* (March 20, 1823) occupies eight and a half columns—nearly two entire pages—of close print.

Though Owen's speech on this occasion, to judge from the length of the reports, must have occupied some two hours in delivery, he had still not completed his exposition, and a third meeting, not less crowded than those which preceded it, was held on April 19.[1] In this third speech Owen entered into the financial aspect of the question. He produced a series of calculations designed to show that a community of one thousand persons, men, women, and children, occupied partly in agriculture and partly in manufactures could, if their labour were properly directed and co-ordinated, produce enough not only to maintain themselves in abundance, and to provide for the education of their children, the maintenance of the sick and the aged, but also leave a large annual surplus, sufficient to extinguish in a few years any debt which might have been accumulated in the original purchase of the land and erection of the buildings. On Owen's calculations this surplus might be reckoned as ranging from £2,500 to £16,000 a year, according to the nature of the industries pursued by the happy villagers. A stormy discussion followed Owen's speech, the Rev. Mr. Singer again being prominent amongst the opposition.

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[1] The pressure and heat at the meeting were so great that several ladies fainted (report in *Dublin Evening Mail*, April 23, 1823).

The meeting was again adjourned until April 24. At this fourth meeting, which appears to have been of a semi-private nature, Owen's friends were in the majority. Sir T. Esmond, Lord Cloncurry, Æneas Macdonnell and General Browne spoke in favour of the scheme.[1] Finally, on May 3, was held the first meeting of the Hibernian Philanthropic Society. Owen was supported by Lord Cloncurry, Sir Frederick Flood, Sir William Brabazon, Sir Capel Molyneux, General Browne, the Hon. Mr. Dawson, and other persons of social position. A clergyman, the Rev. E. Groves, was one of the secretaries. A substantial list of subscriptions was announced, and the table at which the secretary sat was "literally covered with bank-notes." After some prefatory remarks by Lord Cloncurry, Owen made another lengthy speech, in the course of which he displayed his series of cubes, and explained in detail how they illustrated the divisions of existing society.

Of the Hibernian Philanthropic Society we hear no more after this year. But, as will be seen hereafter, the seed sown in the Dublin campaign bore fruit later.[1]

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[1] For a report of the meeting see the *Patriot*, April 26, 1823. No mention of the meeting appears in *Robert Owen's Journal*, or in the *Dublin Report*.

In the course of this same year, 1823, a Select Committee of the House of Commons, of which Ricardo was a member, was appointed to consider the employment of the poor in Ireland. A memorial was presented to the Committee from the Hibernian Philanthropic Society praying that Owen's plan of villages of co-operation might be given a trial. Owen was himself called as a witness before the Committee, and was examined at considerable length upon the economic and the ethical aspects of his scheme. The Committee report that the scheme had attracted so much attention and interest, especially in Ireland, that they felt it their duty to examine it in detail and consider the tendency of the principles on which it is founded. Their conclusion is as follows :

"But when it is considered, that Mr. Owen's plan is founded upon a principle that a state of perfect equality can be produced and can lead to beneficial consequences, your Committee consider this position so irreconcilable with the nature and interests of mankind, and the experience of all ages, that it is impossible to treat this scheme as being practicable. Your Committee concur in the opinion that a state in which an inequality of conditions offers the natural rewards of good conduct, and inspires widely and generally the hopes of rising and the fear of falling in society, is unquestionably the best calculated to develop the energies and faculties of man, and is best suited to the exercise and improvement of human virtue. If Mr. Owen's establishments could be conducted according to his intentions, the idle and profligate would be placed in a situation equal to that which would be a reward to the industrious and virtuous. True it is, that Mr. Owen suggests that under his new arrangements idleness and profligacy might be altogether extirpated from society, but such an opinion is one which appears altogether visionary. Certainly your Committee feel every disposition highly to estimate the effects of good education and early moral habits, but to conceive that any 'arrangement of circumstances' can altogether divest a man of his passions and frailties, as they comprehend principles in themselves undeniable, is a result which can never be anticipated."

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[1] Accounts of the Dublin meetings will be found in the *Dublin Report*, a pamphlet published in Dublin in 1823, subsequently reprinted in the first three volumes of *Robert Owen's Journal*, also in the *New Existence of Man upon Earth*, Part IV. Fairly full reports are to be found in the contemporary Dublin newspapers, the *Evening Mail* and the *Patriot*.

The Dublin meetings mark the conclusion of another stage in Owen's career. They were the last occasions on which he had the opportunity in this country of addressing an audience composed mainly of the well-to-do and educated classes. His appeals to them were, as we have seen, by no means unproductive, measured by the standard of the subscription-lists. But the enthusiasm evoked seems to have been shortlived, and none of these subscription lists ever matured. In later years Owen addressed his message to a wider audience. *Flectere si nequeo Superos*, *Acheronta movebo.* On his return, six years later, from America and the failure of his great experiment at New Harmony, he seems to have found a more congenial environment amongst the working classes. For the rest of his life his appeal was addressed mainly to them ; and if the response which it evoked was not always of the precise kind at which he aimed, the effects produced were at any rate more enduring.

CHAPTER XIII

NEW HARMONY

FOR some years, as we have seen, Owen had been endeavouring, aided by committees formed of his wealthy and aristocratic followers, to raise the funds necessary to start an experimental Community. But so far none of these efforts had proved successful. But in the summer of 1824 an opening presented itself in an unexpected quarter, of which Owen was not slow to take advantage.

George Rapp was a small farmer born at Iptingen in Würtemberg in 1757. In early manhood he reacted strongly against the lifeless formalism of religion as manifested in the Churches of his native land, and gradually gathered round him a band of disciples who learned to look to him for spiritual instruction. Persecution followed; and at length, in 1803, Rapp determined to lead his followers to the land of religious freedom. He sailed for America in that year with two or three companions, and purchased five thousand acres of uncultivated land near Pittsburg. In the next year six hundred of his followers joined him, and the Harmony Society was formed. The little community was composed of pious German peasants, sober, thrifty, and industrious. They flourished exceedingly and in a few years possessed mills and workshops, a tannery, a vineyard, a distillery and grew all that was needed to supply themselves with food and clothing. In 1807 a new wave of religious feeling swept through the Society and the members generally renounced marriage, agreeing to live a celibate life.[1] At the same time they forswore the use of tobacco.

In 1814, being apparently dissatisfied with the site of their original settlement, the Society purchased some thirty thousand acres of Government land in Posey County, Indiana, on the banks of the Wabash, a tributary of the Ohio. In 1815 they sold their Pennsylvanian property, and the whole Society, numbering it is said about eight or nine hundred persons,[2] moved to their new home. The new settlement, which was named Harmonie or Harmony, consisted of a large quantity of very fertile flat land on the banks of the river, backed by low-wooded hills suitable for the vine. The soil soon brought forth abundantly. They cultivated cornland and pasture, magnificent orchards and far-stretching vineyards. The streets of the little city were planted with black locust-trees and mulberries—the latter to afford material for the silk-weaving which was an important feature in the communal industry. The dwelling houses for the settlers were built some of brick, some of wood; each with its sufficient garden enclosure filled with fruit-trees. There were also four large buildings to serve as community-houses; a substantial

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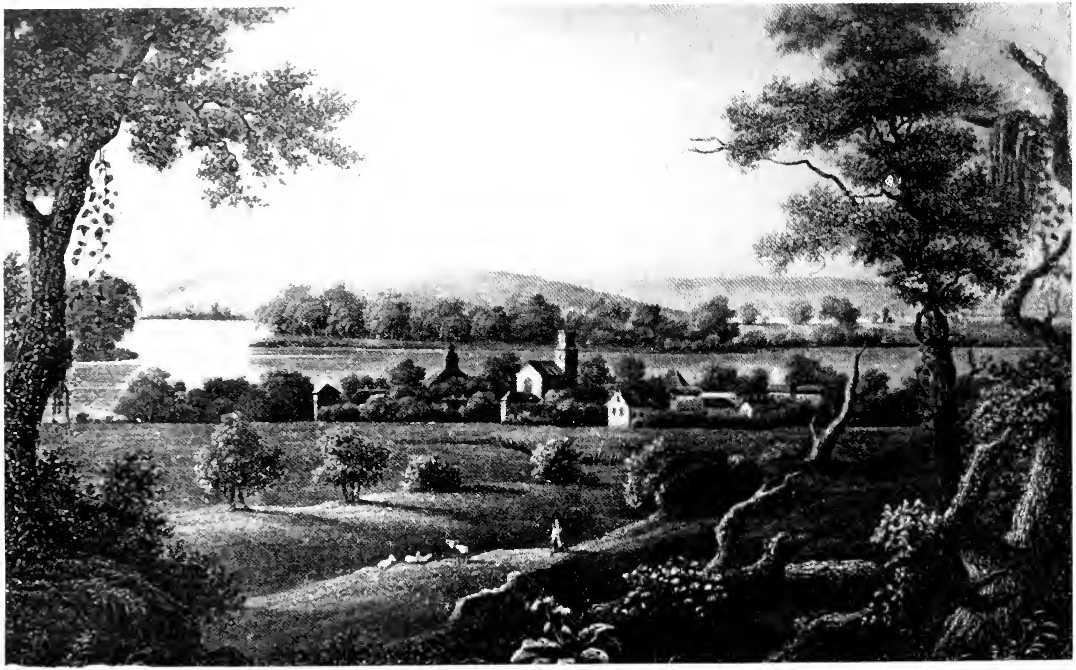
[1] It does not appear that there was any compulsion in the matter. Nordhoff (*The Communistic Societies of the United States*, p. 73) says that those who refused to accept celibacy withdrew from the Society. But Hebert, who visited the Society at its new habitation at Harmony in 1822, says that marriages were permitted even at that date, and that the last had occurred nearly three years before his visit (*A Visit to the Colony of Harmony in Indiana. London*, 1825).

[2] Their numbers are said to have been recruited by emigration.



From an old print.

HARMONY.

brick house for Father Rapp ; a massive stone granary with loopholed walls, to serve at need as a defence against attack by Indians and others ; a wooden church, and a huge cruciform building of brick, with four doors, one at the extremity of each end of the cross. The upper storey of this building was supported inside by massive pillars of walnut, cherry and sassafras.[1]

There were also a silk-factory, woollen-mill, saw-mill, brickyard, distillery, oil-mill and dye-works. Harmony soon became an important business and manufacturing centre for all the country round. Hebert, visiting it in 1822, found the people very prosperous and apparently very contented : but he notes that there was an absence of mirth or conviviality. Besides the church, the only undertaking not of a purely utilitarian character appears to have been a maze or labyrinth, such as that at Hampton Court, the walks walled in with hedges of beech, with a small summer-house at the centre, rude outside, but exquisitely furnished within. And even this we are told served a symbolic purpose, having been designed by Rapp to illustrate the wanderings of the soul through the world, and the finding of the desired haven at last in community-life.

In 1824 the colonists determined again to move their home. The ostensible cause of the change was the unhealthiness of the site ; but it was thought by some to be part of Rapp's policy to keep his people on the move, lest, becoming too comfortable and prosperous, they should forget their faith and their vow of celibacy. At any rate, the Society commissioned Richard Flower, an Englishman who had helped to found a colony in the neighbouring State of Illinois, to sell their property for them.

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[1] Hebert (*op. cit.*) describes this cruciform building as a church. But it is certain that the wooden building, which was furnished with a spire and two heavy bells, was intended for a church. *The New Harmony Gazette* (Vol. I., p. 22) calls the cruciform building the Town Hall : and it was in fact used in Owen's time for public meetings, concerts, etc. Robert Dale Owen (*op. cit.*, p. 212) writes of "a spacious cruciform brick hall."

In the summer of 1824 Flower came to Braxfield. Owen, as we have seen, was already acquainted with the Rappite experiment; indeed the knowledge of it had probably helped to shape his own ideal of a co-operative colony. It is no matter for wonder, then, that the offer made by Flower proved tempting. Here was a magnificent theatre already equipped for his great experiment, and in a country not yet in complete bondage to the prejudices and conventions of older societies. His children, for their part, were fascinated by the prospect. "I listened with delight," says Robert Dale Owen, "to Mr. Flower's account of a frontier life, and when one morning my father asked me 'Well, Robert, what say you, New Lanark or Harmony?' I answered without hesitation 'Harmony.'"

