

# REPORT

OF

## THE DISCUSSION

BETWEEN

ROBERT OWEN, ESQ.,

AND

THE REV. WM. LEGG, B.A.,

WHICH TOOK PLACE

IN THE TOWN HALL, READING,

MARCH 5 & 6, 1839,

ON MR. OWEN'S NEW VIEWS OF SOCIETY.

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## DISCUSSION.

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THIS novel discussion, which had been determined upon on the occasion of Mr. Owen's lectures in the Theatre at Reading, in December last, commenced on Tuesday evening, March 5th, in the Town Hall. Considerable interest was excited among the inhabitants, and more particularly among the dissenters; and many persons came from the neighbouring towns and villages to hear the discussion.

The following are the twenty-four propositions the truth of which Mr. Owen undertook to defend.

1st. That, from the earliest period of known history, all human affairs have been based on fundamental errors; errors fatal to the real virtue, rationality, sanity, and happiness, of the human race.

2nd. That these errors have been,—first, the supposition that man is created with a free will to believe, to feel, and to act, as he likes, and, therefore, ought to be responsible for his thoughts, feelings, and conduct, to his fellow men;—and, second, that he forms his own character, and, therefore, ought to be responsible to society for it, according to the notions, however irrational or insane they may be, of those around him.

3rd. That these suppositions are all in direct opposition to the facts which now exist; and are, therefore, most easily proved to be irrational and insane;—notions highly injurious to the unity, peace, virtue, and happiness, of the human race; and not beneficial to any individual, of any rank or station, in any country, throughout the world.

4th. That these errors have pervaded all human proceedings from the earliest period; as, in like manner, for so many thousand years, all men believed that the earth was flat and immoveable, and the sun moved daily around it.

5th. That the most evident facts are so glaringly opposed to the imaginary notion that each one forms his own belief, feelings, conduct, and character, that these errors could not have remained so long upon the human mind, had they not been continually enforced by a general *organization* of society, forming a trinity of power, against which, until the present period, no individual has had the slightest chance successfully to contend.

6th. That this trinity of power consists of,—first, religions of mysteries, invented by men; second, human laws in opposition to nature's laws; and, third, governments of force and

fraud :—and this organization of society pervades all the nations of the earth.

7th. That this organization could not have been maintained among those nations who have acquired the art of accurately investigating facts and the laws of nature, and of deducing the fixed sciences from them, had it not been for a *classification* of society, which gave the most influential and powerful classes an *apparent* interest in perpetually supporting it.

8th. That no member of the family of man has a real interest in maintaining either the fundamental errors on which society is based, or the organization and classification by which alone these errors are forced upon the human mind.

9th. That these errors, this organization, and this classification, are the sole cause of the ignorance, poverty, fear of poverty, disunion of mind and interest, and the passions, vice, crimes, and misery, which have hitherto pervaded all human society.

10th. That while these fundamental errors, this organization, and this classification, shall be supported by authority and public opinion, there is not the slightest probability that man can be made either a rational animal or a sane being.

11th. That, could the popular will be enlightened and made sane on these subjects, so deeply involving the well-being and happiness of every one, there are abundant means now in existence to make all of the human race better, wiser, more virtuous, more wealthy, more healthy, and happier beyond all comparison, than any classes or individuals are now, ever have been, or can by possibility become, while these errors, this organization, and this classification shall be maintained.

12th. That it is now, beyond all estimate, the highest interest of every human being, of every rank and station, that these fundamental errors, this organization, and this classification, should be openly denounced and abandoned, by all governments, churches, and people.

13th. That the acquisition of this knowledge by any portion of society, is sufficient evidence that the time has arrived for this great revolution in the mind of man, and in all human affairs, to take place.

14th. That the discovery of these all-important truths, and their communication to the public of the civilized world, will necessarily cause this great change to be carried into execution, and to be made universal, notwithstanding all the ignorance and prejudice now existing.

15th. That this change will produce, and permanently maintain charity, peace, wealth, virtue, affection, and happiness,

among the whole of the human race; and that this is the only change by which these great and glorious results can be effected.

16th. That these fundamental errors, this organization, and this classification, have required certain combinations of external circumstances, to make so many errors work together, in the wretchedly ignorant and chaotic manner in which the affairs of the world have been hitherto managed and conducted.

17th. That man ever has been, is now, and ever must be, the creature of the circumstances by which he is surrounded; the effect of which circumstances is modified to some small, undefinable extent, by the peculiar quality and combination of the organs and faculties of his individual organization.

18th. That man's inferiority or superiority, misery or happiness, depends in a very great degree on the kind and quality of the external circumstances by which he may be surrounded.

19th. That the mode by which the change from the fundamental errors, the organization and the classification, which have formed the past and present chaotic, vicious, and insane state of society, will be effected, will be through an entire change of the irrational external circumstances, which these errors, this organization, and this classification, have rendered necessary for their continuance, in opposition to the new facts which time and experience are always developing in one part or other of the world.

20th. That an entire new arrangement of external circumstances may now be formed, with the means under the easy control of society;—circumstances, which shall insure, without failure, a far superior character for the human race, to any ever yet attained; and more command of superior wealth by all, than any have ever yet possessed:—circumstances, which shall terminate all wars and disunion among mankind, individual and national; and which will establish peace, goodwill, charity, and affection for ever, and secure a far higher degree of continually increasing knowledge and happiness for all, than any one has ever yet experienced or enjoyed.

21st. That these external circumstances will consist of superior self-sustaining arrangements, scientifically combined in their due proportions, for producing and distributing wealth; for the domestic accommodation of all; for forming a superior character from birth to maturity for all; and for regulating and governing all, locally and generally, without any necessity for the continuance of the hitherto-practised unjust and barbarous mode of individual punishment, or individual reward.

22nd. That these new arrangements will consist of establishments, each devised for the accommodation and support of a population or family of from 500 to 2000, in the usual proportion of men, women, and children; who will always amply supply themselves, by their superior knowledge, and well-directed industry, aided by the illimitable powers of mechanism and chemistry, which will be applied to supersede all the unhealthy and disagreeable operations of life.

23rd. That these superior external arrangements for insuring the permanent improvement and happiness of the human race, may be constructed and maintained, at a far less expense of capital, time, and labour, than is now required to continue the present chaotic and conflicting state of society. And

24th. That the entire change from the present to the new arrangements, may be effected without disorder or confusion of any kind, and most beneficially for every one.

### FIRST DAY.

For some time previous to the opening of the doors, a large crowd had congregated, and the crush was violent to gain admittance. Before the time appointed for the commencement of business, the hall was densely crowded, the usual proportion of females being present.

Precisely at six o'clock Dr. COWAN appeared on the platform, and was received with loud cheering; he was followed by the Rev. Mr. LEGG, who was greeted with repeated rounds of applause from all parts of the hall. Mr. OWEN's appearance was also hailed with considerable applause.

On the motion of Mr. LEGG, seconded by Mr. OWEN,

Dr. COWAN was unanimously voted into the chair. He declared his intention of exercising the strictest justice and impartiality in the discussion; not that he entertained neutral opinions, but he was determined to manifest no bias one way or the other; and if the proceedings were interrupted by disorderly conduct, clamour, or confusion, and he found it impossible to preserve order, then he would dissolve the meeting and vacate the chair. (Cheers.) Dr. Cowan then stated that Mr. Owen would commence the discussion, and occupy the attention of the audience for three quarters of an hour; Mr. Legg would then reply for the same space of time; and afterwards twenty minutes each would be allowed for both to speak alternately.

Mr. OWEN then addressed the meeting. He did not appear before them as the advocate of any class, sect, party, or creed, of this or any other country. He was there to perform a duty of the highest magnitude—he was there to propose an entire change in the system of

society. He would first request them to dismiss from their minds, as far as possible, all those prejudices which reports of Owenism or Socialism, or whatever else it was called, had produced; for, he could assure them, that not one of those reports was true. It was utterly impossible for him in the course of one night to explain and elucidate the six sciences of which his system was composed; he could merely give a bare outline of its general and leading features. He had travelled over the whole of Europe and the greatest part of America—he had come in contact with the primest and finest minds in the world, but he had never found one individual who understood the subject—who had ever given himself the time and trouble to acquire it. Society had been in error from the beginning; it was in error now, and this he had to prove.

In order to place the subject before the audience, Mr. Owen then proceeded to read, from a manuscript, the following

### ADDRESS

*To the Heads of the Governments and Churches, and to the Leading Influences in the Civilized World.*

THE experience of past ages, aided by modern discoveries in the sciences of mind and physics, has now secured the means by which permanent progressive improvement, prosperity, and happiness, far superior to any hitherto known or enjoyed by any portion of mankind, may be insured to every individual, in all countries.

There are, however, many deep-rooted prejudices, which create various obstacles to the immediate application of those means to practice; these prejudices are religious, moral, political, and social; and for the removal of them, speedily and effectually, without violence or disorder, your united aid is required.

