

12

TWO MEMORIALS

ON BEHALF OF THE WORKING CLASSES;

THE FIRST PRESENTED TO

THE GOVERNMENTS
OF
EUROPE AND AMERICA,

THE SECOND TO

THE ALLIED POWERS

ASSEMBLED IN CONGRESS

AT

Aix-la-Chapelle.

By ROBERT OWEN.

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46
10



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M E M O R I A L
OF
ROBERT OWEN,
OF NEW LANARK IN SCOTLAND,
TO
THE GOVERNMENTS
OF
EUROPE AND AMERICA.

THE Memorialist has devoted the last thirty years of his life to the study and practice of political economy, and by permitting practice in all cases to correct theory, he has attained the most important results for the wellbeing of society.

In consequence of the numberless benefits which the knowledge thus acquired is calculated to give to the inhabitants of every country, the Memorialist is desirous of making it known, in the shortest time, to those who govern the civilized world and to the public. He therefore presents memorials on the subject to the Governments of Europe and America.

The Memorialist is not influenced to this proceeding by partiality or prejudice for or against any class, sect, party, or country. He views the whole human race as men created originally with the same general faculties and qualities, though varied in degree, and

trained by circumstances, over which society has now a complete controul, to despise, hate, and oppose each other even to death, although the path is now clear, by which, with more ease, society may train them to esteem, to love, and to aid each other.

Nor yet has the Memorialist been actuated to the conduct which he adopts, by a desire for wealth, for popularity, for honours, or for future fame; to him these already appear the playthings of infants.

But he is induced to act thus, because he can show the causes which perpetually generate misery in human society, and also develop the means, by which, without injury to any, those causes may be gradually, and, at no very distant period, effectually removed. To witness this change in part, or, if that shall not be permitted, to know that it must soon commence and rapidly proceed, is his reward, and it is already secured to him.

Under these circumstances, the Memorialist claims not that kind of attention which is usually given to ordinary questions of policy; but he asks for the devotion of the minds of the parties whom he addresses, that they may comprehend subjects not yet open to common capacities, and which involve all the valuable interests of society.

For a period has arrived, in which a greater change in human affairs will be forced on the world than the world has yet witnessed; but in all its extent the change will be highly beneficial to every individual and to all states.

It is a period, when the errors which have hitherto perplexed mankind, are about to be unravelled, and

in consequence, the obstacles which stood in the way of human improvement and enjoyment will be removed.

The immediate causes which make this change certain and necessary, are, the overwhelming effects of new scientific power and the rapidly increasing knowledge of all classes of men. The former will soon render human labour of little avail in the creation of wealth, while the latter will make evident to the people the absolute necessity, which has thus arisen for them to give a different direction to their powers, and will inform them also how the change is to be effected.

To this day, the means of consumption or of obtaining the necessaries of life, by the working classes, have been acquired solely through the medium of their labour, the value of which the new power has already much diminished. And the certain consequences of the undirected progress of this power will be to reduce the exchangeable value of manual labour, until it falls below the means of procuring a wretched subsistence for any large proportion of the working classes, while the remainder of them must be starved out of existence.

Such is the nature of the contest, which has already continued for some time, and which now exists in full activity, between scientific Power and manual Labour, between Knowledge and Ignorance; but no one, who comprehends any thing of the subject, can for one moment doubt the result.

It is presumed that the Power thus addressed cannot desire an increase to the misery of the people,

while in consequence new dangers to every state must continually arise on every side.

On these grounds solely the Memorialist requests attention and co-operation.

He is now ready to communicate the full details of these important subjects to any or to all of the Powers whom he addresses, that, if those details shall appear on examination to be derived from facts and experience, as he presumes they will be found, the requisite measures to stop the progress of the existing distress among the working classes may be adopted, by the respective governments, before the period shall be past when the combined extended sufferings and knowledge of the people, will permit the requisite time for calm deliberation.

The Memorialist adds an appendix, which contains some of the general results which he has derived from long study, multiplied experiments on a large scale, and a personal communication with acute, intelligent and enlightened men of all classes, sects, and parties, more varied and confidential than has ever perhaps fallen to the lot of one individual.

And thus circumstanced, he awaits the deliberation and reply of the Power whom he has now addressed.

Frankfort, 20 Sept. 1818.