Owen accordingly went in December, 1824, to America to view the property, taking with him his son William and leaving Robert Dale Owen to look after the New Lanark Mills in his absence. And in April of the following year he bought the village as it stood, with all its industries and twenty thousand acres of land, for £30,000,[1] a price which seems not exorbitant. The original colonists forthwith returned to Pennsylvania, and established themselves not far from the site of their former settlement. The new colony was named Economy, and there the Rappites flourished for many years.[1]

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[1] R. Dale Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 211, *Nordhoff*, p. 76. In the *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 353 (report of Robert Owen's speech at Philadelphia), the amount paid by Owen for the real and personal property together is given as about 140,000 dollars—say £28,000. In *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I.,

When Owen arrived in America he found that his fame had already preceded him. There had indeed been founded some years previously, in New York, a "Society for promoting Communities," which in 1822 had published an "*Essay on Common Wealths*," containing extracts from the *New View of Society* together with Melish's account of the Harmony Society. The New World was prepared therefore to welcome both the man and his doctrines. On February 25 and March 7, 1825, he delivered discourses in the Hall of Representatives at Washington before distinguished audiences, which included the President of the United States and several

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p. 14, the land is said to have amounted to nearly 30,000 acres, of which less than 3,000 were cultivated by the Society. From a copy of the deed of agreement, dated May 21, 1825, which is preserved in the Manchester Correspondence, it appears that Rapp conveyed to Owen, "20,097 acres, together with all the tenements, buildings, implements and appurtenances, including by express agreement the Town Clock and bells, all the furniture of every description in the tavern," the copper brewing-kettles, dyeing-kettles and blacksmith's tools, for 95,000 dollars (=£19,451). The 40,000 odd dollars was no doubt the price of the live-stock and other personal property.

[1] The reader may be interested to learn the ending of the Rappite Community—for it came to an end just a hundred years from its beginning. After Rapp's death in 1847 the Society continued to prosper exceedingly, and became extremely wealthy. The numbers, however, seem to have steadily diminished. About 1890 several new members were elected, amongst them one John S. Duss, who ultimately became trustee and business manager for the Society. In 1903 the Society was reduced to six members, amongst whom were John Duss and his wife, and in the spring of that year the lands of the township, Economy, were sold, it is said for 4,000,000 dollars, to a land company; the proceeds of the sale being divided amongst the surviving members (*Philadelphia Press*, April 17, 1903; *Philadelphia Ledger*, May 2, 1903).

members of the Cabinet, Judges, Members of Congress, and other persons of importance. In the first address he confined himself to an outline of his doctrine of the influence of circumstances on belief and character. In the second he gave details of the projected community, and exhibited drawings and a wooden model of the proposed quadrangle. After describing the town of Harmony and its "infant manufactures," he went on to point out that the existing arrangement of the houses, etc., would not permit the settlement to form a fitting habitation for the ideal Community. "Therefore it will serve only a temporary but yet a useful temporary purpose for the objects which I have in view. It will enable me to form immediately a preliminary society, in which to receive a new population, and to collect, prepare and arrange the materials for erecting several such combinations as the model represents,[1] and for forming several independent yet united associations, having common property and one common interest." He went on to vindicate Harmony from the charge of unhealthiness, pointing out that of the eight hundred persons in the Society, only seven had died in the two preceding years. Anticipating possible objections on political

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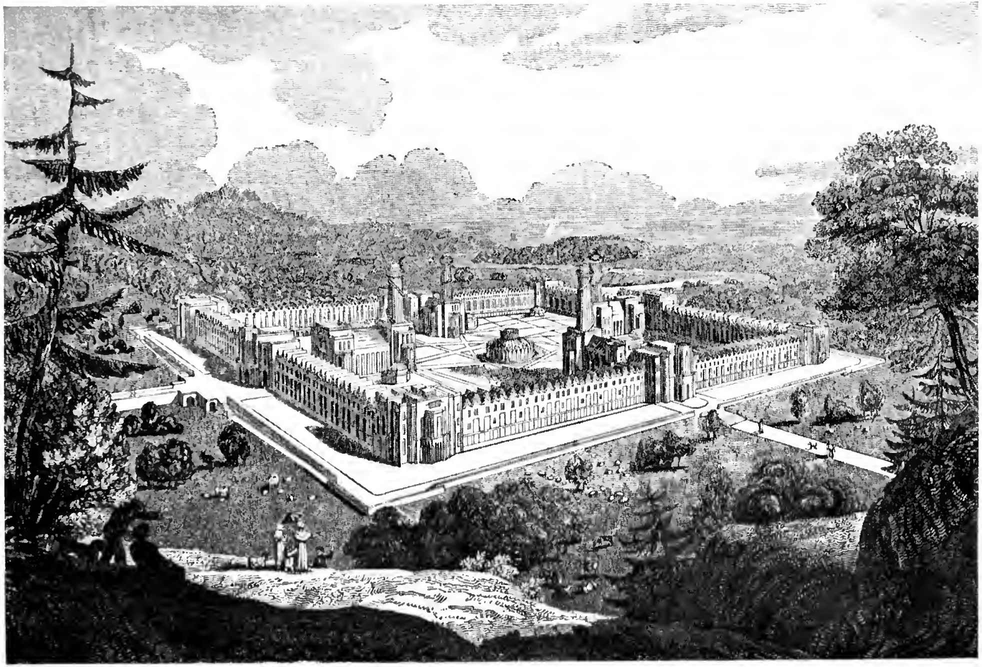
[1] From an article in the *Co-operative Magazine* for January, 1826, describing the progress made at New Harmony, we learn that "a favourable site has been marked out on which the new buildings are to be erected," and a reference is made to the frontispiece of the magazine, reproduced on the opposite page, which represents a quadrangular building placed in a fertile valley-bottom on the banks of a winding river, apparently intended for the Wabash. The article continues, "It is confidently expected that by the latter end of this year, the members of the community will exchange their present residence for one in which the most skilful combination of scientific arrangements will be made subservient to the various purposes of social and domestic life." But the intention, if ever formed, must soon have been dropped.



From a woodcut in the Co-operative Magazine, 1828.

MODEL OF ROBERT OWEN'S PROPOSED COMMUNITY.

grounds, he pointed out that it would be as easy for communities of the kind to confederate themselves into a State, as it was for the several States of the American Union to confederate themselves into a nation, and that defence against aggression could be secured by training the schoolboys in the communal schools in military and naval exercises.

Here, then, "in the heart of the United States," Owen proclaimed, "the Power which governs and directs the Universe and every action of man . . . permits me to announce a new empire of peace and goodwill to men." He concluded his address, it is stated, by inviting the "industrious and well-disposed of all nations" to come to New Harmony.[1] At any rate, some kind of manifesto was issued, inviting those who were in sympathy with the scheme to join the new Community.[2]

There came, in fact, in the early months of 1825 to Harmony—or New Harmony, as it was henceforth to be known—some hundreds of persons from all parts of the Union, who if they could not all be described as industrious, and did not all share Owen's hopes of a new state of society, were all, no doubt, well disposed to a communal life as they severally conceived it, and found at least common ground in their dissatisfaction with the existing order. Owen never had the opportunity of selecting his recruits, as appears to have been his original intention, for he found the settlement filled to overflowing on his arrival. Eight hundred, it is said, came within the first few weeks, and by October, 1825, the number had increased to nine hundred.[1] William Owen, writing to his father from New Harmony on October 24, 1825, says, "We have been much puzzled to know what to do with those who profess to do anything and everything: they are perfect drones, and can never be satisfied here. We have got rid of a good many such, although we still have a few left." And Robert Dale Owen, who made the acquaintance of the Community early in the following year, describes them as a "heterogeneous collection of radicals, enthusiastic devotees to principle, honest latitudinarians and lazy theorists, with a sprinkling of unprincipled sharpers thrown in."[2]

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[1] Noyes, *History of American Socialisms*, p. 35. The words do not appear in the address as published in the *New Harmony Gazette* (Vol. II).

[2] Lockwood, *The New Harmony Communities*, p. 89.

On April 25, 1825, Robert Owen delivered an address to the hundreds assembled at New Harmony. He pointed out that a change from the individualistic to the social system could not be made all at once. Time was needed for the denizens of the future Community to become acquainted with each other: time was also needed to enable the inhabitants to change the selfish habits bred by individualism for the superior habits necessary in a social state. There must therefore be a half-way house, and, he continued, "New Harmony, the future name of this place, is the best half-way house I could procure for those who are going to travel this extraordinary journey with me; and although it is not intended to be our permanent residence, I hope it will be found not a bad traveller's tavern, in which we shall remain only until we can change our old garments, and fully prepare ourselves for the new state of existence, into which we hope to enter."

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[1] *Noyes*, loc. cit.; *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 30.

[2] *Threading my Way*, p. 254.

He then pointed out that it might be found necessary that there should at first be some pecuniary inequality, since it was essential for the proper starting of the scheme to import a few men of science from the outside, who would not be satisfied with the plain fare and simple accommodation which would be the lot of the ordinary workers. For himself, however, he wished no better accommodation than the rest, and in any case there would be no personal inequality—no distinction of rank.

Owen then proceeded to read the proposed Constitution of the Preliminary Society. At the outset he, as founder and sole proprietor, proposed to appoint the committee of management, with the proviso that at the end of the first year the members should elect representatives on the committee.[1] The Society was to be open to all the world, except "persons of colour." The members accepted no pecuniary liability. They were to bring with them their own furniture and effects; they were to work, under the direction of the committee, at some trade or occupation; a credit was to be set against each name at the public store for the amount of useful work done; and against this credit a debit was entered for goods supplied. At the end of the year the balance would be placed to the credit of the member; but he was not at liberty to withdraw any part of it in cash, without the consent of the committee. He could, however, leave the Society at a week's notice, and withdraw his balance.

Owen had intended to prohibit the distillation of whiskey, but found that this step was impossible at the present time. He hoped, however, that it might be effected in the future.[1] He recommended that the articles consumed by the members should, as far as possible, be of American origin, and especially those that the Society itself could produce, so that it might ultimately be self-sufficing. Finally he hoped that at the end of three years the members would be prepared to constitute a Community of Equality, "and so for ever bury all the evils of the old selfish individual system."

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[1] In fact the members appear to have elected three out of the committee of seven persons, from the outset (see *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 102).

At the beginning of June Owen left New Harmony, and returned to Europe early in August. On October 1, 1825, appeared the *New Harmony Gazette*, with the motto, "If we cannot reconcile all opinions, let us endeavour to unite all hearts." In its early numbers we have an interesting picture of the state of the Society at that date. Nothing is said of the agricultural prospects. As regards the manufactures we learn that, though the Community possessed well-equipped mills and workshops of various kinds, they could not use them to the full for want of skilled workmen. The sawmill was doing good business with all the country round; the hat manufactory and the boot-making shop were doing well; the manufacture of soap, candles and glue had exceeded the requirements of the Community. But the dye-works and the pottery were standing idle for want of hands, and for the same cause the cotton and woollen mills could turn out but a small weekly product.

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[1] William Owen writes in August, 1825, stating that a resolution had been passed to the effect that no spirituous liquors should be retailed in New Harmony. (Quoted in the *Co-operative Magazine*, January, 1826.)

A letter from William Owen, who had been left in charge of the colony during his father's absence, dated New Harmony, December 16, 1825, gives a detailed account of their position and of the difficulties of founding a colony in the undeveloped West.

"MY DEAREST FATHER,

"We were astonished to hear that you had advertised for so many hands, whom you wished to engage as members or hired workmen, for it will be impossible to give them houses or even rooms here, until we shall have built more houses for their accommodation. Of many of those for whom you advertised we have already sufficient numbers and excellent workmen."