Collectively, you possess ample power to overcome and remove these obstacles to your own happiness and to the happiness of the human race; and it is now your most decided interest to apply that power without delay.

The prejudices which have created these obstacles have arisen from the ignorance of the laws of nature, and especially of *human* nature, in which men come into existence at their birth.

This ignorance of the laws of human nature, at birth, has given rise to the imaginary notion of original sin in man. This ignorance *has* been, and *now is*, the sole cause of *sin* among the human race.

In consequence of this ignorance or inexperience at birth, of the laws of human nature, men erred in their first notions or conjectures respecting the faculties or powers of their own nature; and thus, through all past ages, they have sinned against the laws of humanity, and entailed misery on man.

Our early ancestors imagined, and each generation has been subsequently taught, that individual man possessed the power, within himself, to form his own character, physical, intellectual, religious, moral, and practical; and, in consequence, society has, most irrationally, made him responsible for the formation of his own character. By this fundamental error; all vices and crimes have been generated, and man has been made the most inconsistent and irrational of all terrestrial animals.

Our ancestors also imagined that man possessed the power to create his own convictions and feelings, by an imaginary faculty called free-will, or something existing within him, without a cause for its existence; and supposed that *some* peculiar convictions and feelings constituted *virtue*, and merited all manner of reward, through time and eternity; and that other convictions and feelings constituted *vice*, and deserved all manner of punishment, through time and eternity.

These original misconceptions, arising from inexperience, have required for their continual support, error to be added to error through every succeeding generation, until these original mistakes have now filled society with myriads of errors, which hourly inflict the most grievous evils upon the population of the world; and all who reflect say, "There is something wrong in the constitution of society."

Our early ancestors, being thus ignorant of their own nature, were impressed with the notion that various peculiar convictions and feelings, derived from their own wild and over-excited imaginations, constituted virtue, and others vice; and they began to award temporal and to promise eternal rewards for the one, and to inflict temporal and threaten eternal punishments for the other; and thus, through mental delusions, effectually made man irrational in his thoughts, feelings, and conduct.

Slow experience, by gradually removing these mental delusions, has hitherto been the sole teacher of real knowledge to man. It was many ages before he advanced beyond the period when he was wholly governed by imaginary notions of all things, and before he knew how to examine facts, so as to be enabled to deduce and discover one fixed science.

During the long reign of mental delusion, and period of deficient experience, facts—the only true words of God or nature—were unnoticed or neglected; and men's imaginations were, in consequence, filled with the most crude conjectures and wild fancies; they were, therefore, continually divided in opinion, respecting the peculiar convictions and feelings which constituted virtue and merited praise and reward, and those which constituted vice and deserved blame and punishment.

The strongest party, in every country, always endeavoured to force their own convictions and feelings, whatever they might happen to be,



on the weaker party, as the true convictions and feelings of what they called virtue, and which were, as they said, such as all men ought to believe and to feel; and, while this party could retain power, they rewarded and punished according to these irrational notions.

When the strongest party could not, by fair argument, convince the weaker of the truth of their irrational statements, they had recourse to a newly-devised deception, and said, that the peculiar convictions and feelings which they taught, were real virtue *because* they came from a mysterious Being, supreme over the universe; and that it was *divine* knowledge which they taught; and which divine knowledge no human being ought to doubt or dispute; while, they said, those convictions and feelings which differed from theirs, came from the imaginary notions of men, or of some inferior supernatural *evil* power, which was opposed to their assumed superior Power. Any convictions and feelings which were opposed to those taught by the strongest party were, therefore, called by them "infidelity," "atheism," &c.; and were deemed by them to be false and wicked; and they said that those who persisted in maintaining such convictions and feelings, were wilfully irrational and bad, and consequently ought to be destroyed for the love and glory of the Supreme Power of the universe, existing in some spiritual or material form, according to the wild fancies of the then dominant party.

But each party, as it acquired power, claimed the right of explaining the will of their own fancied Supreme Power or Being; and often the new party who, by force or fraud, had acquired power, explained the will of *their* Supreme Being to be different, and frequently quite opposite, to the will of the Supreme Being of the previous dominant parties.

Thus have all the religions of the world, past and present, originated in the crude or inexperienced ages of the world; emanating from the wild irrational conceptions of men, while they were ignorant of the laws of nature; for all religions can now be demonstrated to be opposed to facts, reason, and common sense, and most injurious to the well-being and happiness of the human race.

These varied imaginary notions of ignorant men, which they call "sacred religion," have made man the most inconsistent, irrational, wicked, and miserable, of all terrestrial animals. He, at this moment, through these irrational religions, and the myriads of errors and vices which they have created, produces more misery to his own species, than any other tribe of animals; and more misery to terrestrial animated nature, than all other animals collectively. He is, therefore, at this day, in all his conduct, the most inconsistent, or foolish, wicked, and miserable, of all earthly animals.

Nor, until the original error upon which society has been based, and all the religions of man's invention, in the clouds and heavens of his

imaginings, and the myriads of errors which these crude conceptions have required for their support, shall be abandoned, and entirely removed, can there be the least chance for man to be made a consistent rational creature, or a sane and virtuous being.

For the original error, the religions of men's imagination and invention, and the myriads of absurdities which are required for their continuance in opposition to the ascertained facts upon which the fixed sciences are founded, are now, hourly producing all manner of ignorances, vices, crimes, and miseries, to the people and governments of all countries.

This universal derangement of the mental faculties of man, has made him, very generally, to esteem the greatest vices as the highest virtues, and many of the highest virtues as the worst vices; and thus, through all past generations, endless confusions of mind, and evils in practice, have been produced.

For instance—the highest virtue, which is to speak the Truth, has been made to be esteemed the greatest crime. It is the highest virtue, because its universal practice would produce high intelligence, and universal happiness to the human race. For, to speak the Truth is for each one to express the genuine convictions and feelings, which by the laws of his nature he is compelled to receive, and which he cannot avoid having, and for which he has not, nor ever can have, any just merit or demerit.

Such, however, is now the gross ignorance of the human race, that, in many cases, when individuals, most conscientiously honest, express their well-considered convictions upon the most important subjects,—convictions which, by their nature, they are compelled to have,—it is called infidelity; and although thus to express themselves is, in reality, the highest of all virtues, it is deemed, by insane man, to be the worst of crimes; and the exercise of this divine virtue, has often been punished with torture and death; and even now, this highest of all virtues is, by ignorant irrational man, made a crime of the most horrifying character:—a proof of the degraded mental condition in which one portion of the human race is held by another, both being equally insane.

In like manner, men are taught to imagine, that it is most praiseworthy to destroy, plunder, and murder, upon a very large scale; and, especially, to mangle and kill the greatest number of human beings; to burn, destroy, and rob, to the greatest extent, the wealth of others; and thus to inflict the most severe and extensive misery, on the largest number of their fellow men; although their own murdering and plundering party may suffer grievously in the contest. Yes! this most cruel and insane conduct is now deemed to be so meritorious, that the leaders in these proceedings are awarded the highest rank of merit, and rewards

and honours are freely bestowed, for thus producing misery to hundreds of thousands of their fellow beings; although, as soon as man shall be made a rational creature, and to understand in what real virtue consists, he will at once perceive the folly and madness of these proceedings, and that they are enormous crimes against nature and the laws of humanity;—crimes which, in a sane state of society, could not exist.

It is also deemed absolutely necessary, and a high virtue, to train a considerable number of men, at a great expense of the labour of other men, to acquire the art, trade, and mystery, of, what is called, the priesthood of the world, or teachers of the wild imaginary systems of religion, which our ancestors invented to mystify and confound the human faculties. Now, these various religions of mystery, or of mental delusion, continue to estrange the feelings of man from man, to divide the human race, and to afford food for perpetual contests and contentions between the teachers and professors of differing and opposing religions;—for those thus taught, not only acquire, but they teach others to have, the most unkind and uncharitable feelings for those who have been taught opposing religions;\* and the world, by these means is kept in continued disorder and crime. It is, therefore, one of the most mischievous vices, thus to train an order of men to live by the labour of other men, to educate mankind to hate and despise each other for no fault of their own, and thus to create, among all the nations of the earth, the greatest amount of disunion, irrationality, crime, and misery.

Again, it is deemed most honourable, and deserving of high rewards and distinctions, for men to be useless and idle, or even mischievous, and to compel others to supply all their wants and whims, in the most unnecessary superabundance, to the great injury and degradation of those who are thus compelled to create the supply for them; while, by this proceeding, the worst vices, passions, and crimes, are necessarily engendered in both parties; and *every individual* of the human race is, thereby, trained to become far worse, and more miserable, than any human being ought to be. Yet all men, under the existing irrational system of endless errors, are taught ardently to desire to attain this state of useless and unjust idleness; while, under other arrangements, in a sane state of society, every one would have all his faculties temperately exercised, be beneficially occupied, and made more healthy and happy, and become far superior to any men now living, physically, mentally, morally, and practically.