APPENDIX,

Containing some of the general results, derived from the Memorialist's long study and experience.

FIRST GENERAL RESULT.

THAT the period is arrived, when the means are become obvious, by which, without force or fraud of any kind, riches may be created in such abundance, and so advantageously for all, that the wants and desires of every human being may be more than satisfied.

In consequence, the dominion of wealth, and the evils arising from the desire to acquire and accumulate riches, are on the point of terminating.

SECOND GENERAL RESULT.

That the period is arrived, when the principles of the science are become obvious, by which, without force or punishment of any kind, the rising generation may be, with ease and advantage to all, surrounded by new circumstances, which shall form them into any character that society may predetermine; and if any defect shall afterwards appear in those characters, except what nature has made uncontrollable by human means, the cause will not be in the individuals, but it will be solely owing to the inexperience of the parties who attempt to put those invaluable principles into practice.

In consequence, the dominion of Ignorance, of Fraud and Violence, is also on the point of terminating.

THIRD GENERAL RESULT.

That it is the interest, and that it will soon appear to be the interest, of each individual, in every rank, in all countries, that judicious measures should be adopted, with the least delay, to secure these beneficial results in practice. It is however greatly to be desired that they should be carried into effect by general consent, gradually and temperately, in order that no party or individual may be injured by the changes which must necessarily arise.

In consequence, any attempt to stop or retard the Introduction of these measures will be unavailing. Already the principles and consequent practice are placed effectually beyond the power of human assault. It will be found, that silence cannot now retard their progress, and that opposition will give increased celebrity to their movements.

MEMORIAL

of
ROBERT OWEN,

OF NEW LANARK IN SCOTLAND,

TO
THE ALLIED POWERS

ASSEMBLED IN CONGRESS

AT

Aix-la-Chapelle,

SHOWETH,

THAT your Memorialist has addressed a Memorial to the Governments of Europe and America, on subjects deeply interesting to the wellbeing of all ranks in these countries.

That he has presented the said Memorial to many of the European Governments, and he will take the earliest opportunity to present it to the remaining Governments of Europe, and to the States of America.

That the said Memorial was a preliminary one, being intended to call the attention of the civilized world,

First, To the new and extraordinary effects produced by the introduction of improved scientific power into the manufactures of Europe and America,

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and which has already materially affected the value of manual labour, and the health, comfort, and happiness of the working classes.

Secondly, To the overwhelming influence which experience has now given to the adult part of society, over the rising generation, to educate them, by the arrangement of new circumstances around them from infancy, to become the best characters for their own happiness, and the permanent good of the community to which they may belong.

That your Memorialist stated his willingness to develop the details of his experience on these important subjects, to all or to any of the Governments whom he addressed.

That as the unaided deliberations of Governments are necessarily slow, and the people are daily injured by the effects of the misdirected influence of the new power, and from the want of a well digested system of training and education, from infancy, applicable to every child of the poor; he deems it his duty, with a view to facilitate and accelerate the execution of an object which the Allied Powers have so much at heart, and in which their immediate interest is so deeply involved, to submit to Congress, as he now does, Preliminary Explanations of the three General Results, contained in the Appendix to the said Memorial, and which the subjects naturally divide into three parts.

PART FIRST.

THE first general Result was as follows:—

“That the period is arrived when the means are become obvious, by which, without force or fraud of any kind, riches may be created in such abundance, and advantageously for all, that the wants and desires of every human being may be more than satisfied.”

Preliminary Explanations of the foregoing Result.

The general proof of this statement shall be drawn from the changes which have occurred in the British Empire within the last quarter of a century, or since the general introduction of Messrs. Watt and Arkwright's improved mechanism first into the manufactures of Britain, and subsequently into those of other countries.

At the commencement of the period mentioned, a much larger proportion of the population of Great Britain was engaged in agriculture than in manufactures, and it is probable the inhabitants of the British Isles experienced a greater degree of substantial prosperity than they had obtained before, or than they have enjoyed since. The cause is obvious:—the new manufacturing system had then attained that point which gave the highest value to manual labour, compared with the prices of the necessaries and comforts of life, which it was calculated to afford, and it had not yet produced the demoralizing effects which soon afterwards began to emanate from this system.