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He explains, however, that they need, amongst others, "masons, bricklayers, wheelwrights, carpenters, machine makers, potters (confidential men likely to remain here), and above all good cooks and washer-women, and laundresses. The tavern in particular requires a good cook and also all the boarding houses. If you can, I would advise to hire at Louisville a black man cook, we want him here sadly, particularly as you expect to bring so many people here. But although I have said we want these men to make our workshops full and perfect, I would at the same time repeat and impress upon your mind that *we have no room for them.* I believe I expressed the same opinion to you in my letter to New York. I was therefore surprised that you should advertise for so many mechanics ; we had applications for membership almost every day from various quarters and from then we have received more than gone away. We have received a good many valuable mechanics since you left us, and all the brick and frame houses are filled except one, which we reserved for those you might bring with you, it having been vacated lately. We shall find some difficulty in finding room for those you bring with you, and as to those with whom you may engage in New York, I do not know what we can do with them. And as for building houses, that is at present out of the question. We have no lime, no rocks, (ready blasted) no brick, no timber, no boards, no shingles, nothing requisite for building, and as to getting them from others, *they are not to be had in the whole country*. We must ourselves produce the whole of them, before we can build, we must dig and burn the lime, dig and blast the rocks, mould and burn the bricks, fell and hew the timber, fell and saw the boards and split the shingles, and to do all these things, we have no hands to spare, or the branches of business in the Society must stop, and they cannot stop, or the whole Society would stop too. These are the facts as they really are and you will find them so when you come. I have not exaggerated the difficulties or the time it will take to prepare for building. As this is winter of course we can do but little in this line. As to fitting up other houses, such as the church or granary, it is out of the question. We have no lumber to make partitions of, and there is none to be had, till we saw it, in the country, which we cannot do till the creeks rise. Besides, the granary is full of grain, and the church is the school. Further, no means of cooking whatever. Besides, as McDonald observes, we must not immediately curtail their comforts and conveniences, which would necessarily be if put in such places to sleep. On this account I had hoped you would have brought no Eastern mechanics, and also because those who are already accustomed to a Western life would put up better with such accommodations because accustomed to them more and we can get plenty of them, when we can receive them and have houses for them. If you can bring with you some stoves from Louisville foundries, and also abundance of stove pipes, we could accommodate more people in our present houses; the stoves need not be large, the cheaper the better. We should want perhaps 20 stoves. We have no bedding for any body, not even for those along with you; we have no feathers, no ticking, no sheets, no blankets. You must buy some, or every one must bring with them enough for themselves. The sugar is gone, quite gone, and the river being low, we can get none till it rises. We use about 2 barrels per week. The store will be quite empty in six weeks. We are all in good spirits and the gentlemen of the Committee desire best remembrances.

"Yours truly,
"WILLIAM OWEN."

In its non-productive activities, however, as we learn from the *Gazette*, the Society had more success to record. The tavern was constantly filled with visitors from the neighbouring States, who came to stay at New Harmony. The military were well organised. There was already a company of Artillery, one of Infantry, and a corps of Riflemen; whilst a company of Veterans and a company of Fusiliers were being formed. About one hundred and thirty children were boarded and educated at the schools. Finally, the need of recreation had not been overlooked. There was a good band, and many of the children showed decided musical talent. A ball was held every Tuesday evening in the Town Hall (the large cruciform building already described); there was a concert every Friday; and Wednesday evenings were given up to a public meeting and discussion on all matters relating to the well-being of the Society. From other sources we learn that the church and Town Hall were thrown open on Sundays for the meetings of different religious sects, and that ministers of all denominations were given full liberty to preach.[1]

In November of this same year 1825, Robert Owen returned to America, accompanied by his son Robert, and by one or two disciples, amongst them Captain Macdonald, formerly a prominent member of the Edinburgh Practical Society.[2] He brought with him also a model, nearly six feet square, of the proposed Community Buildings which he presented to the President of the United States, for the uses of the General Government.[3]

Owen returned to New Harmony on January 12, 1826, bringing with him some of those men of science to whom reference had been made in his speech of April 27. Their leader was one William Maclure, a native of Ayr in Scotland, who had already made Owen's acquaintance in a visit which he had paid to New Lanark in July,

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[1] Letter dated December, 1825, printed in *Co-operative Magazine*, February, 1826.

[2] See below, Chapter XV.

New Harmony Gazette, Vol. I., p. 118.

1824. He had been delighted with all that he saw there, especially with the education of the children, and with Owen's plans for reorganising society "so as to drown the self in an ocean of sociality."[1] Maclure had come to America towards the close of the eighteenth century, and had spent several years in making single-handed a geological survey of the United States, travelling on foot through every State and Territory in the Union. The results of his gigantic labours were published in 1809. He had subsequently helped to found the Philadelphia Academy of Science, and was for many years the President of that body. With his love of natural science was joined a passionate enthusiasm for popular education. He had long been ambitious to found an agricultural school for the children of the poor, *i.e.* a school somewhat after the model of Fellenberg's school for the children of peasants, in which "physical labour should be combined with moral and intellectual culture," the labours of the children in the fields helping to defray the cost of their schooling in the classroom. A man of considerable wealth, he had started an experimental school of the kind on a large scale in Spain, but was compelled to abandon the scheme on account of the unsettled state of that country. Though by no means agreeing with all Owen's economic views, he was sufficiently in sympathy with him to be willing to co-operate in the New Harmony experiment, mainly, no doubt, because he saw in it a favourable opportunity for giving effect to his educational theories. He agreed therefore, to advance some of the capital needed to float the scheme, and to give his personal assistance to the Community Schools.[1]

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[1] From Maclure's Diary, which is preserved in the New Harmony Public Library.

With Maclure came Thomas Say, a distinguished zoologist, afterwards known as author of an *American Entomology* and an *American Conchology*, the latter work having been printed at New Harmony; Charles Lesueur, a French naturalist and draughtsman, who drew some of the engravings in the conchology above referred to, known also for his work on American freshwater fishes; Gerard Troost, a distinguished Dutch chemist and geologist, afterwards Professor of Chemistry at Nashville University; Joseph Neef, an ex-soldier, who had been a master under Pestalozzi at Yverdun; Phiquepal d'Arusmont, afterwards the husband of Frances Wright; Madame Marie Frétageot (both Pestalozzian teachers), and several others. The distinguished party travelled by boat down the Ohio to New Harmony—"the Boatload of Knowledge," as it was called—reaching that place on January 12, 1826.

It had been Owen's original intention, as we have seen, to wait for three years—*i.e.* until about the end of 1827, before attempting to constitute a Community of Equality. On his arrival, however, in January, 1826, he seems to have been so much pleased, both with the material prosperity of the colony and with the progress made by the members of the Community in the principles of true fellowship and co-operation, that he proposed to them that they should cut short their period of probation, and enter at once upon the final and perfect stage of social development.

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[1] It is not clear how much money Maclure actually advanced. The original intention had been that he and Owen should each put down a like sum. Maclure subsequently stipulated that his risk should be limited to £2,000 (10,000 dollars). Later, Owen expressly stated that "Mr. Maclure before he went (to New Harmony) advanced a part, and only a small part, of the purchase money for the real property." (Address at Philadelphia on June 27, 1827, reported in *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 353.)

Accordingly a general meeting of the residents was summoned on January 25, which straightway elected a committee of seven persons to draw up a constitution for the community. Amongst the seven were William and R. Dale Owen and Captain Donald Macdonald. The committee reported to the convention on February 1, and the convention at its ninth sitting, on Sunday, February 5, 1826, finally adopted a constitution. The document begins with a statement of objects and principles and a profession of faith. Then follow the articles of union. Article No. I prescribes the title—"The New Harmony Community of Equality."

Article No. II. runs—"All the members of the Community shall be considered as one family, and no one shall be held in higher or lower estimation on account of occupation.

"There shall be similar food, clothing and education, as near as can be, furnished for all according to their ages and, as soon as practicable, all shall live in similar houses, and in all respects be accommodated alike.

"Every member shall render his or her best service for the good of the whole."

The Community was to be divided into six departments—Agriculture; Manufactures; Literature, Science and Education; Domestic Economy; General Economy; Commerce: each department should again be subdivided into occupations. Each occupation should choose an Intendent, the Intendents should choose four

Superintendents—and all these officers, together with the Secretary, should constitute the Executive Council. The real estate was to be vested in the Community as a whole.[1]

Thus the Society at one step emerged from the chrysalis stage of modified individualism into the winged glory of pure communism. Prior to February 5, the value of the labour of each individual had been reckoned up and placed to his credit at the Communal Stores, and he had drawn upon this credit to procure whatever provisions or other articles he required. But in the new Society there was to be no discrimination between one man's labour and another's; nor any buying and selling within the bounds of the Community. Each man was to give of his labour according to his ability and to receive food, clothing and shelter according to his needs.

In a private letter written by W. Pelham (afterwards for some months editor of the *New Harmony Gazette*) to his son, dated February 8, three days after the adoption of the constitution, we have an interesting picture of the enthusiasm prevailing at the time. After describing the free and exhaustive criticism to which the draft constitution had been subjected, and its final acceptance, the writer proceeds—"Hitherto there had been much irregularity of effort, the consequences of which nearly paralysed the energies of the population: but at length I see the way clear, and I see the utter impossibility of such a state of things again recurring. The several parts of the great machine will be so admirably adapted to each other as to effect the most valuable purposes. I anticipate that in six months the New Harmony machine will go like clockwork." . . . Again, referring to the pending election of officers, he writes—"This is an anxious time (not with a view to the final success of our principles, which must infallibly succeed sooner or later, but) with a view to the speedy accomplishment of the purposes for which we are associated." The writer's tribute to Owen is worth quoting—"He is an extraordinary man, a wonderful man—such a one indeed as the world has never before seen. His wisdom, his comprehensive mind, his practical knowledge, but above all, his openness, candour and sincerity, have no parallel in ancient or modern history."[1]

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[1] *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., pp. 161, 162.

As Mr. Pelham surmised, it would appear that the new constitution, with all that it implied, was adopted with but few dissentient voices. Amongst the dissentients, however, was Captain Macdonald. In an interesting letter which appeared in the *New Harmony Gazette* of February 22, he explains why he could not join the new Community. Practically he objected to the whole system of representative government, even a thoroughly democratic government, such as that proposed by the new constitution. In his view the machinery of representation and election would inevitably lead to suspicions, jealousies and factions. He held that the organisation of industry and all the details of the working of the Society should be settled in the open family assembly, that all might know what was going on, and that each individual man or woman might feel that he or she had a voice in all the decisions arrived at. Clearly a Community of eight hundred or one thousand persons was too unwieldy to be worked on these lines. With such numbers some form of representation or delegation was a mechanical necessity. Macdonald's strictures, however, were probably not without justification. The constitution, which was no doubt partly modelled on the system in force at the New Lanark Mills, was too elaborate; and in a Community of Equality the mere existence of Intendents and Superintendents constituted the most glaring of inequalities. Macdonald's views were apparently to some extent shared by others. For the new constitution did not march in accordance with the hopes of its authors. At any rate the general assembly on February 19 passed a resolution requesting Owen to assist for one year in conducting and superintending the affairs of the Society.

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[1] I owe this letter to Professor Earl Barnes, who kindly lent me a copy which he had himself made from the original (now at New Harmony) in April, 1890. A writer who visited New Harmony in August, 1825, gives similar testimony to the impression produced by Owen's character. "Perhaps there has seldom been an instance in modern times where a benevolent individual has obtained such a complete ascendency over the minds of others, and such a thorough conviction of the rectitude of his intentions, as this gentleman established during his short stay of only a few months among us. Every one seemed to repose upon his promises with undoubting confidence." (Quoted in the *Co-operative Magazine* of February, 1826, p. 49.)