It is, also, a high virtue—because it contributes essentially to the

\* Such, for instance, as now exists between the Jews, Christians, Hindoos, and Mahomedans; Catholics and Protestants; Trinitarians and Unitarians; &c. &c.

happiness of the human race—to unite men, through a correct knowledge of their nature, in kindness, charity, and friendship; yet it is now deemed by insane man a virtue to train men to acquire the art or profession which will make it their interest to induce other men to quarrel with, oppose, and contend against, each other; at times even to the ruin of one or both parties; while it is sound wisdom, and the true interest of every one, altogether to abrogate this mischievous profession and mode of conduct, and to render it useless and unnecessary, throughout all society.

Again, celibacy in both sexes, beyond the age appointed by nature, is well known by the medical profession, to produce the most severe and melancholy diseases of body and mind; it is, therefore, a grievous crime for man to oppose nature, by making artificial arrangements to render celibacy necessary; and it is proved to be so, by the endless vices, crimes, and misery, which are produced throughout society, by this opposition to nature's laws. Yet insane man has made this crime against nature, (which has also arisen from the original error on which society has been based,) to be considered the highest female virtue; and its infringement,—except under the sanction of some ceremonies of man's crude inventions, performed by a member of some one of the opposing priesthoods of the world,—to be deemed a crime of the worst character; one, which shall be made to cause the greatest misery to the party who offends against these irrational human laws and ceremonies; and who, therefore, is never to be forgiven, but to be made an outcast from relatives and friends, and from all that is deemed respectable in society. By this error, and its innumerable evil consequences,—but the necessary effect of the previous fundamental errors,—man has entailed upon man and woman, by an attempt to improve nature by counteracting it, more vice, crime, and misery, than by any other error which he has committed; for, by this act of irrationality, he has introduced endless deception between the sexes, and caused more opposition or repulsion of feeling between them, than exists between the sexes of any other terrestrial animals.

It is also deemed by insane man commendable to accumulate and hoard up much surplus wealth; and those who do so are highly honoured; while numbers of their fellow men are perishing for want of that surplus wealth, and, most frequently, from the want of being permitted to cultivate the land thus unjustly withheld from their labour, when little or no use is made of it. The withholding of this land and surplus wealth, is, by the priesthood and wealthy, now made a virtue; while, in a sane state of the human faculties, it would be discovered to be a grievous crime against nature, on account of the extensive and unnecessary vice and misery which it produces upon the rich and poor.

It would be endless to enumerate all the other irrationalities, which the original error and its consequences have produced, throughout all past ages: the preceding statements are sufficient for the present purpose, to shew that the original error has led, step by step, to the formation of a crude, artificial, cruel, miserable, and most insane state of society; and the more intelligent will now be enabled to form some idea of the real condition of humanity, produced by these errors, in all parts of the world; and they will now begin to understand the cause of the universal cry for an entire change of this wretched system.

It has been previously stated that the means exist in abundance to change this irrational and miserable state, for a rational and happy existence;—for one, in which *all* may be made far superior in mind, manners, and conduct, to any who have yet lived; and to enjoy far more permanent happiness.

It is, therefore, the interest of all, whatever may be their present rank or station, that this change should be now effected, and brought into practice, through an enlightened union of all in church and state, to prevent the necessity for physical contest, force, or fraud, of any kind.

The acquisition of the knowledge, derived from facts and experience, which develops the *cause* of misery, and the easy mode by which the cause may be removed, constitute a certain sign that the period for this glorious and long expected change has at length arrived;—a period when all ascertained errors shall be universally abandoned; when the innumerable evils which they create shall be made to cease; and when the human race shall, for the first time, begin to enjoy the rights, advantages, and happiness, of a wise and happy state of existence.

It seems desirable that this universal revolution in human affairs should not be accomplished by a few individuals in any one country, or by any one nation:—that it had far better be carried on simultaneously by all civilized nations, in such a manner as to give immediate efficiency to the great and glorious Truths on which the necessity for the change is founded; and that the concentrated experience of all nations, should be applied to create the new character for man, and to form the new superior external circumstances in which he should be placed, to become, and continue, the intelligent and happy being, which, through the experience that has been acquired, he may now be universally made.

It is useless to waste more of the time and happiness of the human race, upon the endless disputed points on religion, law, governments, political economy, commerce, or war;—these are subjects fit only to occupy the time and attention of man while his intellectual faculties are deranged; while he is taught false principles; and trained, in consequence, in practices opposed to his happiness; and thus forced to become a most inconsistent and irrational being, and to contend

continually against his nature, and, consequently, against the Power which created him.

It is for you, the leaders of this degraded and wretched state of society, whom I now address, to abandon these absurdities, and to take up this great subject in good earnest, and with a determination to become fully masters of it, both in the outline and in detail. You will then discover that the sciences of the production and distribution of wealth; of the formation of the human character from birth to death; of government; and of the overwhelming influence of external circumstances over man; are now discovered, and ready to be made universally known, in order to direct the practice of the human race to obtain far more wealth, easily and pleasantly to all, than has ever yet been produced; to distribute it well, wisely, and beneficially for all, without contest; to insure a far superior character for all, than any individual has yet possessed; to govern all, for the benefit and to the entire satisfaction of all;—and to surround the human race with a new combination of external circumstances, which will insure to all, far superior means of permanent progressive improvement and happiness, than have ever been enjoyed by any portion of the human race.

You will ascertain that, under this change, there will be no poverty, disunion, or crime; consequently, no contest, individual or national; all will be made highly intelligent, and kind and charitable in proportion to their intelligence. In fact, by this glorious change, man will be regenerated, his mind born again, and he will be imbued with a new spirit,—one that will keep the world permanently in peace and harmony, and produce a new state of society, in which all shall be protected and provided for in all respects, to the full extent of the knowledge and means possessed by society.

The best means by which this great and glorious change in the condition of humanity, may be effected, without confusion or disorder of any kind, and without loss to any individual, would be, by the existing governments appointing one or more of the most experienced persons in their respective dominions, to meet at a convenient place, in congress, to take these matters into their most grave consideration; and, there and then, decide upon the practical measures to be adopted, to insure the entire change, in the shortest time, for the advantage of all nations, including both people and governments.

At this Congress of experienced men of all nations I will engage to demonstrate,—

1st. That a new mind, far superior to any yet known to have existed, may now be formed in all men; and that, in consequence, an entire change, from all that is inferior to all that shall be superior, may now be universally effected, most beneficially for all governments and people.

2nd. That this most desirable change, for all nations and people, is now, especially, rendered necessary by the later discoveries in physics ;—discoveries which include the enormous power to be derived from steam on land and water ; from the various machineries to fabricate both the soft and hard materials of nature ; from the new gas light ; from the new facilities of travelling, by the improved steam boat and railways ; from the steam press, when it shall be efficiently applied to disseminate truth and real knowledge ; and from many other minor discoveries, which have been brought into practice within the last century ;—discoveries which, when rightly applied and directed, are more than sufficient to insure universal prosperity to the increasing population of the world, for more than five hundred years, although there should be no additional scientific discoveries made ; while it is known that these improvements are but in their infancy,—for the progress of scientific discoveries proceeds in a continually increasing ratio.

3rd. That this change,—the crowning advent of the world,—may be now most beneficially introduced, simultaneously, into all civilized countries, through the public announcement of the discovery of the error upon which society has been based ; of the sciences of forming the human character, and of new-forming it ; of the production and distribution of wealth ; of governing without force or fraud ; and of uniting the human race in one well understood interest, and in one common speech, taught to all people, in addition to their present native language.

4th. That, through these physical and mental discoveries united, society may be now reorganized in such a manner, that there shall be no motive to express a falsehood in look, word, or action ;—all shall be impelled, by its evident advantage, to speak the truth only, upon all occasions ;—wealth of superior qualities shall be, with pleasure to the producers and consumers, created in superfluity for all ; and distributed to the entire satisfaction of all ;—every one, from birth, shall have a character, physical, mental, moral, and practical, *formed for him*, far superior to any yet formed, or that could have been formed for the most favoured individuals who have lived under the irrational principles and circumstances, which the fundamental errors on which society has been based have alone produced ;—money, superior to any yet introduced into use, shall be abundant for all purposes, as long as money shall be required ;—the exchange of all commodities, wealth, and knowledge, shall be free over the world ; and the world freely opened to all ;—the union of the sexes shall be made in accordance with the evident laws of human nature, after it shall have been rightly cultivated and freed from vulgarity, vice, and misery of every kind ;—the means of preserving health shall be taught to all, and universally practised ;—

nothing inferior shall be made, cultivated, or used, while that which is superior can be produced and obtained;—all shall live in superior dwellings, surrounded with superior appendages, for continual improvement, recreation, and amusement;—the land shall be highly cultivated, and laid out, to present, for the benefit of all, the greatest convenience and beauty;—and all annoying, inferior, or injurious external circumstances, shall be removed to the greatest practicable extent, or almost entirely, from the abodes of the population of all countries.

