THE

LIFE, TIMES, AND LABOURS

OF

ROBERT OWEN

BY

LLOYD JONES

EDITED BY WILLIAM CAIRNS JONES

WITH TWO PORTRAITS AND A FAC-SIMILE

VOL. II.

LONDON
SWAN SONNENSCHEIN AND CO.
PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1890

DEDICATED

TO

EDWARD VANSITTART NEALE, ESQ.,

IN TOKEN OF THE

ESTEEM IN WHICH HE WAS HELD BY THE AUTHOR,

CONTENTS.

THE LIFE, TIMES, AND LABOURS OF ROBERT OWEN.

CHAPTER I.

Co-operative Stores.

BEFORE Robert Owen visited Mexico he had been busy in promoting active operations among his friends in England. Considering the magnitude of the work to which he devoted himself, it must have been clear to him from the beginning, that of himself he could do little beyond explaining his principles and his plans. In the nature of things, if others did not assist him liberally, it was almost certain that his efforts must end in disappointment, as no private individual, however wealthy, or however willing to part with his wealth, could reasonably hope to meet the money requirements of such an undertaking.

When Owen's appeal to the upper classes had proved ineffectual, and it was made certain that the wealthy would not supply the necessary funds, there was nothing left but to abandon his designs or to try what could be done by an appeal to the masses of the people. An appeal for financial help to the working classes is usually unsuccessful; nothing but generally and strongly felt convictions can operate effectually

to such an end, and as no agitation of any consequence had been carried on in favour of Owen's principles, it was not possible that there could exist any widely-spread conviction in favour of them, or any general enthusiasm for their adoption. The production of strong conviction in the public mind in regard to subjects to which public attention has not been constantly directed, is not to be reasonably looked for. For the instruction of the people where conviction has to be produced and a knowledge of method of action inculcated, active missionary work is necessary. A centre had to be formed from which men of strong convictions and enthusiastic temper might go forth to deliver to others the faith by which they themselves were animated. These men had to be found. Time was necessary for the discovery of the requisite qualities in men newly drawn together, and the social movement originated by Owen was as yet in its infancy. Beyond what he had himself done by means of public meetings, and printed essays and letters, little had been attempted; and therefore, although in 1817, and for a couple of years subsequently, much discussion was carried on, it had not attracted the attention of the masses of the people, nor penetrated among them so as to impart an understanding of what was really meant, or beget the enthusiasm necessary for effective effort.

The *Economist*, the first number of which was published on January 27, 1821, price three pence, and which seems to have terminated its existence in March, 1822, was a publication of sixteen small octavo pages. Owen himself seems to have had little if anything to do with it. The editor, who signed himself "Economist," was, I believe, a gentleman named

Mudie, and it may be said that he wrote like a clever and sensible man on subjects which had connection with the social and industrial improvement of the working people. One thing noticeable was an eagerness to begin small experiments in connection with groups of families, and as this was a form of co-operation of which Owen disapproved, it was very likely the reason why he kept clear of the paper and the projects it encouraged.

The *Orbiston Register*, printed at Edinburgh, and edited by Abram Combe, the brother of George and Andrew Combe, was of octavo size, eight pages, closely printed. This, while Combe's health permitted him to attend to it, was a well-written and most useful publication; but when failing health compelled Combe to relinquish his editorial duties, it was less ably conducted. The *Co-operative Magazine* was started in 1826, and was issued in monthly numbers. It consisted of forty-eight closely-printed pages, and contained much information as to what was then going on as co-operative work: instances of the misery and crime in society, and comments thereon; also explanations of the new proposals of Owen, and expositions useful for the furthering of co-operative propagandism. The *Co-operator*, a small four-paged paper, in reality a series of tracts, contained disquisitions on co-operation as a business, rather than speculations as to a new state of society, and recorded progress with a commendable brevity. At the end of the first number there is the following announcement:—"Societies upon this principle, viz., that of accumulating a common capital, and investing it in trade, and so making 10 per cent. of it, instead of investing it in the funds at only 4,

or 4½, with the intention of ultimately purchasing land and living in community, have been established in the following places—36 Red Lion Square, London; 37 West Street, Brighton; 10 Queen's Place, Brighton; and 20 Marine Place, Worthing." The word "community" in this case signifies a group of people living together in common neighbourhood for the sake of the advantages to be derived from common arrangements for promoting education, employment, social intercourse, economy, and comfort. That there might be no mistake, as to the kind of change they proposed, it is declared that the three essentials for co-operation were labour, capital, and knowledge.