Then for a time all seemed to promise well. An editorial in the *Gazette* of March 22 breathes a spirit of optimism worthy of Owen himself. The article begins by admitting that hitherto they have spent too much time in debate, and in the endeavour to reconcile conflicting opinions. "We have discovered that our energies have been wasted in fruitless efforts, each one endeavouring to convince the others that he alone possessed the power of unlocking the treasures of social life. This error is happily dispelled. By the indefatigable attention of Mr. Owen, a degree of order, of regularity and system has been introduced into every department of business which promises increase and permanency. The town now presents a scene of active and steady industry, the effects of which are visible and palpable. The Society is gradually becoming really, as well as ostensibly, a Community of Equality, based on the equal rights and equal duties of all. Our streets no longer exhibit groups of idle talkers—but each one is busily engaged in the occupation he has chosen for his employment. Our public meetings, instead of being the arena of contending orators, have assumed a different character, and are now places of business. . . . No vain disputations now grate upon the ears of patient industry."[1]

But the Society was too large and its elements too heterogeneous for all to work smoothly. William Maclure, writing to Professor Silliman on March 16, explains that they had succeeded better than they had any reason to expect. But they "found it much easier to assimilate a few having the same pursuits than many having different occupations." There were, moreover, it is evident, social inequalities, religious differences, and national idiosyncrasies to create disunion, or at lowest, to hinder the complete amalgamation required. "It was therefore decided," continues Maclure, "to divide into small communities the land surrounding Harmony, and already two Societies are formed, one with 1,200 acres of good land, the other with 1,100 acres, at 83.60 and at 85 dollars per acre, seven years credit being allowed, and 5 years afterwards to pay it" by annual instalments. Money was also advanced for stocking the land, etc.[1]

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[1] *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 207.

The two Communities were named Macluria and Feiba Peveli, the first separating, it is said, mainly on religious grounds, the second, which consisted chiefly of English country folk, on racial differences. These two Societies adopted a common profession of faith, and a constitution differing little from that of the parent Society. The most notable difference was that the executive powers were vested in a non-elective body—a council of fathers—who in Macluria were to be the five oldest members of the community under the age of sixty-five. In Feiba Peveli the limiting age was fixed at fifty-five. Both societies appear to have contemplated a system of pure communism.[2]

In a leader commenting on the formation of the two new Societies, the *New Harmony Gazette* remarks "that the formation of communities is now pretty well understood among us, and is entered upon like a matter of ordinary business."[3] Again, in an address published on May 10 containing a retrospect of the previous year, Robert Owen, with his perennial optimism, finds only cause for congratulation in the multiplication of Communities. "In one short year," he says, "the mass of confusion, and in many instances of bad and irregular habits, has been formed into a Community of mutual co-operation and equality, now proceeding rapidly towards a state of regular organisation; and out of it two other Communities have been formed and are located in the immediate neighbourhood. Both are in close union with this Community and with each other; both are founded on the true communistic principles"—the principles of equality and common property. Macluria, indeed, would have grain and vegetables of their own growing to supply the year's consumption; and had already built and occupied comfortable temporary cabins. Feiba also had much land under cultivation, and seemed assured of ultimate success.

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[1] The letter from which the above extract is quoted originally appeared in *Silliman's Journal*. It is reprinted in the *Co-operative Magazine* for November, 1826.

[2] For an account of Macluria see *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 209. For Feiba Peveli, *Ibid.*, p. 225. The name calls for explanation. Stedman Whitwell, its godfather and presumable founder, invented a system of nomenclature under which the name of a place should contain an indication of its latitude and longitude; *a* or *b* representing 1, *e* or *d* = 2, the diphthong *ei* = 8, and so on. Thus Feiba Peveli = 38.11 N., 87.53 W. Under this system New Harmony (38.11 N., 87.55 W.) might be called Ipba Veinul; Orbiston (55.34 N., 4.3 W.) would be Ulio Ovuoti; London and Paris might be known henceforth as Lafa-Tovutu and Oput Tedou respectively. The system is recommended by its author as agreeable alike to the man of common sense and to the man of taste! (*New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., pp. 226, 227.)

[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 230.

On July 4, Independence Day, 1826, Owen delivered at New Harmony an oration inaugurating the era of mental independence: and thereafter the *Gazette* bears on its title page the legend "First (Second, etc.) year of Mental Independence."[1]

It happens that we have pictures from several different hands of the state of New Harmony in the early months of 1826. Robert Dale Owen gives a few pages to it in his *Autobiography*.[2] Reaching New Harmony early in 1826 in his twenty-fifth year, full of faith in the new order of society which his father was about to inaugurate, he was intoxicated with the freedom, the good fellowship, the enthusiasm which he found prevailing. It was, indeed, the land of youth and hope. There were concerts and weekly dances, and all manner of social intercourse; there were, above all, the weekly discussions in which matters of high moment were debated with all the freedom and fine seriousness of youth. The housing, no doubt, was of the rudest, the fare of the simplest, and there was plenty of hard work for those who cared to undertake it. But these things do but add zest to a picnic, or to a camping-out expedition. And here was a picnic on whose issues depended the regeneration of the world.

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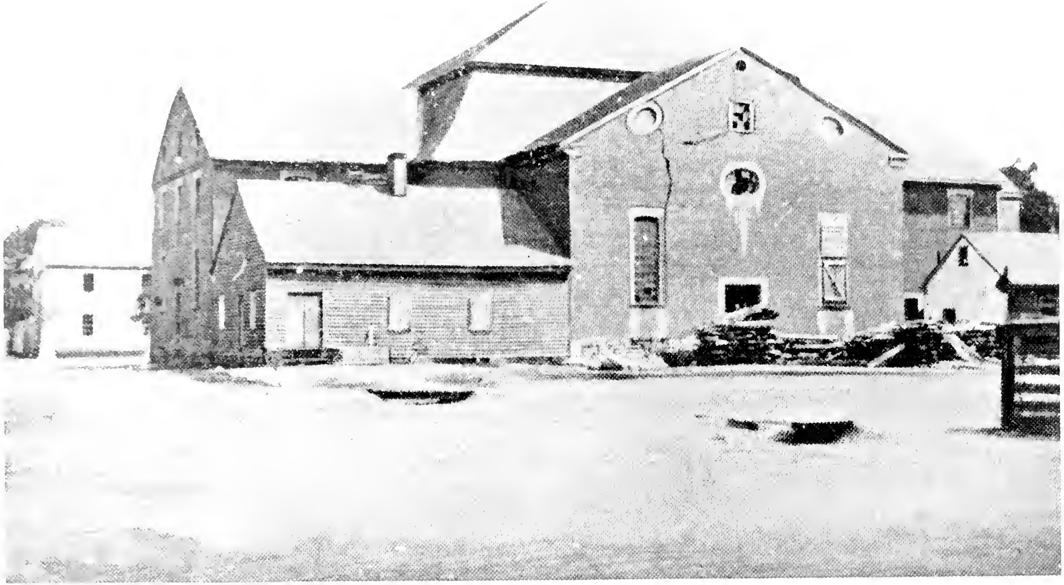
[1] *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p 329.

[2] pp. 244 *et seq.*

Young Owen's zeal impelled him to volunteer for all the hard work that came along. He helped to pull down some of the oldest and most dilapidated of the village cabins; he took a turn at sowing wheat, until his arm refused any longer to perform its office; he helped to bake bread, and by a unanimous vote was awarded the product of his labours for his own sole consumption. But he soon left these undertakings to others, and found more congenial employment in helping to edit the *Gazette*, and in teaching in the schools. He took also a prominent part in the government of the infant colony.

On April 13, 1826, there came to New Harmony a distinguished European traveller, Charles Bernard, Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach. The Duke was an acute and interested observer, and tells us a good deal about the real condition of affairs. He lodged at the Community tavern and found the accommodation passable. In the tavern he met a man "very plainly dressed, about fifty years of age, of rather low stature," who proved to be Owen himself. Owen showed him all over the Community, and expounded to him all his plans and his hopes for the future, and the Duke marvelled at Owen's invulnerable belief in his ability to remake the world. The Duke tells us that Owen's faith was by no means shared by the New Harmonites with whom he talked. Moreover, he saw signs of the early breaking-up of the Society. He talked with Mr. Jennings (one of the committee of seven who had drawn up the new constitution, and for some time editor of the *Gazette*). Mr. Jennings, he found, "intended to leave the place and go to Philadelphia. Many other members have the same design, and I can hardly believe the Society will have a long duration. Enthusiasm, which soon abandons its subjects, as well as the itch for novelty, have contributed much to the formation of the Society. In spite of the principles of equality which they recognise, it taxes the feelings to live on the same footing with others indiscriminately, and eat with them at the same table. . . ." Two things specially impressed the Duke: the extreme frugality of the living, and the difficulty of amalgamating different social grades. In fact he found that in their amusements and social meetings, at all events, the better educated classes kept together. The working men, he notes on his first evening, did not join in the dance in the public hall, but read the newspapers scattered on the tables; and later he remarks that when partners were assigned for the cotillon by drawing numbers, "the young ladies turned up their noses at the democratic dancers who often in this way fell to their lot." Even at the lectures the better educated members kept themselves together and took no notice of the others; but the Duke observed that some tatterdemalions placed themselves on the platform close to Owen. Again, there was a distinctive Community dress, which was worn almost exclusively by the more aristocratic members. The costume of the men consisted of "wide pantaloons buttoned over a boy's jacket made of light material, without a collar; that of the women of a coat reaching to the knee and of pantaloons such as little girls wear among us." The Duke even hazarded the remark that these dresses "have a good appearance." But "Hermann's a German."

But after all, the most prominent item in the Duke's narrative is the dancing. During the first six days of his visit he witnessed dancing every evening. On the Tuesday there was a formal ball in the public hall—the cruciform building already referred to. The Duke notes that there was "a particular place marked off for the children to dance in, in the centre of the hall, where they could gambol about without running between the legs of the grown persons." But on the other evenings the dances were impromptu affairs, or were merely sandwiched in between lectures and concerts. Here is an account of his Sunday evening in the settlement. "In the evening I paid visits to some ladies, and saw the philosophy and the love of equality put to a severe test with one of them. She is named Virginia, from Philadelphia, is very young and pretty, was delicately brought up, and appears to have taken refuge here on account of an unhappy attachment. While she was singing and playing very well on the piano, she was told that the milking of the cows was her duty, and that they were waiting. Almost in tears she betook herself to this servile employment, execrating the Social



From a photograph.

THE TOWN HALL, HARMONY, INDIANA.

System and its so much prized equality. After the cows were milked, in doing which the young girl was trod on by one and mired by another, I joined an aquatic party with the young ladies and some young philosophers in a very good boat upon the inundated meadows along the Wabash. The evening was beautiful, it was moonlight and the air was very mild. The beautiful Miss Virginia forgot her stable experiences, and regaled us with her sweet voice. Somewhat later we collected at House No. 2, appointed for the School House, where all the young ladies and gentlemen of quality assembled. We amused ourselves during the whole remainder of the evening dancing cotillons and waltzes, and with such animation as rendered it quite lively. New figures had been introduced among the cotillons, among which was one called 'The new Social System.' Several of the ladies made objection to dancing on Sunday ; we thought, however, that in this sanctuary of philosophy such prejudices should be entirely discarded, and our arguments, as well as the inclinations of the ladies, gained the victory." . . .

On the following day the Duke was invited to dinner in House No. 4. "Some gentlemen had been out hunting and brought home a wild turkey, which must be consumed. The turkey formed the whole dinner. Upon the whole I cannot complain either of an overloaded stomach or a headache from the wine. The living was frugal in the strictest sense."