By these new and rational arrangements, emanating continually from true fundamental principles, the present enormous misapplication and waste of labour, capital, and faculty, in the churches and governments and professions of the world, in wars, in manufactures, in trades and commerce, and in the thousand nameless ways which irrationality now directs, will be saved, and applied at once to make this earth, as it now may most easily be made, a terrestrial paradise; and to train its inhabitants to become, at maturity, without the least necessity for punishment, slavery, or servitude of any kind, very superior physical, intellectual, practical, and moral beings.

The materials to thus advance the human race, from all that is low, degrading, and inferior, to all that is elevating and superior, exist in great superfluity; and you may now most advantageously apply them,—not only to *remove*, at once, the severe evils which have so long afflicted, and *prevent* the more severe which threaten to overwhelm, society, and throw the civilized world into chaos,—but to establish, for ever, an entirely new state of human existence, in which a new spirit shall pervade the human race, and peace, unity, prosperity, and happiness, shall be permanently enjoyed by all the nations of the earth.

[The reading of the above Address occupied the remaining portion of the time allotted to Mr. Owen for his first speech, and also nearly the whole of the time of his second; but it is here introduced consecutively, that it may be presented to the reader as a whole.]

At the conclusion of Mr. Owen's first portion of time,

The Rev. Mr. LEGG came forward to address the audience, and was received with repeated rounds of applause. He commenced by expressing his thankfulness for the kind and encouraging reception they had given him, in commencing the arduous and important undertaking which he had imposed upon himself. Several weeks ago, when he announced his intention, he was censured, by a respectable newspaper published in the town, as indiscreet in taking up the challenge, or offer—as he preferred soft to hard words on this occasion—which had been given by Mr. Owen to the ministers of the neighbourhood.



He did not put himself forward as the champion of any sect or party, or of any individuals. He had asked no advice of any friends, because it was probable that they might have discouraged him from the task he had now undertaken, and he might not, with his feelings on the subject, have been at liberty to act on it. He had felt in this way,—that a gentleman had come into the town in which he (Mr. Legg) was a minister; that he had called in question every principle on which he had been accustomed to act; he had attacked the cause of that Lord and Master whom it was his highest honour and felicity to serve; and that, as he might before long be called on to appear before that Lord and Master, how could he hold up his head in his presence, and at his bar, if he had refused, when every thing he held dear had been called in question, to defend his character, his gospel, and his people. (Cheers.) They would easily perceive that there was no difference of object between Mr. Owen and himself; for that gentleman had plainly announced that his only design and wish was to ensure the greatest amount of happiness to the greatest number of the human family. It had been suggested to him that it was not right in him to send a respectful letter to Mr. Owen; but the Saviour whom he had loved and honoured had taught him “meekness in instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging the truth;” and had also commanded that we “honour all men”—to be meek and gentle to all men. Upon such principles he felt bound to pay respect to Mr. Owen, as a candidate for the same eternity as himself, and to give him honour for the benevolent intentions and desires he entertained. He had no doubt that in so entertaining them he was perfectly sincere, and that they were firmly adopted by that gentleman. It was his conviction that Mr. Owen was most anxious to unite with him all classes of Christians in his efforts for the good of mankind. He was bound to admit that man was not yet what he ought to be; that he was not to the fullest extent possessed of that happiness which every benevolent mind would desire to see him possessed of and enjoying. He could not but admit the sincerity of Mr. Owen, when he saw him travelling from town to town, and from country to country, sacrificing a lucrative income, in his anxiety to benefit mankind;—he could not deny his kind and humane intentions. But he must also say, that while, in preparing for the task he had imposed on himself, he had perused Mr. Owen's published works, he had frequently felt startled, stunned, he might say stupified, at the means which he stated were necessary to secure that happiness to the world. He was astonished at the process through which all must pass in their progress towards Mr. Owen's paradise—it was indeed in the highest degree perplexing, especially when he considered that no force now to be used, nor was it permitted to be used,

by any person in favour of Mr. Owen's doctrines. When the new moral world is introduced, sovereigns are to abdicate their thrones, and lay down their sceptres, cabinet ministers are to dissolve their councils for ever, and to bring their seals of office and to deposit them in the museum of the Socialists, as a relic of the state of society which existed in the old world. (Laughter.) Mr. Owen would persuade clergymen to resign the insignia of their sacred office, and the people were no longer to attend together at the house of their God, and to worship there in his fear. He would persuade individuals and families to leave their happy homes and live in large boarding-houses in the New Moral World. He would extinguish that endearing word, home—that word which we have been taught from infancy to lisp. (Cheers.) He would narrow the bounds of individual affection—and destroy the pleasures we now enjoyed in the sympathies of a few kindred minds, in a world already borne down by sin and sorrow. (Renewed cheers.) He would persuade mothers to resign the care of their children at two years of age—(Mr. Owen here intimated his dissent)—children were to be deprived of a fond mother's watchfulness, and to become the property of the community, and the endearing word home was to be extinguished for ever from our vocabulary. (Cheers.)

He would now give an outline of experiments of "Socialism," which had been made in various ages of the world. The first was that of the descendants of Cush, immediately after the deluge; they were dispersed by the confusion of tongues, on attempting to build that monument of their folly, the tower of Babel. In Egypt was the next attempt at social union made; there existed the absolute despotism and tyranny of the king, the knavery and deception of the priesthood, the complete degradation and demoralization of the people; but the principle of moral evil was there, and when her time was come Egypt perished as a nation. The rev. gentleman then related the history of successive nations—the splendour of the Assyrian; the Persian, enervated and enfeebled by excess of physical enjoyment; the unparalleled intellectual supremacy of Greece; the pride and pomp of the Babylonian; the universal dominion of haughty and warlike Rome; all these empires and kingdoms had perished; their doom was pronounced, and they decayed and crumbled into ruin—and why? There was not the leaven of Christianity among them, with the exception of the lower Greek empire, and there the Christianity was only nominal—the idolatry real. They perished, for Christianity was not their basis and their foundation. (Great cheering.) If we turned to modern revolutionary France, where they voted "that there was no God," and "that death was an eternal sleep"—where Napoleon afterwards imitated the consular dignity—we should find that republican and imperial France perished;

now existed under a monarchical form of government, but with a portion of vital Christianity, forming the religion of the people. (Renewed cheers.) He maintained that, while, on the one hand, no nation endured without Christianity, on the other, no nation professing that religion had perished. Poland was an exception, but it was an exception that confirmed rather than refuted his argument, for there he discovered that instead of rendering allegiance to the "King of kings," she had, previous to her destruction by the autocrat of the north, become thoroughly Socinian, (hear, hear,) and every attempt to re-establish Poland as a separate state had been in vain. The experience of 1800 years had proved that Christianity was the salt of the earth, and that so long as a pious people were found in the land, it was impossible to destroy it. They had facts to prove that even Mr. Owen himself had failed to establish a system without basing it on Christianity. Mr. Legg then referred to the settlement of New Harmony, and its dissolution and dispersion soon after Mr. Owen had published his declaration that all religions were based on error, and that the marriage vow was destructive of human happiness; his subjects fled from him in alarm like the birds in Cowper, who

"Parted without the least regret,  
 "Except that they had never met;  
 "And learn'd in future to be wiser  
 "Than to neglect a good adviser."

(Loud laughter and cheers.)

And now, dear friends, what has philosophy—what has the kindness and benevolence of Mr. Owen's system accomplished? Its triumphs, its victories, and its promises are all future; they are still in the dim distance into which our gaze cannot penetrate. But Christianity *has* its triumphs and its trophies already; (cheers) but with regard to philosophy, "Man never is but always to be blest." (Cheering.) The fault does not rest with Christianity that it has not regenerated the world, but is rather owing to the lukewarmness of its professors. (Renewed cheers.) It would have gone faster and farther throughout the world until it had embraced the whole human family—it would have done this, if Christians had prayed more, and given more, and laboured more; but it *had* made the drunkard, sober—liars, men of truth—extortioners, generous. Look to its numberless converts even in heathen lands. (Great cheering.) Look at the South Sea Islands with all their atrocious barbarities and their mysteries of nameless abominations.—What system of philosophy could have accomplished the wonders wrought there? (Loud and repeated cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN here interrupted the rev. speaker, intimating that his allotted period for speaking had expired.