At the period mentioned, the manual and the scientific power of Great Britain were sufficient to create a degree of prosperity, which placed all her population in a state of comfort, at least equal, if not superior, to that of the inhabitants of any other part of the world. The value of her national funds was higher in 1792 than at any other period, and pauperism among the working class was but little known.

The productive powers which created this high degree of prosperity, consisted of temperate manual labour, and mechanical and other scientific power, which had been very gradually and slowly accumulating, through the previous periods of her history.

The manual labour was chiefly performed by men unaided by the premature exertions of children, and its whole amount may be estimated, in 1792, at that of one fourth of the population, which was then about 1.5 millions.

The scientific power, at the same period, was probably about three times the amount of its whole manual labour, in which case the manual labour would be equal to the work of 3,750,000 of men, and the scientific three times the amount, or 11,250,000 of men; which makes the aggregate power equal to the labour of 15,000,000 of men: the population was also 15,000,000. Thus the population, and aggregate powers of production, appear to be equal, or as 1 to 1.

The introduction however of the improved Steam Engine, and Spinning Machinery, with the endless variety of mechanical inventions to which they gave rise, and which have been applied to almost all the useful purposes and ornamental arts of life, have

created a change in the productive powers of Great Britain of the most extraordinary amount:

Manual labour has been increased, by calling into action the almost unceasing daily labour of women and children into manufactures, and in consequence its whole amount may be now estimated at about that of one third of the population, which in 1817 was calculated to be about 18 millions, or in 25 years to have increased 3 millions.

But since the introduction of Arkwright and Watt's improved mechanism, there has been a real addition made to the power of creating wealth, equal to that of 200 millions of active, stout, well trained labourers, or to more than *ten times* the present population of the British Isles, or than *thirty times* the manual labour which they now supply for the production of wealth.

The following changes have then occurred from 1792 to 1817:

The population increased from

15,000,000 to - 18,000,000

The manual labour from one-

fourth of 15,000,000 to one-third of 18,000,000, or to 6,000,000 of men.

The new created scientific

power may be estimated at the least equal to the labour of - - - 200,000,000 of men.

The scientific power estimated

in 1792 at three times the manual labour was equal to 11,250,000 of men.

Which gives for the aggregate

productive power in 1817 217,250,000 of men.

Or, in proportion to the population in 1817, as twelve and a fraction to one.

It follows that Great Britain has thus acquired a new aid from scientific skill in twenty-five years, which enables her to increase her riches annually twelve times beyond what she possessed the power of creating prior to that period, and which she may either waste in war, dissipate by an unprofitable foreign commerce, or apply directly to improve and ameliorate her own population.

This enormous accession to the productive powers of Great Britain is, however, trifling compared with that which she may now acquire: she has still capital and industry, unemployed or misapplied, sufficient to create, annually, an addition to her present productive powers; far exceeding the amount of her actual manual labour.

Already with a population under twenty millions, and a manual power not exceeding six millions, with the aid of her new power, undirected except by blind private interest, she supplies her own demand, and overstocks with her manufactures all the markets in the world into which her commerce is admitted; she is now using every exertion to open new markets, even in the most distant regions, because she feels she could soon supply the wants of another world equally populous with the earth.

Instead however of thus contending with other nations to supply their wants, and thereby, under the present arrangements of society, diminish the value of their manual labour, and depress their working classes, she might most advantageously for herself and them, extend the knowledge which she has acquired of creating wealth, or new productive power, to the rest of Europe, to Asia, Africa, and America.

It is the grand interest of society to adopt practical measures, by which the largest amount of useful and valuable productions may be obtained, at the least expense of labour, and with the most comfort to the producers.

By applying this principle to practice now, when scientific power offers such unlimited aid to the world, wealth may be created in all parts of the earth more than sufficient for every useful purpose.

It is then strictly true—that “the period has arrived when the means are become obvious, by which, without violence, fraud, or disorder of any kind, riches may be created in such abundance, and advantageously for all, that the wants and desires of every human being may be more than satisfied.”

Thus have two men, Watt and Arkwright, by introducing improved scientific power of a peculiar description, given to the world the means of creating wealth far more rapidly than it can be used. No reflecting practical man, who devotes his mind to the subject, will, it is presumed, longer contend against this conclusion.