The Duke visited Communities Nos. 2 and 3 and notes that Maclure had broken off from the parent Society mainly on religious grounds ; and Feiba Peveli from social prejudice, the latter Community consisting chiefly of English country people, who found the cosmopolitanism of New Harmony little to their taste.[1]

It is hardly necessary to say, of any Community founded under Robert Owen's inspiration, that a school for the children was one of the first objects of the Society's care. Robert Dale Owen tells us that when his father left New Harmony in June, 1825, after starting the Preliminary Society, he left behind him a school in which one hundred and thirty children were boarded, clothed and educated at the public expense.[2] The first number of the *Gazette* (October 1, 1825) contains an advertisement of the school, intimating that there were vacancies for a limited number of children from the outside.[3] The inclusive fees for outsiders were 100 dollars a year. But when William Maclure arrived on the scene in January, 1826, he took entire charge of the schools, which hereafter appear to have been run as a separate undertaking, under the name of the Education Society. In the letter to Professor Silliman already cited, Maclure explains his views on education. Children, he says, have hitherto been unjustly treated, by being given tasks which were useless and, to them, unintelligible. The propensity to imitation, he points out, is very strong in children, and he proposed to take advantage of this propensity to teach them the trades and occupations followed by their elders, as far as their feebler strength would permit. In that way their willing interest would be secured and—an important point for the poor—the products of their labour in field or workshop would go far to defray the cost of their subsistence and their education in the necessary arts of writing, arithmetic, in natural history, etc. Moreover, as they would never be idle they would be always kept from mischief. " All our vacations are injurious to youth and only serve the caprice or the pecuniary interests of the Master." In a letter dated July 4, 1826, addressed to the Editor of the *Revue Encyclopédique*,[1] Maclure gives further particulars of the progress made at New Harmony. The Education Society had purchased from Owen, at a price apparently of 30,000 or 40,000 dollars in all, 900 acres of good land for the experimental farm, several houses large and small, " two large granaries and stables for the experimental farming school; a large public building now converted into workshops for the instruction of the boys in the useful arts" [the latter was apparently the Rappites' wooden church] " and a hall to be employed as a museum, for meetings, lectures, &c." There were nearly four hundred children already in the schools, divided as follows: one hundred between two and five years of age, under the direction of Madame Frétageot; nearly two hundred from five to twelve years old, under the direction of M. Neef with his four daughters and his son—all pupils of Pestalozzi; and eighty in the church under M. Phiquepal d'Arusmont, who taught the useful arts and mathematics. The children under M. Phiquepal had produced in six weeks produce to the value of 900 dollars. Owen's two sons were engaged in the schools, and MM. Say, Troost and Lesueur taught natural history, chemistry, drawing, etc.

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[1] *Travels through N. America during the years* 1825-6, by H.R.H. Charles Bernard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach (translated), Philadelphia, 1828, Vol. II., pp. 106-123.

[2] *Threading my Way*, p. 229. It appears, however, from Owen's speech of May 27, 1827 (quoted below), that a great part of the cost came out of Owen's own pocket.

[3] Lockwood, *op. cit.*, p. 193, states that these pupils came from as far east as Philadelphia and New York.

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[1] Reprinted in the *Co-operative Magazine* for December, 1826.

Robert Dale Owen, after trying his hand, as already said, at various agricultural and domestic employments, took charge for a time of the elder boys, and found the task of managing them no sinecure. They were, he tells us, a rough, boisterous, lawless set, not wanting in mother-wit, but impatient of discipline and social restraints of any kind—as might, indeed, be expected from the children of their fathers. Dale Owen insisted that no corporal punishment should be permitted, and his account of how ultimately he succeeded in establishing perfect obedience by no other means than his own common sense and sheer goodwill shows him to have been a true son of his father.[1]

The Duke of Saxe-Weimar naturally paid a visit to the schools. "I found Professor Neef," he writes, "in the act of leading the boys of the school out to labour. Military exercises formed a part of the instruction of the children. I saw the boys divided into two ranks and parted into detachments, marching to labour. On the way they performed various wheelings and evolutions. All the boys and girls have a very healthy look, are cheerful and lively and by no means bashful. The boys labour in the field or the garden, and were now occupied with new fencing. The girls learned female employments; they are as little oppressed as the boys with labour and teaching; these happy and interesting little children were much more employed in making their youth pass as happily as possible. Madame Neef showed me their schoolhouse, in which she dwelt, and in which places for sleeping were arranged for the boys. Each slept upon a cot frame, on a straw bed." Later on, the Duke "went to the quondam church, a workshop for the boys who are intended for joiners and shoemakers. These boys sleep upon the floor above the church in cribs, three in a row, and thus have their sleeping place and place of instruction close together." There was also an infant school conducted by Madame Neef and Madame Frétageot. A quaint picture of the girls' school is given by a former pupil, Mrs. Thrall, who died at New Harmony some years back. She wrote that "in summer the girls wore dresses of coarse linen with a coarse plaid costume for Sunday or for special occasions. In winter they wore heavy woollen dresses. At rising a detail of the girls was sent out to do the milking, and this milk, with mush cooked in large kettles, constituted the essential part of the morning meal, which the children were expected to finish in fifteen minutes. We had bread but once a week, on Saturday. I thought if I ever got out I would kill myself eating sugar and cake. We marched in military order, after breakfast, to Community House No. 2. I remember that there were blackboards covering one side of the schoolroom, and that we had wires, with balls on them, by which we learnt to count. We also had singing exercises by which we familiarised ourselves with lessons in various branches. At dinner we generally had soup, at supper mush and milk again. We went to bed at sundown in little bunks suspended in rows by cords from the ceiling. Sometimes one of the children at the end of the row would swing back her cradle, and when it collided on the return bound with the next bunk, it set the whole row bumping together. This was a favourite diversion, and caused the teachers much distress. At regular intervals we used to be marched to the Community apothecary's shop, where a dose that tasted like sulphur was impartially dealt out to each pupil. Children regularly in the boarding school were not allowed to see their parents, except at rare intervals. I saw my father and mother twice in two years. We had a little song we used to sing :—

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[1] *Threading my Way*, pp. 246 9.

Number 2 pigs locked up in a pen
When they get out—it's now and then ;
When they get out they smell about ;
For fear old Neef will find them out !"[1]

Such harmony dwells in immortal souls, when nourished on a sufficiency of mush and milk !

From one Paul Brown, who came into the Community at the beginning of April, 1826, we hear of dissension and distrust as prevalent amongst the members.[2] By the constitution of February 5, it was provided that the real estate should be held in trust for the use of the Community, and that members leaving the Community should be entitled to receive only the money which they had actually brought into the common stock, and a proportionate part of the value of any real estate acquired by the Community during their membership. The measures by which the real estate was to be transferred from Owen to the Community are nowhere set forth in the *Gazette*. But Brown states that, apparently after the constitution had been accepted, the members were asked to sign a document binding themselves to the ultimate purchase of the estate as hereafter to be appraised, and that there was much dissatisfaction thereat. Ultimately, Brown tells us, Owen selected twenty-five men who were willing to take upon themselves the responsibility of signing a contract with himself and Maclure. These twenty-five were to co-opt others who should share the responsibility with them; besides these full members there were to be the conditional and probationary members.

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[1] Quoted by Lockwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 194, 195.

[2] *Twelve months in New Harmony*. Cincinnati, 1827.

Owen, according to Brown, was constantly inculcating on the people the necessity of thrift, "and knacks of saving and gaining money. Yet persons were spending their time in teaching music and dancing; profusions of musical instruments were provided, and great quantities of candles burnt at their balls. It is said he once told them in his preaching that 'they must be good misers.' A great part of the time the people were very much stinted in their allowance of coffee and tea, butter, milk, &c. Mr. Owen, constantly boarding at the tavern, where luxurious regale was copiously provided to sell to travelling men of the world and to loungers, drank rich coffee and tea."[1]

Another subject of Brown's criticism was the minute and complicated system of accounts. Accounts were kept, he tells us, of every pennyworth that was consumed, and every member was credited with every hour's work done; and a number of intelligent persons were occupied in the "sterile and tasteless drudgery" of keeping these accounts, who might otherwise have been employed on useful and productive labour.

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[1] *Twelve months in New Harmony*, p. 25. In his speech at Philadelphia on June 27, 1827, Owen stated that whilst at New Harmony he tried the experiment of having only two meals a day—at 7 a.m. and 5 p.m., and that his "average expenses of living, for about five months, including eating and drinking, amounted to less than six cents (3*d.*) a day." (*New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p 347.)

Brown's criticism here is obviously wide of the mark; for nothing could be more important in a new experiment of this kind than to keep the most minute and accurate account practicable of every item of expenditure, and of the disposal of every member's time. His remark, however, that "the children ran mad, in point of morals, from having heard the doctrine of no praise or blame, no reward or punishment, which went under the name of the new system," derives some confirmation from the account by Robert Dale Owen of the unruliness and want of discipline amongst the elder boys in the school. We shall see later that the same difficulties were encountered at Orbiston.

But taken as a whole Brown's strictures are unintelligent, and instructive only so far as they serve to show the spirit which prevailed amongst some of the baser-minded members of the little Community. Unfortunately, however, there can be no doubt that there were differences of view—not always perhaps acute—amongst the colonists; and that the new constitution did not for long work smoothly. In the course of the next twelve months there were several changes of constitution in the parent Community. Paul Brown describes two or three, and the editors of the *Gazette* hint at yet others;[1] and several daughter Communities were formed. Finally, in an editorial in the *Gazette* of March 28, 1827, written by Robert Dale Owen and his brother William,[1] we have an authoritative account of the state of affairs. The article is practically a confession that the great enterprise has failed for the time. "The experiment to ascertain whether a mixed and unassorted population could successfully govern their own affairs as a Community was a bold and a hazardous and, as we think, a premature one.

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[1] A. J. Macdonald, quoted by Noyes (*op. cit.*, pp. 35-40), enumerates seven successive constitutions for the parent Community. In this total are included the Preliminary Society and the constitution of February 5, 1826.

"Our own opinion is that Robert Owen ascribed too little influence to the early anti-social circumstances that had surrounded many of the quickly collected inhabitants of New Harmony before their arrival there, and too much to those circumstances which his experience might enable them to create round themselves in future." One form of government, they proceed, was tried after another, "until it appeared that the whole population, numerous as they were, were too various in their feelings and too dissimilar in their habits to unite and govern themselves harmoniously in one Community." They split therefore into three. Then two of these again united, and asked Owen with four other trustees to take charge of their affairs. Shortly, however, the trustees found that the reunited Society consumed more than it produced. "The deficiency of production appeared immediately attributable in part to carelessness in many members as regarded Community property; in part to their want of interest in the experiment itself—the only true incitement to Community industry; and these again were to be traced to a want of confidence in each other, not perhaps unfounded, and which was increased by the unequal industry and by the discordant variety of habits which existed among them." So the parent Community was finally subdivided into independent occupations—each occupation managing its own affairs and making a small weekly contribution to the general expenses of the town. "New Harmony, therefore," the editors continue, "is not now a Community but, as was originally intended, a central village out of and around which Communities have formed and may continue to form themselves." For Owen offered land and pecuniary assistance to any who wished to form a community on the estate. At this time (March, 1827) there were, including the Education Society, four such daughter Communities, of which one, Feiba Peveli, had been in existence for about a year. Macluria had also flourished for a year, but had apparently dissolved itself. The Education Society, however, under the direction of William Maclure himself, still flourished, though the Indiana Legislature had recently rejected by a large majority a Bill for its incorporation.[1]

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[1] *Threading my Way*, p. 257. The editorial is anonymous.

At the time that the parent Community was dissolved, as we learn from an address by Robert Owen delivered on May 6, all those persons who did not at once join one of the daughter Communities were warned that they must henceforth either support themselves by their own industry, or leave New Harmony. Under these circumstances, Owen adds, "many families left New Harmony, with their feelings more or less hurt," a statement which is full of illumination for those who desire to know why New Harmony failed. But now, Owen adds, the exodus is happily over. "The Social System is now firmly established; its principles are daily becoming better understood," and there are already *eight* daughter Communities, exclusive of the Education Society, and more are projected. Owen feels an inexpressible delight in looking back upon the obstacles which have been overcome, and "in viewing the cheering prospects which are before us. The latter, although not exactly in the way I expected, far exceed the most sanguine anticipations I formed at the commencement of the experiments here, and induce a belief that nothing can prevent the rapid spread of the Social System over the United States."[1] Just three weeks later, on May 27, 1827, Owen delivered a valedictory address to the *ten* Social Colonies of Equality and Common Property forming on the New Harmony Estate—they have grown, it will be seen, in two months from four to ten.

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[1] *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 158. Maclure's advertisement for pupils appears later in this year in the *Gazette*. He desires a few pupils, not under twelve, to be bound until they come of age. The boys would be employed in school five hours a day, and seven hours on farm, garden, or in the workshops. The girls would be taught "housework, needlework, and such other useful knowledge as is suitable for their sex."