Mr. OWEN then resumed the reading of his address; [given consecutively in this report;] at the conclusion of which he proceeded as follows:—I have thus, sir, and ladies and gentlemen, placed before you an outline of another system, based on different and entirely opposite principles to yours and to the world's. You will naturally say, how is this mighty change to be effected? By the open, full, fair, and free discussion of truths—without the fear of man, or what man may do against the truth. (Cheers.) And I am highly gratified that on me has devolved the duty of explaining these great truths, for the first time to mankind. In this respect—to compare small things with great—I am like Galileo, on discovering that the world was a round ball. The whole world were previously in error; they imagined it was flat; and when he declared this fact, and that the whole universe was in error, he was called—as I have been called—an atheist, an infidel, an unbeliever; and those in power threatened him with death unless he recanted, and they made him say what he knew was not the truth. But I rejoice that in these times important truths can be stated without danger. I have devoted a large portion of my time, and spent a large fortune, in endeavouring to prove to the world these important truths; and if I am in error—if it can be so proved to me—then will I take as active a part in undoing all that I have done; but if not, then will I go forward, endeavouring to compel the whole world to come to me. (Loud laughter and cheers.)

Mr. LEGG said—We are now come, Mr. Chairman and friends, to a very knotty point in reference to the constitution and formation of character, and the responsibility of human beings; but I feel unwilling to enter into the difficult subject of metaphysics. Perhaps some very young persons present would like to hear a definition which had been given of the term—it was this; when a person who was speaking on a subject which the listener could not comprehend, and when the speaker himself could not understand what he was saying, that was called “metaphysics.” (Loud laughter.) In the days of the schoolmen these discussions were very common; they discoursed on various subjects, but there was one question in particular which occupied their attention many nights—it was this: “How many angels could dance on the point of a needle.” (Continued laughter.) As to the formation of human character, allowing Mr. Owen's views of responsibility to be true, he (Mr. L.) would ask how, if all the world were in error, and all the books that were ever written, how Mr. Owen, being born and bred up and surrounded by such irrationality, how, he would ask, came he possessed of such knowledge, which it would appear he entirely monopolised? He must either have got it from some man, or he was inspired, or he was made to possess it in the face of insurmountable

difficulties, and with most appalling obstacles to its attainment; then it proves that, with all these difficulties, man can form his own character. (Cheers.) The rev. gentleman then went into a rather lengthened definition of the influence circumstances have in forming character, combating Mr. Owen's sweeping assertion that character and conduct were invariably and inevitably produced by them; and then proceeded nearly as follows. He would contend that man was not responsible for crime if driven to its commission by a stern and invincible necessity. (Hear, hear.) Consciousness was necessary for responsibility—the latter could not possibly exist without the former. He would warn him of the consequences of freeing man from the responsibilities of conscience, in which, as in a mirror, he can behold a full length view of his every action; he would caution him that in discarding it, he left an individual, when freed from its restraint, to the appetites and the loose and degrading propensities of his depraved nature. (Great cheering.) As the sun was the eye of the natural world, so was conscience the eye of the soul; it might be silent, it might for a time be stifled, it might seem to be asleep, but, if the individual performed any evil action, it flashed, like lightning, with an instantaneous impression; it had an ear that was never closed, an eye that was tremulously awake, and ever directed unto heaven. (Loud applause.) For, if we are responsible to men for our actions, are we not likewise responsible to those institutions which God has appointed for the good and well-being of society?

The rev. gentleman then resumed his seat amid general marks of approbation.

Mr. OWEN said that great part if not all the objections of Mr. Legg arose from misapprehension of his system. He did not recommend the child to be separated from its mother at two years of age. The education of children would certainly not be left to the parents; they would be under the care of the community, and brought up by them; they would be children of very superior habits, far superior to those of the old world, and they would be no trouble to their parents. (Loud laughter.) Mr. Legg had forgotten in his statement the case of Paraguay, where for 150 years the Jesuit priests governed a population of 200,000 upon social principles and with perfect success. (Cheers.) They had no private property, and there was consequently no vice. (Hear, hear.) And, he would ask, what part of the world was there in which neither war, vice, misery, nor servitude prevailed, under the old irrational system? Mr. Legg had also forgotten that no nation of Mahometans had been destroyed since Mahomet first propagated his opinions, and founded a nation; therefore, his (Mr. Legg's) argument that Christianity was essential to the permanence of a king-

dom, went for nothing. He was also mis-informed with respect to the success of the social system in New Harmony. In fact no experiment of its principles had been made there; what had been done there was done without his (Mr. O.'s) recommendation or advice. (Hear, hear.) Still it was untrue that no success had attended the introduction of part of the system there. New Harmony was now one of the most prosperous and flourishing settlements. His family, a most happy family, dwelt there; one of his sons had just been returned for the third time a member of Congress, and another son was appointed geological state surveyor. Indeed the whole colony was very prosperous, considering they were yet in the old world. (Laughter.)

The only attempt that had been made towards the introduction of the Social state was at New Lanark, and pursued under his direction and management for 29 years, with, at first, a most inferior population of 2,500 persons, and with the most complete success. Thousands of persons of all ranks had visited the establishment, and who bore testimony that they had never beheld so virtuous and happy a people. (Cheers.) From this fact he contended that man did not form his own character—it was formed solely by the action of circumstances upon his organization, and over which he had no controul; and until those circumstances were removed and others of a more favourable nature and of a better description introduced, the result would be the same. There never would be a sane or rational character formed in the world until the science of human nature was understood—until those circumstances were removed which were the origin of all the vice, crime, and misery, which abounded in the world. Why, he would ask, was it that within a mile and a half of the court of the sovereign of this country, there was such a place as St. Giles's, containing a population of 100,000 of the most inferior characters which the most degrading circumstances could produce?

Mr. LEGG's time for closing the evening's discussion having arrived, the rev. gentleman spoke to the following effect:—In reference to New Harmony, he had hardly time to read an extract which would prove that the endeavour to form a community of interests had failed; but he would ask Mr. Owen how it was that his son should go to Congress to the irrational ravings of the inhabitants of the old insane world, (loud laughter and cheers) leaving the happiest family in the world (continued laughter) and the most prosperous community in the universe, for the strife and turmoil and bickerings of political parties? (Great laughter.) Mr. Owen says that we are compelled to receive convictions and feelings, and therefore it is not right to make man responsible for them. He says truly, that an infant cannot choose whether it is born at Windsor or under a hedge-row; but when it had passed into a

state of consciousness, then its responsibility to God would commence, and he (Mr. L.) would contend that the argument of Mr. Owen, that he has no free will, that he was the creature of circumstances, the victim of a stern and inevitable necessity, was not proved, because he could shut his eyes to the light, he could resist the convictions of his own conscience. (Cheers.)

A great deal had been said about Galileo, as proving that one man might be right and all the world wrong—and that, consequently, Mr. Owen might be right and the whole world wrong; but he (Mr. Legg,) could not see a perfect analogy in the two cases; it did not affect the question; whether it was proved that the world was spherical or flat, whether it went round on its axis or did not, it was of small consequence to the inhabitants—it did not affect their happiness, nor was it material to the affairs of human life. But the responsibility and consciousness of man were very different things, they formed an essential part of man himself; in all ages mankind had felt it, and it still formed part of his belief; to God he is amenable and responsible for his conduct, his feelings, his convictions, his principles, and his actions. (Long continued cheering.) There was no time this evening to enter into an examination of the evidences of Christianity, but he was quite prepared to pursue that important investigation to morrow evening. (Renewed cheers.)

Mr. Owen had boldly stated that religion was an invention of mysteries. This was a mere assertion; he (Mr. L.) hoped he would not refuse to prove it. He had to disprove all the evidences by which it was supported; and when he could prove that he had something better to offer than that religion that warmed and cheered his (Mr. L.'s) heart, then would he adopt it. But it reminded him of the fable of the dog crossing a plank placed across a stream with a piece of meat in his mouth, who seeing the reflection in the water let it fall, and plunging after the shadow lost the substance. The rev. gentleman then sat down amid loud and long continued cheering from all parts of the hall.

Dr. COWAN complimented the meeting on the order and quietness which had marked their proceedings. He had before remarked that noise and clamour would not assist the cause of truth or confute error; (cheers), and he was happy that the audience had acquitted themselves with so much decorum and respectability. It was found impossible to terminate the discussion in one evening; it was therefore proposed to continue the discussion on the following evening, tickets for which would be issued on the same terms as before.

## SECOND DAY.

AT the time appointed for commencing the discussion, the hall rapidly filled, and at six o'clock it was densely crowded; the majority being composed of females. When Dr. Cowan and Messrs. Legg and Owen appeared they were severally greeted with unequivocal manifestations of approbation.

Dr. COWAN was again voted into the chair on the motion of Mr. Legg, seconded by Mr. Owen, and addressed the meeting. He said that the meeting yesterday was very creditable to the town of Reading, and he trusted that the audience would disdain to have recourse to noise and confusion, by the use of which the cause of truth could never be advanced. (Cheers.) After several other observations, the chairman stated that the disputants would speak each for half an hour, and then alternately speak three quarters of an hour; at the end of that period the discussion would be closed, and no person would be at liberty to address the meeting.