The grand question now to be solved, is, not how a sufficiency of wealth can be produced; but how the excess of riches, which may be most easily created, may be generally distributed throughout society advantageously for all, and without *prematurely* disturbing the existing institutions or arrangements in any country.

PART SECOND.

Preliminary Explanations of the Second General Result stated in the Appendix to the Memorial addressed to the Governments of Europe and America, by Robert Owen.

STATEMENT.

THAT the period is arrived when the principles of the science of political œconomy are become obvious, by which, without disorder, force, or punishment of any kind, the rising generation may be with ease and advantage to all, surrounded by new circumstances, which shall form them into any character that society may predetermine; and if any defect shall afterwards appear in those characters, except what nature has made uncontrollable by human means, the cause will not be in the individuals, but will be solely owing to the inexperience of the parties who attempt to put those invaluable principles into practice.

General Preliminary Explanations of the foregoing Result.

It is a fact self-evident, that children are born with certain faculties and qualities, or with the seeds or germs of them, and that these combined constitute what is called human nature.

In conformity with what appears to be an universal fact in the creation, these faculties and qualities differ in each individual in strength and in combination, and to so great an extent, as to render it highly

improbable that any two infants have been or ever will be born alike.

It is also a fact obvious to our reason, that whatever these powers may be in each child, he could not create the smallest part of them; they are formed for him by Providence, by Nature, by that power, whatever name man may give it, which creates him, and whether those faculties and qualities are inferior or superior, it is contrary to reason to say that the infant can be entitled to merit or deserve any blame for them.

He has received his natural constitution as the lamb and the tiger have received theirs, and there is precisely as much wisdom in finding fault with the one as with the others.

The child is also born in some country of parents belonging to some class, and who possess characters respectively peculiar to themselves.

On these circumstances also the child can have no influence whatever: each of them has arisen from causes over which the child could have no power of any kind.

These circumstances, however unobserved they may have been by ordinary minds, have hitherto determined, First, Whether the child shall be a Jew, a disciple of Confucius, a worshipper of Juggernaut, a Christian, a Mahomedan, or a savage, even a cannibal. Secondly, To what country he shall belong, and in consequence what national prejudices shall be forced upon him. Thirdly, What sectarian notions, if any, shall be impressed on his mind. Fourthly, What language he shall be taught, for language in-

fluences character more than is usually supposed. Fifthly, In what class he shall be trained. Sixthly, What peculiar habits and notions he shall imbibe from his parents, and those immediately around him, in childhood.

So completely indeed has he been hitherto enveloped within those various mediums, that it is unlikely a single individual has yet been able to resist their influence, except in a slight degree, even aided by the infinite variety of natural faculties and qualities which have been given to children in every part of the world. Now, however, with the experience acquired, society may form new circumstances around children in every part of the world, which shall enable each of them to pass this six-fold barrier of error and prejudice.

It is true, the power of society over the individual is not without limit; it cannot re-create and altogether change the natural faculties and qualities which are given to children at birth; it cannot make those faculties and qualities superior, which nature has originally made inferior; but the power which it has already gained by experience over human nature, may be applied to effect every purpose that can be rationally desired.

Such indeed is the powerful influence which experience has now given to society over the rising generation, that it may surround children from their birth with new circumstances, which shall form each of them, bodily and mentally, in such a manner, that their habits, dispositions, and general character, shall be greatly superior to the habits, dispositions, and general characters, which the circumstances of society have

hitherto formed in man in any part of the world. He may also by the same means be so trained, placed, and employed in proper unity with others, and aided by mechanical, chemical, and other scientific power, that he shall create a surplus of new wealth, or property, far beyond what he can or will desire to retain for his own use.

Under these circumstances, until the whole earth shall be well cultivated and the seas refuse to furnish additional food, each child born in the working class will become a blessing to parents, and a new acquisition of productive riches to society.

And these beneficial changes may now be created at much less expense, and with less trouble, than are required to continue the present defective and most injurious systems.