In this address Owen explains that he would like to undertake the work of feeding, clothing and educating the children in the Community Schools without cost to the colonists; but he had already expended so much money on the scheme that he is doubtful if he will be able to defray the entire cost. He had left, however, 3,000 dollars for the purpose. On June 1, Owen left New Harmony: on the twenty-seventh of the same month he delivered an address at Philadelphia, and reached England on July 24, 1827.

After his departure the *New Harmony Gazette* is silent as to the progress of the ten Communities, the last item being a brief notice of a harvest festival at Feiba Peveli on July 28, 1827, at which upwards of fifty persons sat down to an excellent supper.[1] The editor indeed seems intentionally to shun all reference to domestic concerns. We are told, however, that a Thespian Society had been formed at New Harmony, and gave their first dramatic performance—the *Poor Gentleman* and *Fortune's Frolic*—on February 23, 1828. The performance gave general satisfaction; and on the twenty-third of the following month two other comedies were produced.[2]

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[1] *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 255.

In the late autumn of 1827 Robert Owen returned to America, and delivered lectures in various cities throughout the Eastern States. On Sunday, April 13, 1828, we find him again addressing a public meeting of the inhabitants of New Harmony. The state of things which he found on his return had convinced even his optimism that the great social experiment had so far failed. He briefly recapitulates the history of the enterprise, and then characteristically proceeds to reconstruct a new edifice from the ruins of the old:

"I came here with a determination to try what could be effected in this new country to relieve my fellow-men from superstition and mental degradation, so that if successful the experiment might be an example which all might follow and by which all might benefit.

"I tried here a new course for which I was induced to hope that fifty years of political liberty had prepared the American population—that is, to govern themselves advantageously. I supplied land, houses and the use of much capital . . . but experience proved that the attempt was premature to unite a number of strangers not previously educated for the purpose, who should carry on extensive operations for their common interest, and live together as a common family. I afterwards tried, before my last departure hence, what could be done by those who associated through their own choice and in small numbers; to these I gave leases of large tracts of good land for ten thousand years upon a nominal rent, and for moral conditions only . . . now upon my return I find that the habits of the individual system were so powerful that these leases have been, with a few exceptions, applied for individual purposes and individual gain, and in consequence they must return again into my hands.

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[1] *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 342.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. III., pp. 142, 150, 190.

"This last experiment has made it evident that families trained in the individual system, founded as it is upon superstition, have not acquired those moral qualities of forbearance and charity for each other which are necessary to promote full confidence and harmony among all the members, and without which Communities cannot exist."

He then proceeded to refer to various breaches of the engagements entered into with him, and to conduct on the part of certain persons at variance with the principles of the Social System, especially the establishment of monopolies, and the carrying on of "petty stores and whiskey shops" on the competition system.

"My intention," he proceeds, "now is to form such arrangements on the estate of Harmony as will enable those who desire to promote the practice of the Social System to live in separate families on the individual system, and yet to unite their general labour, or to exchange labour for labour on the most beneficial terms for all, or to do both or neither as their feelings and apparent interests may influence them. While other arrangements shall be formed to enable them to have their children trained from infancy in a knowledge of the principles of human nature and of the laws which govern it. . . .

"By these measures I hope there will be brought around us by degrees an honest and industrious and also a well-educated population, with right feelings and views, who will earnestly endeavour to promote the happiness of each other, and unite in bringing up their children as one family with simple manners, temperate habits and useful knowledge, both in principle and practice."[1]

On Sunday, June 22, 1828, Robert Owen met the inhabitants of New Harmony to bid them farewell, and on the following Friday he left the Colony.[2]

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[1] *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. III., pp. 204, 205.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 287.

CHAPTER XIV

THE END OF NEW HARMONY

AFTER Owen's departure in June, 1828, we hear little more of the colony at New Harmony. The *New Harmony Gazette* still continued, indeed, under that name until October of that year, when it changed its title for *The New Harmony and Nashoba Gazette or Free Inquirer.* The new periodical was edited, as its predecessor had been for some twelve months, by R. Dale Owen and Frances Wright. The little Community soon lapsed into complete individualism, Owen and Maclure, the two landlords, selling or leasing in small lots such of the property as they did not retain in their own hands.[1] One of the daughter Communities, however, No. 3 (? Feiba Peveli), is reported to have continued as a Community under the terms of the original lease for some years. But eventually that too was dissolved and some of the property bought by two of the members for their private occupation.[2]

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[1] A. J. Macdonald, quoted by Noyes, *History of American Socialisms*, pp. 41, 42.

[2] Dr. Schuach, quoted by Lockwood, *The New Harmony Communities*, p. 215. From a private letter written by Richard Owen in December, 1880 (a copy of which has been lent me by Professor Earl Barnes), I gather that the freehold of the land on which the Community stood was given by Owen to his son Richard; and that on the expiration of the lease, the Community having, it would seem, previously dissolved, Richard Owen sold part of the land to two of the members, retaining part for his own use.

The whole enterprise, culminating in the change to private ownership, entailed heavy loss to Owen. The exact nature of the financial transactions in connection with the original purchase of the site and buildings and the subsequent conduct of the enterprise—which was probably at no period self-supporting—remains obscure. From Owen's Philadelphia address[1] we learn that the sum paid for the real estate amounted to near 100,000 dollars,[2] and for the personal property 40,000 more—say £28,000 in all. It was the original intention that Maclure should contribute a like amount. It does not appear that he actually did so; but he certainly advanced large sums. Unfortunately the pecuniary arrangements between him and Owen were not apparently placed upon a sound business footing; and subsequent misunderstandings on Maclure's part led to a serious rupture. On April 30, 1827, Maclure issued an advertisement warning all concerned that he would not be responsible for any debt contracted by Owen in their joint names, and subsequently commenced legal proceedings against Owen to recover money alleged to be due. Eventually, however, the matter at issue was referred to arbitrators, from whose award it appears that it was Maclure who was indebted to Owen, to the amount of 5,000 dollars.[3]

In the winding up in 1827 and 1828 of the com-

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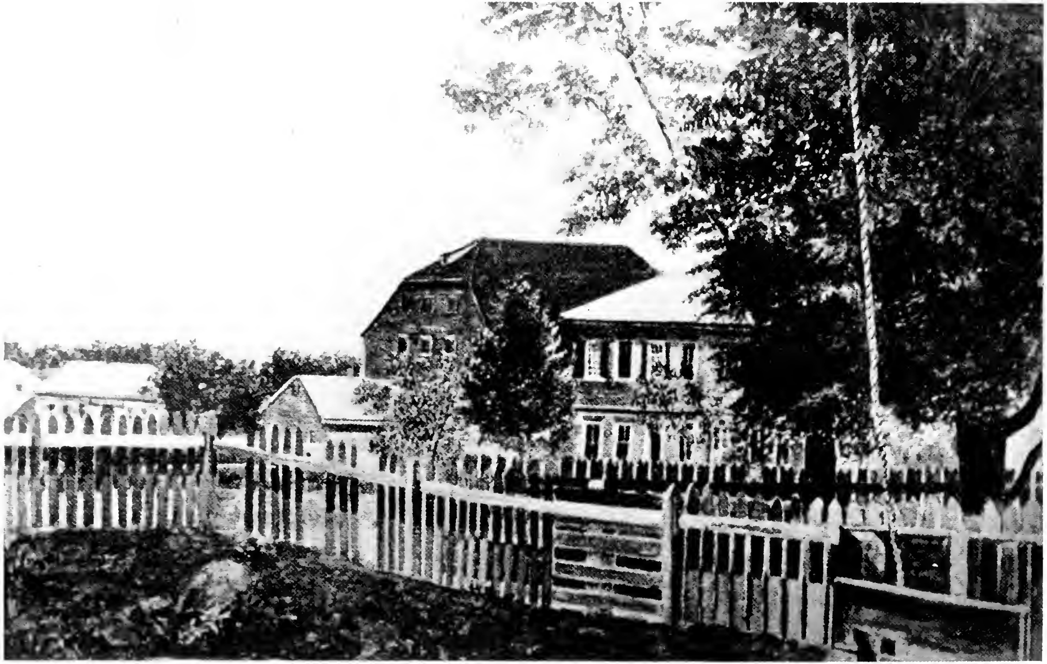
[1] *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 353. The address was delivered on June 27, 1827.

[2] Actually ninety-five thousand, as shown above, p. 289 (footnote).

[3] The only account which we have of these transactions is Owen's own, given after the Philadelphia address referred to. But a full report appeared subsequently in the *New Harmony Gazette*, and as Maclure still continued to reside at New Harmony it may perhaps be presumed that if not substantially accurate it would have been contradicted.



THE GRANARY FORT AND GEORGE RAPP'S RESIDENCE HARMONY.

The residence was later occupied by the Owens.

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munity affairs, Owen lost a large amount of property through unscrupulous speculators, who took advantage of his simplicity and generosity. In particular, it is told of a man called Taylor, who was for some time in partnership with William Owen and Fauntleroy, that on the dissolution of the partnership he agreed to purchase from Robert Owen a large tract of land, with all that was on it, and that on the night before the agreement was actually signed he caused a large quantity of cattle and farming implements to be put upon the land, and so came into possession of them. Having got the land he built a distillery upon it.[1]

Owen reserved some part of the land for himself and eventually made it over to one of his sons. His own loss over the whole experiment from the beginning amounted to over £40,000—more than four-fifths of his entire available capital at that time.[2]

Owen left not only his fortune but his family behind him in Indiana. His four sons—for the two younger sons, Richard and David Dale Owen had come over in 1828—remained in New Harmony as citizens of the United States,[3] and ultimately won distinction in various fields. Robert Dale, as already said, continued to edit the *New Harmony Gazette* and afterwards the *Free Inquirer*, in conjunction with Frances Wright. He returned to England for a time in the early thirties: the first volume of the *Crisis* (1832) bears on the title page the legend "Edited by Robert Owen and Robert Dale Owen." About this time also Robert Dale Owen published a pamphlet, *Moral Physiology*, in which he advocated the use of checks on conception. But his later life was spent as a citizen of the United States. In 1835 he became a Member of the Indiana State Legislature, and in 1843 he was elected to the Congress of the United States. As a Member of Congress he intoduced the Bill providing for the founding of the Smithsonian Institution; the plan of the actual building is also said to have been due to him and his brother David Dale. He was elected a member of the Indiana Constitutional Convention in 1850 and proved "beyond all comparison the most laborious, fertile and efficient member of that body. The law reforms and the provisions for woman's rights and free schools were especially his work, and leave upon our Statute books the ineffaceable mark of his father's inculcation, modified and strengthened by his own talent and observation." In effect, the constitution which he helped to frame provided for a uniform system of common schools, free to all, throughout the State. He later succeeded in passing State laws giving married women control of their property, and providing for greater freedom in divorce. In 1853 he was appointed U.S. Minister at Naples. Whilst there he became converted to Spiritualism, and his two books, *Footfalls on the Boundary of another World*, and *The Debateable land between this World and the Next*, remain two of the best books ever written on the subject. That pernicious heresy never found a nobler or more persuasive advocate. His *Autobiography*, published in 1874, is marked by the same winning candour and simplicity. He died on June 24, 1877, his last days being unhappily clouded by slight mental derangement, brought on, it is said, by the shock of the exposure of a medium in whom he had placed full confidence.

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[1] Macdonald, quoted by Noyes, *op. cit.*, p. 48. See also *Threading my Way*, p. 258. The dissolution of partnership with William Owen and the cancelling of all agreements with Robert Owen is advertised in the *New Harmony Gazette* of October 1, 1828, p. 392.

[2] *Threading my Way*, p. 261.

[3] In the Manchester Correspondence there is a Court Copy, with the official seal, of a declaration made by Robert Owen at a Circuit Court held at Palestine, State of Illinois, on May 9, 1825, in which he announced his intention of becoming a citizen of the United States. But the intention does not seem to have been fulfilled.