Mr. OWEN said it was his first duty to reply to those parts of Mr. Legg's statements which he had no opportunity of replying to last night. His friend had said that all the happiness of his (Mr. Owen's) system—that all the benefits of his regenerated world—were future, and were promissory; but he would ask him what had the world gained during the last 1800 years, since the introduction of the Christian religion? When he found, during that period, Christians, of every kind, sect, and party, disagreeing, quarrelling, and destroying each other for their different creeds and beliefs—when he found them possessed of all the vices of human nature—full of selfishness and malice, and all uncharitable feelings, he would say that there was little cause for boasting with all these results before them; but he trusted it would not take 1800, or even eighteen, years to alter the whole state of society, and make it what it never had been—no, nor ever would, or could be, under the present dispensation—happy. (Cheers and laughter.) Mr. Legg had admitted that man had little power or controul over circumstances; then why make him responsible to the enormous extent which, he asserted, he was subject to?

Mr. Owen then proceeded to shew that the character and conduct of men was invariably the result of the circumstances in which they were placed, and over which they had no controul, acting upon the peculiar organization of each individual; and, as one proof, referred his audience to the circumstances by which an individual was surrounded



who was born in St. Giles's. In that locality there were certainly many and powerful circumstances operating to make the commission of crime desirable to such individual, while the inducements to virtue were small and few. He (Mr. O.) would define crime to be those actions by which evil was induced, or misery inflicted on individuals by their fellow creatures. But in the new world there would be no motives to the commission of crime; the happiness of each would be the object of the whole community, conflicting interests would for ever cease to exist, and this would be effected by placing the arrangements of society on an entirely different basis from those, which now caused universal ignorance and misery throughout the whole world.

My friend, continued Mr. Owen, wished to know how I could account for the principle of evil. I can give no other explanation than this—that man was born ignorant, and this ignorance was the cause of all the evil that existed. My friend said it was the devil, or some supernatural power, that instigated man to the commission of crime; but I think when he calmly reflects upon the subject, he will abandon this error. (A laugh.) He cannot surely suppose that the Supreme Power—ininitely wise and holy—would produce another being to counteract his own good designs and benevolent intentions. It is utterly impossible. Another argument advanced was, that conscience was born and implanted in the mind of every man; but the fact is that conscience is just as much a manufacture as cotton or any other material. We can create for the Gentoo a Gentoo conscience, for a Cannibal we can create a Cannibal conscience. (Great sensation and some interruption.) My friends, I am endeavouring to state the truth; I am not anxious for victory, my only desire is for that which shall benefit mankind. (Applause.) Mr. Legg says, I would make them mere machines—yes, but I would also make them *good* machines, and certainly they can be made so. Again, he says that man cannot controul circumstances, and yet he makes him responsible notwithstanding. Something was also said about theft, and the motives to theft, but in our new moral world (loud laughter) there shall be no inducement, no motive to its commission. I have been asked if I would treat a madman confined in Bedlam in the same manner that I would treat the world. To this I would answer, that I consider the whole world as a great lunatic asylum (roars of laughter), and I should therefore treat all alike—I should pity them both, and try to do both good. (Continued laughter and applause.)

Mr. Legg also says, man can believe or disbelieve as he likes; if this is true, then I am entirely wrong, and all my statements are erroneous. I say again, that no man has ever had, or ever will have, the power to believe or disbelieve as he likes, or think as he likes. There

are, you see, five candlesticks on this table; now if we can believe or disbelieve as we like, we can believe that there are five or six. But can any person do that? Again, some hundreds of thousands of human beings believe that Mahomet was a true prophet, and I would ask Mr. Legg, can he, for five minutes only, believe that Mahomet was a prophet? No, he cannot; and a Mahometan would have the same difficulty in believing the Christian religion. Neither can we like or dislike any person whom we please; we are attracted by some virtuous qualities in the one, and we shrink from the unlovely and unamiable disposition of the other. And yet this is the fundamental error of the human race, and on which all governments, all laws, and all religions are based; and there can be no pure and abiding charity, or love in the human mind, so long as this error shall be maintained.

If it be so easy to demonstrate the errors of society, how comes it that they have been maintained and perpetuated for 1800 years? I answer, by a trinity of power—by religions of mysteries—by human laws in opposition to nature's laws—and by governments of force and fraud. (Partial applause). The whole world was governed on these principles, and the organization of society was based thereon. This was supported and maintained in existence by the present absurd and irrational classification of society, which he would now explain. (Mr. Owen here produced a number of cubes, varying in size, and proceeded to elucidate his position by a reference to them in the following manner.) The largest represented the whole population of Great Britain and Ireland. The next in size, and which was three-fifths of the whole, indicated the largest class—the working class;—they were the producers of all wealth, and yet were the most degraded and ignorant. (Cheers.) There was no individual benefitted by such an arrangement. The next represented the third in numerical amount, the thieves, vagabonds, and paupers. The fourth, the retail dealers, those who were always striving to buy cheap and sell dear. (Loud laughter). Then came the merchants, bankers, and professions, the wholesale distributors of wealth, manufacturers, &c. Then the army and navy, in which a raw recruit after a few weeks' drill, came out quite a different person; these were taught scientifically to butcher each other on a large scale. Then came the landed gentry and the baronets. Then the clergy and the Houses of Lords and Commons. The smallest cube, about the size of a pea, represented the royal family and the bishops and archbishops, and the whole of the large mass was governed by this little one. (loud laughter and cheers). There was no single individual who benefitted by this arrangement—all suffered by it and were its victims.

Rev. Mr. Legg commenced by observing, that Mr. Owen's argument respecting the Jesuits at Paraguay did, in reality, strengthen his assertion. It appeared, that after these had existed 187 years as a separate community, the King of Portugal expelled the Jesuits, and soon afterwards the people merged into neighbouring states. The community had been cemented by that great conservative principle to which he had referred yesterday—the principle of Christianity; and though in a corrupt form, it proved that a slight leaven of Christianity would preserve a state from extinction.

In answer to Mr. Owen's reply, that no Mahometan state was ever destroyed, he would refer him to the case of Hyder Ali, whose power was so great, and whose empire was so extensive, that it required the largest force and the greatest general of the age to conquer him; his empire, and that an entirely Mahometan one, had been destroyed. He then instanced Turkey, as now existing solely by the permission of a Christian nation, and as certain, the moment England withdrew her support, to be absorbed into the Russian empire. There was no perdurable principle of vitality except in Christianity, and without it every state had decayed and crumbled away. Mr. Legg then went on to deny that he had mentioned the argument respecting the existence of an evil spirit, or that he had asserted God to be the author of evil. Evil, continued Mr. Legg, was not a production, it was a privation, it was a want, a want of conformity to the will of God. He then proceeded to argue against Mr. Owen, to the effect that simple ignorance was not necessarily evil, but that acting in opposition to light and knowledge constituted sin.

Mr. Owen had stated that we could not love or hate as we would, but he had made no distinction between the love of complacency, and the love of benevolence. With respect to the first, it was true we could not love any object which created a disagreeable impression on the mind, but by the latter, we could fulfil the scripture doctrine, and love our neighbour as ourself. He had asserted, that the present artificial state of the world proceeded from a "trinity of power," of which religions of mysteries constituted a principal part. Now, they might infer that, if a divine revelation had been made to man, some portions of it would be inscrutable to the finite mind of man. That they were mysterious, arose from the very nature of the truths communicated, and of our minds. We knew them as facts revealed to us, but the extent of them, we, with our feeble and finite intellect, could not comprehend. This should teach them to look with deference and humility upon them, and the danger of rushing as into a sudden blaze of blinding and dazzling light, which, beheld from a reverent distance, would have guided them to heaven. The Social system required, according to Mr. Owen, the

comprehension of the finest minds and most acute intellect, and was therefore as mysterious as the system of Christianity. After illustrating the truths of revelation by a beautiful allusion to the discoveries of astronomy, and inferring that the small portion of them we could comprehend, taught us how much more there was that we could not, and how vast must be the power to whom all was clear as the noonday, the rev. speaker concluded a glowing and eloquent address, by impressing on the minds of all the limitations which were placed on human knowledge, until that day when we shall know all things even as we are known. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. Owen said, in reference to the ingenious arguments of his friend, Mr. Legg, he could never understand the use of mysteries; but he would draw their attention to matters of fact, as he (Mr. O.) was a practical man. He then referred to the classification of society he had introduced at the close of his former address, and said, that if society was rightly directed, the working class would produce twenty-four fold more wealth than they did now—more than abundantly sufficient for every individual in the world to support him in comfort and happiness. A considerable portion of this address was occupied by the speaker describing the eight divisions or classes of society adverted to in his last speech. He then resumed. Our friend gave us a very ingenious account of conscience, responsibility, and the will of God, but he (Mr. Owen) would ask if there was a single individual present, who, having the power to remove the existence of evil, would not do so? There was not one present. And until the learned would give them some sound reason why evil was produced, and if a Superior Power did exist, why it was not removed, they had better remain silent. Respecting the education of children, he had never said that children would be born wise; but he said that they would be aided by the concentrated wisdom, experience, and capital of the world, instead of being opposed by it, as at present. His friend thought, and no wonder, that character could not be manufactured; but he (Mr. Owen) had demonstrated how a conscience of any kind could be manufactured in any infant, either Christian, Jew, Gentoo, Mahometan, or Cannibal. The principle was the same—the character and the belief were produced by the circumstances in which the individual was placed. But he possessed the knowledge which, if acted upon, would manufacture characters far superior to any possessed by any individual ever yet born. (Loud laughter and some applause.)