It is to be particularly remarked, that these statements are founded and supported by actual and incontrovertible facts; the Memorialist has acted upon these principles for many years, and all the practical results have exceeded his most sanguine expectations. He has proved, by the most decisive experience, the vast, the incalculable superiority of legislating for the arrangement of circumstances, compared with the past and present feeble system of legislating for individuals, and allowing the circumstances to remain unchanged. The latter mode is truly laying hold of the wrong end of the lever. It is violating the progressive principle of society, founded on an universal law of nature. Some uninformed, inexperienced, and prejudiced persons have lightly and hastily concluded, that the Memorialist is a visionary, and therefore he

occupies himself with public affairs. Whenever the subject shall be thoroughly investigated to its foundation, it will be found the fact is not so. He has long witnessed the happy effects of the principles which he recommends, even very imperfectly executed in practice; and in consequence he cannot but feel anxious to see them generally introduced and acted upon in all countries in which there are any who are poor, ignorant, and unprovided with proper employment.

At New Lanark in Scotland, the Memorialist, while opposed by all the prejudices of birth existing in that part of the world, patiently, and silently for many years, occupied himself by withdrawing some of the *old circumstances*, which he found injurious to the well-being of his little colony, and with arranging new ones, within which 500 or 600 children and young persons are now daily educated, without punishment or individual reward of any kind; their habits, dispositions, and character are allowed by strangers who visit them, to be superior to the habits, dispositions, and characters of the same class to be found elsewhere.

And about 1600 persons of this colony are daily employed, who with the aid of scientific power complete as much work, in a better manner, than could be executed in Scotland, of the same kind, forty years ago, by 160,000 persons; or, in other words, one now with this new aid performs the labour of one hundred.

Extraordinary as these facts may appear to many who are unacquainted with such kinds of facts, society may now create new arrangements to train, educate,

and employ the ignorant and unprovided of the working classes, under circumstances far more advantageous for them and for the public, than it was in the power of the Memorialist to accomplish. He commenced his task without education, without friends who could render him any assistance, without fortune; and he has been opposed in his whole progress by the mistaken notions of the world.

If then an individual of ordinary capacity, thus circumstanced, could create the arrangements which have been stated, solely because he was influenced by principles which are true and in strict unison with nature, how much more could have been effected in the same time, for the improvement of society, by an individual so influenced, if he had possessed superior natural talents, a good education, friends in power, and a fortune sufficient to enable him to put his knowledge into practice under all the proper circumstances, and taking agriculture instead of manufacturing for the foundation of his new arrangements?—Yet how much more could have been attained in the same period for the permanent improvement of all classes, if, instead of an individual, the whole of society had been influenced by these rational principles, and had acted upon them?

With this explanation, it is surely then not too much to say that “the period is arrived when the principles of the science of political œconomy are become obvious, by which, without injury to any, the rising generation of the working classes may be, with ease and advantage to all, surrounded by new circumstances, which shall form them into any character

that society may predetermine; and if any defect shall afterwards appear in those characters, except what nature has made uncontrollable by human means, the cause will not be in the individuals, but it will be solely owing to the inability of the parties who attempt to put those invaluable principles into practice.

PART THIRD.

Preliminary Explanations of the Third General Result stated in the Appendix or Conclusion to the Memorial addressed to the Governments of Europe and America, by Robert Owen.

STATEMENT.

“THAT it is the interest, and that it will soon appear to be the interest, of each individual, in every rank in all countries, that judicious measures should be adopted, with the least delay, to secure these beneficial results in practice. It is however greatly to be desired, that they should be carried into effect by general consent, gradually and temperately, in order that no party or individual may be injured by the changes which must necessarily follow.”

General Preliminary Explanations of the foregoing Results.

Your Memorialist submits, that in the explanations of the First General Result, it has been shown that the means have been discovered and brought into action, by which a great accumulation of wealth has

been made, and that, by the extension of new scientific power, riches may be increased beyond any assignable limit. That in the preliminary explanations of the *second* General Result, it has been shown that the principles of the science of political œconomy are become obvious, by which, without disorder, violence, or punishment of any kind, the rising generation may be, with ease and advantage to all, surrounded by new circumstances, which shall form them into any character that society may predetermine.

Under the existing arrangements in all countries, the mass of the people derive their subsistence through the nominal value of their labour, and which rises and falls on the common commercial principle of supply and demand.