The second brother, William, settled down at New Harmony, marrying there in 1837. He died in 1841 or 1842. The two younger sons, David Dale Owen and Richard Owen were at Fellenberg's School throughout the whole period of the Community experiment, and only arrived at New Harmony in January, 1828. David Dale Owen afterwards returned to Europe to pursue his scientific studies. In 1839 he was appointed United States Geologist and instructed to make a survey of the North-West, including what is now Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, etc. The headquarters of the United States Geological Survey continued at New Harmony until 1856, when they were transferred to the Smithsonian Institution. David Owen continued his work at geology until his death in 1860.[1]

The youngest son, Richard Owen, on his arrival at New Harmony in his eighteenth year, found employment in teaching in the schools. Later for some years he cultivated the land left him by his father, and ran a steam flourmill. In 1848 he assisted his brother David in the geological survey referred to. Subsequently he became a Professor of Natural Science in the Nashville University.

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[1] I take these particulars mostly from Lockwood's book, *The New Harmony Communities*, pp. 260-7.

On the death of David in 1860 he succeeded him as State Geologist. In the following year he accepted the lieutenant-colonelcy of the 15th Indiana Volunteers, and for the next two or three years was actively engaged in the war. In the spring of 1862 he and his regiment were taken prisoners, and the Confederate general took the opportunity of publicly thanking Owen for his kindness to some four thousand Southern prisoners who had been placed in his charge the previous winter. After the war the remainder of Richard Owen's life was given to his scientific pursuits. He published numerous reports and monographs, chiefly on geological subjects, terrestrial magnetism, etc., and also a few addresses on education and ethical questions. He died at New Harmony on March 24, 1890, in his eighty-first year.[1]

After the death of her mother and sisters, Owen's only surviving daughter, Jane, married Fauntleroy, one of the men at one time associated in partnership with Owen, and settled at New Harmony.

William Maclure remained at New Harmony for a short time after the collapse of the Community experiment, and continued to carry on the schools; and when his health compelled him to leave New Harmony, he did not sever his connection with the place. In 1828 he started a periodical called the *Disseminator*, "containing hints to the youth of the United States; edited, printed, and published by the pupils of the School of Industry."[2] In 1831 he brought out a bulky octavo volume of "Opinions on various subjects, dedicated to the Industrious Producers." The book was published at New

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[1] From a Memoir in the *American Geologist* for September, 1890.

[2] *Lockwood*, p. 252.

Harmony and printed at the School Press, and the printing is by no means badly done.[1] Shortly before his death he conveyed a sufficient sum of money to found the Working Men's Institute and Public Library at New Harmony, which still stands as a monument to his memory.

Thomas Say also remained on in New Harmony, acting as Maclure's agent and assistant. As already stated, he there produced his treatises on American entomology and conchology. The latter book was actually printed at New Harmony.

Thus, though Owen's great experiment failed, a quite unlooked-for success in another direction rewarded his efforts. New Harmony remained for more than a generation the chief scientific and educational centre in the West ; and the influences which radiated from it have made themselves felt in many directions in the social and political structure of the country. Even to this day the impress of Robert Owen is clearly marked upon the town which he founded. New Harmony is not as other towns of the Western States. It is a town with a history. The dust of those broken hopes and ideals forms the soil in which the life of the present is rooted. The name of Owen is still borne in the town by several prominent citizens, descendants of the great Socialist. The town is proud in the possession of a public library—the librarian himself a grandson of one of the original colonists—of some fifteen thousand volumes, many of them scarce and valuable works.

New Harmony and its daughter Communities were by no means the only experiments in practical Socialism at this period. We have already seen that there existed in New York some years before Owen's visit in the autumn of 1824 a Society for founding Communities. Owen's *New View of Society* had no doubt attracted attention in America long before his advent. Moreover there were examples in the Shaker Communities, and in Harmony itself, to prove the practicability of association on the principles of common property and equality. The lectures delivered by Owen, therefore, at his several visits in the large towns, found a ready hearing; and several attempts were made in the years 1825-8 to carry out his views in practice. The colony of Nashoba was apparently in contemplation even before Owen's visit in 1824. Frances Wright, its founder, had the cause of negro emancipation much at heart, and her experiment was designed to educate the slave to live in freedom and equality with his white brother. She visited the Rappites both at Harmony and Economy, studied their methods, and finally in the autumn of 1825 purchased two thousand acres of land in West Tennessee, and purchased also several families of slaves, whom she settled on the land, there to work out their freedom. Her own illness hampered the progress of the scheme, and ultimately in December, 1826, she made over the estate to a body of trustees, amongst whom were Lafayette, Robert Owen, W. Maclure, Robert Dale Owen and George Flower, to hold in perpetual trust for the negro race. The experiment lasted for some years. It failed ultimately from much the same causes as brought failure on New Harmony.[1]

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[1] There is a copy in the British Museum.

One of the most notable of the experiments which owed its inspiration directly to Owen was the Community of Yellow Springs, Ohio. On his way to purchase Harmony, Owen delivered a lecture on the new system in Cincinnati and created a profound impression. Amongst those who were most affected was a Swedenborgian minister named Roe; and he with members of his congregation and others soon organised a Community and purchased 800 acres of land, for 8,000 dollars. The Community started in July, 1825. In September we read that nearly 100 hands were already at work; the number was to be limited to 2,000. The members expected soon to have trades of all kinds and factories at work. In fact the Community is said to have lasted for a few months only.[1]

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[1] *Noyes*, pp. 66-72. *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 164; Vol. III., pp. 124, 132, 172, etc.

Other Communities were started in the course of these four years, 1825-8, at Franklin, New York;[2] Kendal, Ohio;[3] Forrest-ville, Indiana;[4] Coxsackie, New York;[5] Haverstraw, New York; Blue Spring, Indiana. We hear also of a "Community of United Germans" at Teutonia, Ohio. But this, though a democratic Community recognizing the principle of common property, had a religious basis.[6]

By 1828 it is probable that all these Communities had come to an end. But Owen's teaching, and the demonstration of his principles and his ideals afforded by the New Harmony experiment, had an influence of a more permanent character. There can be little doubt that the Fourierite enthusiasm of 1840-50 onwards, which produced Brook Farm and innumerable "Phalanxes," owed much to Owen. They reaped a harvest of which he had sown the seed. The later experiments were, indeed, in many instances far more longlived than any Communities of the Owenite period. Brook Farm lasted for five years, the Wisconsin Phalanx for six, the North American Phalanx for twelve; and several minor Fourierite Communities had an existence of two or three years. The secret of their relative success reveals one of the main causes of the failure of New Harmony and the other experiments of the earlier period. All the Owenite Communities, as we have seen, were theoretically conducted on the principle of absolute equality and community of property. No man was to be esteemed before or after another; and no man's labour was to be rewarded more or less than another's. All were to work as they could, and to receive a like share in the common product. In the Fourierite Communities differences of status and accommodation were recognised. Each member contributed a certain sum to the common stock, and paid for what accommodation he required. Further, each received a reward proportionate to the amount and value of his labour.

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[1] *Noyes*, pp. 59-65. *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 71. Noyes's authority is a newspaper extract, without title or date, found amongst Macdonald's papers. But some particulars of the Community are given in the *New Harmony Gazette*.

[2] *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 287.

[3] *Id.*, Vol. I., p. 349; Vol. II., p. 81; Vol. III., p. 141.

[4] *Id.*, Vol. III., pp. 34, 141.

[5] *Id.*, Vol. III., p. 141. Haverstraw and Blue Spring, so far as I can find, are not mentioned in the *Gazette*; but some account of them is given in Macdonald's MSS. quoted by Noyes.

[6] *New Harmony Gazette*. Vol. III., p. 81.

The causes contributing to the failure of New Harmony were many and various. The first mistake was made when the general invitation was issued to the industrious and well-disposed of all nations to join. The new colony was indeed fortunate in that so many of those who joined it did fairly answer to this description. But there were some sharpers, some unsuccessful speculators, many amiable visionaries ; and not a few, apparently, whose only proof of fitness for the world to be was their failure in the world that is. Again, if all the colonists had been as industrious and as honest as Owen himself, they were still too heterogeneous to fuse into a Community of Equality. Differences of sect, race and social rank, as we have seen, constantly stood in the way. Once more, the Rappites, whose example and guidance Owen had hoped for at the starting of the colony, left before it had fairly begun. Owen himself was not on the spot to direct affairs throughout the first year ; and there was no one capable of taking his place. But if the colonists had been judiciously selected, and if Owen had guided the enterprise from the commencement, the inevitable catastrophe would only have come a little later. Even the most carefully organised of the Fourierite Communities, which did provide some incentive to effort, struggled on for a few years at most.

Under Owen's scheme there was to be no scourge for idleness, and no reward for industry ; no outlet whatever for ambition. Such a system might work in a golden age, when mankind, finding all their material wants satisfied, should have realised the universal human brotherhood, and left themselves free to turn their thoughts to the things of the spirit. But in a society which had found that the good things of the world are not enough to go round, and whose members had been trained each to snatch as large a share as he could, the great dream was too great. In fact, the only Communist

Societies which have attained any high degree of material prosperity and have retained it for any length of time, have been precisely those which did not look for material success, to wit, those whose members had been unified by a common religious enthusiasm. They have also for the most part consisted of persons of the same social rank, and the same nationality; their union has generally been consolidated by emigration, which has kept them strangers in a strange land; they have most of them been governed by a religious oligarchy or monarchy. And lastly, they have escaped their fair share of the world's burdens by an enforced celibacy.

A member of the Oneida Community, one of the most successful communities which was ever founded on a professedly democratic basis, and did not adopt celibacy, sums up the case against New Harmony in one pregnant sentence. "There are only two ways," said he, "of governing a Community; it must be done either by law or by grace. Owen abolished law, but did not establish grace." [1]

Owen bade farewell to New Harmony, as described in the preceding chapter, at the end of June, 1828, and returned to England; but only to embark on a new attempt at Community-building. Owen's own account of this new venture is that he was solicited by Rocafuertez, the Mexican Minister in London, to apply to the Mexican Government for the grant of Cohahuila and Texas, then a province of the Mexican Republic, to form the stage of a social experiment on a colossal scale.[1] But from the Manchester Correspondence it would appear that the idea was first started in his mind by a letter ftom one Ben. R. Milan, who wrote on August 30 of this year from Louisiana, stating that he and General Wavell had received grants from the Government of Mexico of land in Texas, and were prepared to offer valuable allotments on suitable terms, if Owen would care to consider the proposal. Owen had thus it would seem already made up his mind to colonise Texas, before he approached the Mexican Minister, who for his part did his best to discountenance the project, as the following letter will show.

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[1] Noyes, *op. cit.*, p. 54. The constitution of Oneida was never really democratic during the lifetime of Noyes, its founder; and though not adopting celibacy, the members took measures to regulate the growth of population.

"IVY LODGE, FULHAM,
17*th October*, 1828.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"The more I reflect upon your plan more obstacles I meet in its execution, and greater is my apprehension that you will not succeed in Texas; the interest I take in your concerns and the value I set on your time always applied to useful purposes stimulates me to tell you my candid opinion on this interesting subject. I am afraid you will be completely disappointed in your expectations, and in carrying into effect your benevolent scheme of moral reform in such a country as Texas, and if I dare suggest to you the idea of giving up your trip to Mexico by the next Packet, I would do it, guided by a feeling of respect I have for you.

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[1] *London Investigator*, Vol. III., p. 232. Owen wrote a brief sketch of his life which appeared simultaneously in the *London Investigator* (a secularist journal edited by Robert Cooper) and the *Millennial Gazette* during the year 1856.

"I have sent your memorial to the Mexican Government and have recommended it, but I fear it will not meet the sanction of the Ministry, at all events I think it would be more advisable to wait for an answer. Hoping you will excuse my frankness, proceeding from the interest I take in your welfare, I have the honour to be,

"My dear Sir,
"Your most obedient servant,
"VIC^{TE} ROCAFUERTEZ."