Mr. LEGG again attributed the purest and most benevolent intentions to his antagonist. He had exposed himself on all occasions to ridicule, he had expended capital, and, with self-denying perseverance, devoted his time with the humane desire of benefitting mankind and

promoting their welfare. While he thus admitted that Mr. Owen had a large amount of benevolence, he thought he also possessed a large amount of self-esteem (laughter); for, when he had, by a chemical process, fused all classes, the bishops and archbishops, and the royal families, he was to re-construct, out of the same materials, the same number of grades, himself standing on the pyramid he had reared as the climax of the whole. (Shouts of laughter).

Mr. OWEN denied that he was influenced by a motive for future fame, any more than he was for present popularity. (Cheers.) He then proceeded:—I told him (Mr. Legg) that human character could be manufactured—that human beings at birth were the most ductile of all materials. I will now explain how I would form a perfect character in the new world. We all know that all infants are not born with the same disposition, or with the same intellectual faculties; it will therefore be the province of those to whose care the children of the new world are committed to ascertain the propensities and abilities of the child, that its good qualities may be encouraged, while its bad ones will be repressed and subdued. That is the great secret of the system—the formation of the physical, moral, and intellectual character of the inhabitants of the new world. There never yet was an attempt made to introduce Socialism at New Harmony, and the description given of it by the Duke of Saxe Weimar is in many respects wrong.

Mr. Owen then proceeded in his statement of the *cause* of the evils of society. They were principally religions of mysteries, private property, and marriages of the priests. In the new moral world marriages would be allowed after three months' notice had been given, when, if both parties continued in the same mind, it would take place. Divorce would be facilitated. It was so in Scotland now, and to the rich, and the rich only, in this country; but the unions in the new world would be the result of affection, and therefore, in a very great majority of cases, would be of a permanent nature. The vicious arrangements of the present system were manifested in female prostitution on an immense scale. Could any thing be worse than this?\*

Again, my friend says, that no nation has existed without being

\* The following extract from an address delivered by Mr. Owen, in 1833, will more fully explain his views on the subject of marriage.

“As a knowledge of facts has now disclosed to us that liking or disliking, or loving or hating, depend not upon the *will* of man, but upon the manner in which his organization is affected by the ever-varying qualities of external objects, none will be required to perjure themselves, as they are compelled to do under the old system of the world, before they can legally enjoy the natural right of the sexes, by solemnly declaring that they will love to the end of life a being who is liable to perpetual change, and whom they may be forced to dislike or hate before the year expires. No! instead of this blasphemy against the laws of nature, other arrangements, dictated by common sense, or right reason, will be formed to insure all the good that can be derived, and to avoid all the vice and evil that has been expected.

based on Christianity; he has forgotten the Chinese empire; and I have been told, by one of the most eminent theologians of the day, that many of the doctrines of the New Testament are to be found in the writings of Confucius. I would say broadly and boldly that all the sacred books ever written were based on this fundamental error—that man can form his own character and conduct; and this error is the cause of all the misery and vice which affects all classes, sects, and parties. My friend also stated that I alone entertained these views;

rienced, from the social converse between the sexes. All will then be fully conscious, and will openly acknowledge, that pure chastity consists in forming this connexion only when affection exists between the parties, and that it is a vile, abominable, and injurious prostitution to form or continue this connexion when there is no affection between the parties, even when they are what is called legally bound to each other. The union between the sexes will be, in consequence, always pure and chaste; it will be an union of affection only—it will continue as long as that affection can be maintained, and cease only, under well-devised public forms and regulations, when the affection between the parties can no longer be made to exist. And the experience of the world has proved that affection is much more disinterested, pure, and durable, without than with these legal bonds. In order to prevent confusion or any evil whatever by these changes, *other* arrangements, very different from the existing *family* arrangements, will be made, in conformity with this superior union between the sexes, and the superior national education to be provided for the children.

“Many persons grossly mistake our views on the subject of the union of the sexes. Our object is to remove the *causes* of the immense amount of sexual crime and misery, and consequent physical and mental disease which now exists. It is nature's laws, now disregarded, which we desire to discover and implicitly obey; there being none other which can produce virtue and happiness. In the present absence of real knowledge derived from experience, and with the existing irregular feelings of the population of the world, created by a false education, we propose that the union and disunion of the sexes should take place under the following regulations:—

“Persons having an affection for each other, and being desirous of forming an union, first announce such intention publicly in our Sunday assemblies. At the end of three months, if the intention remain, they make a second public declaration, which declarations being registered in the books of the Society will constitute their marriage.

“In our new world, marriages will be solely formed to promote the happiness of the sexes, and if this end be not obtained, the object of the union is defeated. Should the parties, therefore, after the termination of twelve months at the soonest, discover that their disposition and habits are unsuited to each other, and that there is little or no prospect of happiness being derived from their union, they are to make a public declaration as before, to that effect; after which they return, and live together six months longer; at the termination of which if they still find their qualities discordant, they make a second declaration, both of which being duly registered and witnessed, shall constitute their legal separation.

“The above cases apply only when *both* parties unite in the declarations. Should one alone come forward upon the last declaration, and the other object to the separation, they will be required to live together another six months, to try if their feelings and habits can be made to accord, so as to promote happiness. But if at the end of the second six months, the objecting party shall remain in the same mind, the separation shall then be final: and the parties may, without diminution of public opinion, form new unions more suited to their dispositions.

“As all the children of the new world will be trained and educated under the superintendence and care of the Society, the separation of the parents will not produce any change in the condition of the rising generation. Under these arrangements, we have no doubt, a much more virtuous and happy state of society will be enjoyed than any which has existed at any time in any part of the world.”

it is not so. There are hundreds and thousands, yea, tens of thousands, who, believing as I do, are so placed in society that they dare not avow their principles, nor express their convictions, for that would inevitably be followed by their ruin in temporal affairs.

For three years I tried to unite my system with some religious one, but I found it utterly impossible, and I was compelled to abandon the attempt. I care not how I am received; the words have gone forth; no man can now put them in a box and shut them for ever from the world; and I well know, whatever may be your feelings from the excitement of the moment, you will retire home and calmly reflect on what I have told you, and I have no fear of ultimately gaining the victory. (Cheers). For my own part I would live in the bonds of friendship and kindness with all men; I am willing to make any sacrifice for their welfare; but the praise of man I value not as a straw; Society has inflicted on man a geographical language, habits, and condition, and has made him a localized animal instead of a rational creature.

There is one apparently great and insurmountable difficulty to be overcome; one, that appears too deep-rooted, too widely spread over all quarters of the world, and too gigantic in its power for mortal man to attempt to contend against. This is the power of prejudice forced into the minds and upon the habits of all men by their local position; a position, which inflicts upon them, their geographical language, religion, manners, habits, associations of ideas and conduct; and thus compels all men, without exception, instead of being trained to become rational creatures or men, to acquire the character of a mere local animal, to the injury, the deep injury of all the inhabitants of the earth.

How is this universal evil to be fairly met and overcome, without creating misery, by the conflict, to all these localized animals?

Mortal man, by any powers which, in ordinary language, he can call his own, would never think of attempting that which now appears to all men of the old world, most wild and visionary, nay, not to be exceeded in folly or insanity, by any of the most foolish or mad enterprises ever undertaken by man, in his most crude and irrational state. Well, then, what earthly power can be brought to this mighty conflict against localized irrational man, to obtain the victory over him, for intelligent rational man, that the human being may no longer remain, or his offspring be forced to become, the mere geographical creature of local impressions, producing local errors and associations of ideas, destructive of real knowledge, of virtue, and of happiness?

Evidently, most vain would it be, for any mere earthly power to enter upon this more than mortal conflict. A new and divine

weapon must be obtained from that source, from which man has derived his organization and his mental faculties : a weapon of such might and power as shall, when duly wielded and with heavenly aim directed, sever the gordian-knot of human ignorance and prejudice, so effectually, that it shall never more be the cause of inflicting error and misery on man.

But, where is this divine weapon to be found ? Or, when found, who will have the temerity to wield it, and commence the conflict to destroy the localized animal of prejudice, give victory to rational man, and place him secure for ever upon the throne of reason, supported by charity and affection, and, thus sustained, enable him to govern the world in peace ?