This arrangement served the purpose in a tolerable degree while wealth was produced chiefly by manual labour. But it has been shown, that latterly a power of production unlimited in extent, and which scarcely consumes at all, has been introduced; that it has already created a most unfavourable disproportion between the demand for and supply of manual labour, and in its daily undirected progress this disproportion will go on increasing. As long, however, as manual labour continues to be thus depressed, the mass of the people, who derive their subsistence solely from that source, must be subjected to poverty and misery, while a few, not nearly one in one thousand of the population of the world, will be in possession of accumulated wealth, which under those circumstances must equally destroy their happiness. They would be perpetually involved in the opposition of

evil passions and struggle which must arise in such a lamentable state of society.

It is not indeed possible, with the knowledge now in the world, and which is daily advancing, that such a state of society can long exist; the overwhelming strength of knowledge and interest on one side will render all contest vain, and the folly of contest must be severely felt.

No one, therefore, can for a moment doubt that it is the interest of each individual, in every rank and in all countries, that judicious measures should be adopted with the least delay, to secure those beneficial results in practice. Nor can it be doubted, that with the hourly increase of knowledge in many parts of Europe and America, the period can be distant when it will *appear* to be the interest of all, that these ameliorations should be speedily effected.

Thus has your Memorialist given preliminary explanations of the three general results stated in the Appendix to the Memorial addressed to the Governments of Europe and America. He submits these explanations, to satisfy Congress that he has had much valuable experience on these subjects, which he has brought before them; that he understands them thoroughly to their foundation; and upon that knowledge he now re-states, that all countries possess the means, and many the most ample, to give riches, good habits and dispositions, and useful learning and intelligence, to all their inhabitants.

That the practical measures to effect these important purposes are unknown to the Governments and People; otherwise, as the benefits to each would be

beyond estimate, they would speedily carry them into execution.

That your Memorialist is desirous of developing these measures in the most minute detail to Congress, and to the Governments of Europe and America, that they may take the lead in directing, under the established order of things, those changes which can *alone* relieve the world from the practical evils of the present system, which is experienced to be so productive of error and misery, that every one exclaims *Something must be done*, though no one has attempted to explain *what should be done*.

That your Memorialist is most desirous of cordially uniting the Governments and People in those measures, which he is ready to prove *ought now to be put in practice* for the interests of both.

That he has hitherto, except in part, withheld this knowledge from the people, because he has been afraid they would act upon it in their present neglected and unprepared state, with too much precipitancy to benefit themselves or others. He still withholds it from them, until he shall discover that they will use it calmly and temperately for their advantage, without having the desire of applying it to the injury of any class, sect, party, or individual: this period, however, for many reasons, he considers to be rapidly drawing near, and he will patiently await its arrival.

In the common acceptance of the term, your Memorialist has no private object whatever in the measures in which he has so long occupied himself for the public benefit, and in which he has expended large sums in experiments and in various other ways.

He asks nothing; he wants nothing; and he fears nothing individually either from the Governments or the People. Before he moved one step in this course "he put his life in his hand," and all personal objects he considered "as a feather in the balance," compared with the immensity of good which he knew, under such circumstances, might be accomplished for his fellow-creatures. To obtain this amelioration for them, is the sole object which now influences his conduct.

To understand this motive, however, in all its bearings and extent, the mind must be enabled to overcome and pass through the six-fold barrier of error and prejudice with which the circumstances of birth have hitherto encompassed every one. In short, the mind must be duly disciplined and instructed, by a new training from infancy, on the principle that the character of man ever has been, and ever must be, formed *for* him. Then will this motive be distinctly comprehended by all, and it will influence every action of their lives.

Under these circumstances, which your Memorialist is aware are not of an ordinary nature, he proposes that the Allied Powers assembled in Congress should appoint a Commission, to examine personally the effects produced at New Lanark, by a very partial and defective application to practice of the principles which he recommends: also to investigate minutely the whole of the arrangements which, under modifications, he has to propose for adoption in all countries; and to report their opinion thereon to Congress when it next assembles, the frequent meeting of which may

be substantially useful to Europe and to the world. Yes! the finest opportunity that has ever occurred in history now presents itself to Congress, to establish a permanent system of peace, conservation, and charity in its most enlarged and true sense, and effectually to supersede the system of war, destruction, and of almost every evil arising from uncharitable opinions among men produced *solely* by the circumstances of birth.

Aix-la-Chapelle, Oct. 22, 1818.

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