Owen received the letter in New Lanark and replied to it on October 31, in characteristic fashion—"... The subject of your letter in reference to Texas is in unison with my views from the time it was first mentioned to me. I knew many formidable difficulties would present themselves as I proceeded in the negotiation, but I have always had the prejudices of mankind to overcome, and my success has given me confidence to meet them openly and fairly under every form in which they may arise. And the republic of Mexico with the Governments south, north and east, seem to me at this period to be in a state peculiarly favourable to be beneficially acted upon to an extent that few unacquainted with the real state of the human mind in Europe and America can readily imagine. The world is, as it appears to me, full ripe for a great moral change, and it may be, I think, commenced the most advantageously in the New World; the Mexican Republic presents perhaps at the moment the best point at which to begin new and mighty operations ...."

Towards the end of November Owen set sail for Vera Cruz. The ship touched first at San Domingo, and afterwards at Jamaica. At Kingston Owen renewed some old friendships, amongst others with Admiral Fleming, then in command at the West Indies, and made many new ones—for throughout his life he had the power of attracting all men to him. He took the opportunity of studying the condition of the slave population in Jamaica. This is his account of his observations :

"The slaves whom I saw in the island of Jamaica are better dressed, more independent in their look, person and manner, and are greatly more free from corroding care and anxiety than a large portion of the working-classes in England, Scotland and Ireland. What the condition of these slaves was in former times I know not. But I request with all the earnestness such a subject demands, that our good religious people in England will not attempt to disturb these slaves in the happiness and independence which they enjoy in their present condition. For while they are under humane masters—and almost all slave proprietors are now humane, for they know it to be to their interest to be so—the West Indian 'slave' as he is called, is greatly more comfortable and happy than the British or Irish operative manufacturer or day-labourer. These slaves are secure in sufficiency for the enjoyment of all the animal wants, and they are, fortunately for themselves, in the present stage of society too ignorant to desire more. If their present condition should not be interfered with by the abolitionists on the one hand, and the religionists on the other, these slaves cannot fail to be generally the happiest members of society for many years to come—until knowledge can be no longer kept from them."[1]

The extract is not more instructive on the condition of the slaves in pre-abolition days, than on the writer's views of life and on his patriarchal attitude towards the working-classes.

From Jamaica Owen proceeded to Vera Cruz. Mexico was at that time in revolution, Santa Anna, at the head of the army, having recently installed in office a new President, his friend Guerrero. On his way up from the coast Owen fell in with Santa Anna and the revolutionary forces. He was given safe conduct, however, after having made an engagement with Santa Anna to meet him on his return journey, in order to make to him an important communication. On his arrival in the city of Mexico Owen called upon the President of the Republic and other influential personages. His application for the provinces of Texas and Cohahuila could not, he was told, be complied with, but he was promised full jurisdiction over a strip of neutral territory 150 miles in breadth, which ran from sea to sea, forming a barrier between Mexico and the United States. The fulfilment of the promise was made conditional, however, on the Mexican Congress passing an Act to establish freedom of religious belief over the Republic. Later, Owen learnt that the measure was thrown out, and his great scheme accordingly came to nought.[2]

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[1] *British Co-operator* (1830), pp. 93, 94.

[2] It must be remembered that we have only Owen's own version of what took place on the journey to Mexico. That he did actually receive such a promise—even a conditional promise—as he states seems scarcely probable.

After a stay of a few weeks only in the interior Owen made his way back to the coast. On the return journey, in accordance with the arrangement made, he called upon Santa Anna, and proposed to discuss with him the principles of the New System. Santa Anna, we are told, readily assented, and on Owen's attending at an early hour on the following morning he found the general and three of his officers prepared to listen. Owen had drawn out a summary of his doctrines in twelve sections, probably the twelve fundamental laws which figured so prominently in the Cincinnati debate as described at the end of this chapter. These twelve sections he read and expounded to his audience one by one. After an animated discussion we learn that all the officers were converted to the new views, and Santa Anna in particular was so enthusiastic that he expressed a wish that the principles could be translated into Spanish and circulated throughout the Republic. Further, he promised to aid Owen at all times to the full extent of his powers.

On reaching Vera Cruz again Owen was met, in accordance with a promise given by Admiral Fleming, by H.M.S. *Druid* and H.M.S. *Fairy* and was conveyed by the latter, a ten-gun brig, to New Orleans, whence he travelled to Cincinnati, reaching that town early in April, 1829, in time to fulfil an engagement made a twelvemonth before. In January, 1828, after giving a course of lectures in New Orleans, Owen had issued a public challenge to the clergy of the United States inviting any of them to meet him in friendly discussion.

The propositions which Owen had professed himself ready to defend were "(1) That all the religions of the world have been founded on the ignorance of mankind; (2) that they are directly opposed to the never-changing laws of our nature; (3) that they have been and are the real cause of vice, dissension and misery of every description; (4) that they are now the only real bar to the formation of a society of virtue, of intelligence, of charity in the most extended sense, and of sincerity and kindness among the whole human family; and (5) that they can be no longer maintained except through the ignorance of the mass of the people, and the tyranny of the few over the mass." [1]

A Universalist minister, the Rev. Alexander Campbell, of Bethany, Virginia, took up the challenge.

The discussion actually began on Monday, April 13, 1829, and continued day by day, Sunday excepted, until the afternoon of Tuesday the 21st—eight days in all. The proceedings began at 9 a.m. each day and lasted until noon, and were resumed at 3 p.m. each afternoon. Each disputant spoke alternately; but Campbell on one occasion claimed to have spoken for twelve consecutive hours. The audience who attended this strenuous entertainment is said to have numbered about a thousand persons.

In October, 1828, a letter from Owen had appeared in the London *Times*, stating that "the object of the meeting between the clergy and myself in April next in the city of Cincinnati, in the United States, is not to discuss the truth or falsehood of the Christian religion, as stated in the *Scotsman*, but to ascertain the errors in all religions which prevent them from being efficacious in practice, and to bring out all that is really valuable in each, leaving out their errors, and thus to form from them collectively a religion wholly true and consistent, that it may become universal, and be acted upon consistently by all."

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[1] *Debate on the Evidences of Christianity, etc., between Robert Owen and Alexander Campbell*, London, 1839, p. 30.

No doubt in writing this letter Owen thought that he had correctly interpreted Mr. Campbell's aims as well as his own, just as he appears to have thought that he had correctly represented the attitude of Rocafuertez to the Mexican project. In fact Owen was at all times incapable of seeing a point of view differing from his own, or even of conceiving the possibility of such a different view, except as the result of ignorance or blindness. But naturally the matter did not present itself in the same light to Mr. Campbell. Even when directly challenged by the latter, however, Owen was unable to recognise that his letter to the London *Times* was not a fair statement of his original proposal.[1] With such a beginning, it could hardly be expected that the discussion should lead to any common understanding. Owen's share in the proceedings throughout the entire eight days consisted of long expositions of his system, the twelve fundamental laws of human nature, the natural code of law which should obtain in a perfect society; the arrangements for the organisation and government of such a society, and so on. The germs of all the doctrines which he developed later in the *Book of the New Moral World*, the *Lectures on Marriage* and other works are to be found here. But it will be more convenient to consider them in the more systematic form in which they were put before the world later on.[1]

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[1] *Debate on the Evidences of Christianity*, pp. 30, 35.

Campbell's discourse consisted in the main of a learned and occasionally eloquent apology for Christianity. But he took occasion to assail Owen's position, and to point out difficulties and inconsistencies in his argument. Owen was unapt at defence; and Campbell's attacks remained for the most part unanswered.

An English lady, Mrs. Trollope, who was present at the debate, gives an account of the proceedings, from which the following extracts are taken:

"When I recollect its object, and the uncompromising manner in which the orator stated his mature conviction that the whole history of the Church mission was a fraud, and its sacred origin a fable, I cannot but wonder that it was so listened to; yet at the time I felt no such wonder. Never did anyone practise the *suaviter in modo* with more powerful effect than Mr. Owen. The gentle tone of his voice, his mild, sometimes playful, but never ironical, manner, the absence of every vehement or harsh expression, the affectionate interest expressed for 'the whole human family,' the air of candour with which he expressed his wish to be convinced he was wrong, if he indeed were so; his kind smile, the mild expression of his eyes—in short, his whole manner disarmed zeal, and produced a degree of tolerance that those who did not hear him would hardly believe possible. . . .

"From this time Mr. Owen entrenched himself behind his twelve laws, and Mr. Campbell, with equal gravity, confined himself to bringing forward the most

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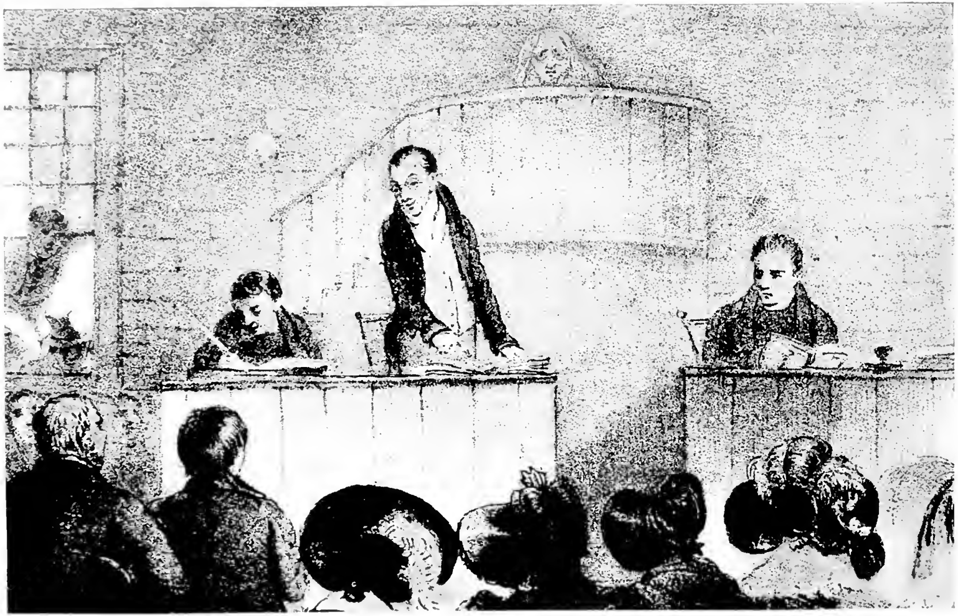
[1] See below, Chapter XX.



From a lithograph in Mrs. Trollope's "Domestic Manners of the Americans, 1832."

THE DEBATE BETWEEN OWEN AND CAMPBELL.

elaborate theological authorities in evidence of the truth of revealed religion. Neither appeared to me to answer the other, but to confine themselves to the utterance of what they had uppermost in their own minds when the discussion began."[1]

From Cincinnati Owen went to Washington, where he had interviews with Van Buren, the Secretary of State, and with the President, Andrew Jackson. Owen tells us that he discussed fully with these two gentlemen the causes of disagreement then existing between the United States and Great Britain, the nature of the settlement which they were prepared to accept, and received assurances of their sincere desire for friendly relations with this country. He was given letters to the United States Minister in England, to be presented after an interview with Lord Aberdeen.

On his return to England, Owen at once sought and obtained an interview with Lord Aberdeen :—

"I explained fully to him what I had done to prepare for a cordial reconciliation with the United States, and what I had promised on the part of our Government. He promptly said, 'Mr. Owen, I highly approve of the policy which you recommend, and of all you have done. If the American Government will meet us half way, we will meet it in the same spirit.' I said, 'I have instructions here to the United States Minister from his Government, if I found you willing, to enter at once in this spirit to settle by immediate negotiations all existing differences.' Lord Aberdeen said, 'I am quite ready to meet Mr. McLane on these conditions.'"

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[1] Quoted in the *Co-operative News*, August 6, 1904, from *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 2 vols., 1832.

Owen accordingly communicated the message to Mr. McLane, a meeting with Lord Aberdeen was arranged, and all differences between the two countries were, Owen tells us, amicably settled ; until some years later the Oregon dispute again gave occasion for his friendly intervention.[1]

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[1] *London Investigator*, Vol. III., p. 247. For the Oregon question and Owen's share in it, see below Chapter xxiii. Again the reader should be reminded that we have only Owen's own version of these incidents.

END OF VOL. I

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