Rejoice, all ye who have so long desired to see the period arrive, when all of the human race shall become wise, and good, and happy ; for, this weapon of mighty power has been discovered ! Its name is Truth ! Its sharpness and brilliancy, now that it is for the first time fully unsheathed to open view, no mortal can withstand. It is a weapon derived direct from the supreme power of the universe, the source from which, alone, Truth has ever been obtained, or can ever emanate.

Yet, who shall wield this divine weapon ? Who, among the sons of men, have been trained, from youth upwards, to practice with it ? Who will dare firmly to grasp it, and boldly go forth to battle, against the accumulating prejudices of ages, and cry, victory or death ?

My friends, fear not. The appointed hour is come ; the victory is near at hand ; it is already secured.—There is a little band, insignificant in numbers—by the world hitherto despised :—but, they have shielded themselves with divine armour ; have cast all worldly consequences far away ; lovers and worshippers of Truth, without admixture of error, they have no fear of man, or of what man can do against them. Already have they practised with this divine weapon, and are familiar with its use. They have firmly grasped it. They have gone forth. They have entered upon the conflict, and they return not, until ignorance, falsehood, superstition, sin, and misery, shall be banished from the abodes of the human race : and peace and charity, reason, truth and justice, love and happiness, shall reign triumphant, and for ever, over the whole family of man, wherever man shall exist ; and slavery and servitude and oppression, or evil of any kind among the sons of men, shall be known no more !!! (Great applause.)

Mr. LEGG, on rising to reply, for the last time, said—We are now in possession of Mr. Owen's system. His great doctrine appears to be, that man is the creature of circumstances, but the whole of Mr. Owen's conduct here and elsewhere contradicts his theory. He writes to all governments to change their circumstances—to change their cre-



ator—for, according to him (Mr. O.) circumstances make them; and yet he calls on all of us to *change* those circumstances. But is not that an impossibility (loud cheers) unless man has the power to act as he pleases?—and this Mr. Owen denies. He wished to say nothing offensive to Mr. Owen, who had kindly lent him his books free of expence, but he found it quite impossible to reconcile one part with another. In one part he blamed the magistrates for their conduct, but why blame them?

Mr. OWEN—"I never blamed any one."

Mr. LEGG—"I wish then that you would publish a Glossary, for I cannot help using words in the sense we generally understand them. But Mr. Owen says he does not censure any individuals for their actions—they are the consequences of circumstances beyond their controul. (Applause.) He says that man is compelled to do what he does, and act as he acts: but it was impossible to separate the man from himself, and this it is that puzzles me in his system, which abounds in numberless contradictions; for I cannot separate man from his character. I have been much assisted in my investigation of the Social system by Mr. Giles's book, of Leeds, but I protest against the spirit in which it is written, and therefore I do not recommend it, for, as I have before said, Mr. Owen is entitled to our respect. He would entreat him—as he might never meet here again until they both appeared before the judgment seat of Christ—to devote a year or two to the study of the evidences of Christianity. (Great cheering.)

He would now appeal to the audience, if it was not manifest that Mr. Owen had blinked every argument he had advanced. (Immense cheering.) He then referred to a quotation from Shelley, in one of the Social tracts, (so atrocious that we cannot repeat it), and denounced the system as resorting to the vilest blasphemies, and spawning its filth among the manufacturing population.

Mr. OWEN here denied that he sanctioned the work in question.

Mr. LEGG resumed—It was bound up in a book circulated by the Socialists, and certainly such doctrines were not calculated to elevate the society in his esteem. Where the evil would terminate he could not foresee, but he prayed that Mr. Owen might yet turn from his errors, and that he might not have to appear before his Judge, at the great day of account, with his sins unrepented of, and his hands dripping with the blood of souls. (Enthusiastic and protracted cheers.)

Dr. COWAN briefly addressed the meeting, urging that the good feeling they had manifested should not be departed from at the close, and saying that their conduct conferred honour on the town.

A vote of thanks to the chairman was carried by acclamation, and the meeting dispersed.

Mr. LEGG having terminated the debate on the last evening, Mr. OWEN had no opportunity to reply to that gentleman's concluding speech. We, therefore, requested Mr. Owen to make up this deficiency in these interesting proceedings, that the public might have the outline, at least, of these novel principles and practices fairly before them.

Mr. Owen, while on his journey to open several new Social Institutions, in different parts of the kingdom, has hastily written and forwarded to us the following reply to the statement given of Mr. Legg's speech, as it appeared in the *Berkshire Chronicle*, published immediately after the discussion, from the notes taken by the reporter for that paper.

"Mr. Legg has truly stated that the great principle on which the system which I advocate is founded, is that "man is the creature of circumstances," but he added, that my conduct, here and elsewhere, contradicts this theory, because I write to all governments to change their circumstances, &c. Now, that man is the creature of circumstances, is a principle acknowledged almost as long as man has known how to communicate his thoughts by writing. It is obvious to all who reflect, that man ever has been, is now, and, while he shall be born ignorant, he ever must be, the creature of those circumstances by which he shall be surrounded from his birth to his death. But that which appears to puzzle Mr. Legg is, how man can be the creature of circumstances, and yet can be made to controul circumstances. Mr. Legg is not the only one that has been puzzled by this apparent contradiction. All the learned men, so called, of the present day, are equally at a loss to reconcile this apparent anomaly. When explained, like other matters which are difficulties previous to explanation, it will be easily understood. Man, in some one generation, discovers, as he makes other new discoveries, the science of the overwhelming influence of external circumstances over all terrestrial life. This science enables the discoverer, and those whom he instructs, to perceive that all external circumstances are favourable, unfavourable, or neutral, in forming the human character; and, by this knowledge, to become intimately acquainted with those circumstances which produce good, and those which produce evil, to man, individually and generally. This discovery is itself a new circumstance, which, by its immense importance to the well-being and happiness of society, will force those who have been made to acquire a knowledge of it to apply it to practice, as I have done for many years, and which I am now doing—and doing with the view, ultimately, to compel the world to adopt the same practice, by inducing them to believe it will be for their interest and happiness to do so.

"That the men of one generation become, in the language of the Christian Scriptures, not only as Gods, "knowing good and evil," but knowing the *cause* of good and evil, and how to introduce the former and to remove the latter; thus one generation will have the controul over the creation of the circumstances which will form the character and controul the conduct of the succeeding generation; and thus will the adult man acquire the means to controul the circumstances of the infant man, and thus to ensure a new spirit and a new mode of existence for the human race, through all succeeding generations; but each generation improving in proportion to the extraordinary progress which, through these improved circumstances, will be made in every generation.

"Mr. Legg refers to Mr. Giles's book for a reply to the general doctrines of Socialism, or, more properly, of "the rational system of Society," which I advocate. There never was a work written which evinces in the writer so much error of the system, which he says it is his intention to explain to the public. He certainly knows nothing of the principles of this system, as is evident by the whole spirit of his book. It is a work of which, when he becomes well informed upon the subject, he will most grievously repent.

"I feel myself greatly indebted to Mr. Legg for the deep, and, I firmly believe, sincere interest, which he feels for my present and future happiness, and for his well-intended recommendation, to study the Christian Scriptures for two years longer. Mr. Legg was not aware that I had read those Scriptures many times through, from the beginning to the end, and studied them with deep interest, as well as the Scriptures of other large divisions of the human race. But when it is discovered, that *all* works of theology, morals, laws, and governments, have been written under the suppositions by writers upon these subjects, that man is a being totally different in his created character at birth from that which we now find him to be, by the investigation of facts which all may now prove for themselves, the value of all these writings terminates, and they become not only useless, but most pernicious to the human race. Now it is probable, that man can never be made a rational and sane being, until all notions that any of these writings have been divinely inspired shall be abandoned; and until they shall be considered as the productions of ordinary men, written in the early and crude ages of human progress towards a period when experience would produce real knowledge from an accurate investigation of facts, or of the unchanging laws of nature. These books, which our ignorant but imaginative ancestors called divine, have produced, and are producing, the worst spirit in man that he can receive, and there is no chance, while they shall be taught to each succeeding generation to be sacred books, that man can ever become good, wise, or happy.

" I regret to see in the same paper in which this discussion is given a kind of charge against some parties for not paying my expenses ; but, the writer, " Justitia," did not know that it had been a previous understanding between Mr. Legg and myself that these expenses were not to be allowed ; on the principle that Christians should not pay any of the expenses of those, who they supposed were advocating principles in opposition to their favourite creeds.

" I must acknowledge, and have great pleasure in so doing, that no one could have acted throughout the whole of this discussion, previous and after it, more fairly or more kindly to an opponent, than Mr. Legg ;— indeed, he acted in such a manner as to compel me to have not only a great regard, but an affection, for a man who possessed, under the unfavourable circumstances in which he had been placed, such a genuine spirit of humanity."