Ridicule has been thrown on the early efforts of co-operators. Their proceedings, however, are best vindicated in their own words, and the results that have followed on the spot where these words were spoken. A meeting was held in Leeds in the December of 1828, of the members of the benefit societies of that town, for the purpose of listening to a discourse on co-operation by Mr. Carson, a working man from Birmingham. The address was an excellent practical address. Mr. Carson proposed that they should form a co-operative society of sixty families, each subscribing 1s. a week to a general fund. "This sum would in one year amount to £150, with which they might commence business. The society might at the end of the year, or sooner if expedient, be enabled to go to market with money sufficient to buy the commodities they might require; because it would be one of their fundamental rules that every purchase should be made with ready money, inasmuch as their profits would be increased one-third by discount on pur-

chases. He calculated that they spent at the rate of 10s. per week each for the various necessaries of life, and this sum would amount in a year to £1,500. Profit and discount on this was calculated at 15 per cent., and this would give £234. "They might," Mr. Carson said, "procure an agent to manage their business for £1 per week, the rent of a showroom and premises would not be more than £30 a year, and, after these deductions, the society would have a clear income of £152 a year." This was Mr. Carson's calculation in Leeds, as a recommendation to the working men of that town fifty-four years ago, or sixteen years before the twenty-eight Rochdale pioneers put their £1 each together to commence practical operations in that town.[1] The *Co-operator*, page 3, No. 10, comments favourably on Mr. Carson's address. "Mr. Carson," it says, "sees clearly the enormous profits which the working classes are daily giving away to other people by not marketing for themselves. Other people grow rich upon these profits, and all the riches of the world in fact are got out of them; for they can be nothing else than the overplus of the labour of the workman above his own subsistence saved up in the shape of capital. Those who save most get most capital. The workmen, if united, might save as well as anybody else. There might as well be a company of workmen as a company of capitalists. A joint-labour company is as

[1] This account is taken from the pages of the *Co-operator*, which was presented to the writer by James Smithies, of Rochdale, and which is, most likely, the copy that guided the Rochdale men in what they did in 1844—the date of the foundation of their store.

simple as a joint-stock company. The only difference is that the one has been invented and the other not. But all things must have a beginning. There was a time when joint-stock companies did not exist. Capitalists were too ignorant to form them. As the knowledge of capitalists increased, they formed joint-stock companies; and as the knowledge of the working classes increases, they will form joint-labour companies. They will keep these enormous profits in their own hands. Mr. Carson alludes to the goodness of articles which a club or union would naturally sell in their own shop. This is another very important consideration. It is quite notorious that every article capable of being adulterated is adulterated. There are persons who live by carrying on trades expressly for the purpose. The generality of people cannot possibly distinguish genuine articles from counterfeits. Whoever buys the counterfeit for the genuine cheats himself out of so much health and strength. This is particularly the case with the workman. To him it is of the utmost consequence to have his food pure, and the most nourishment in the least compass. This he will never attain to without a shop of his own, and this shop he can never possess without co-operation."

In this way the advantages of co-operation were pointed out, and though in Leeds only sixty families were calculated on to start with fifty-four years ago, they have now above 20,400 members. The business done by the co-operators of Great Britain at the present time amounts to about twenty-five millions sterling per annum, while the profit and interest returned to the members of co-operative societies are reckoned at about two-and-a-quarter millions sterling per annum.

At the end of the number of the *Co-operator* for December, 1829, the following announcement appears:—"There are about one hundred and thirty co-operative societies now established." From this it will be seen that there was no disinclination on the part of a section of the working people to give it as fair a trial as their knowledge and means permitted.

There has been a disposition to mix up and confound the proceedings of co-operators of various kinds, and if those concerned were not unfriendly to Robert Owen, to credit him with the blundering or failure of the various experiments. He, in fact, abstained from encouraging any of the small experiments so much talked of up to 1835, in the belief that success could only be obtained by the possession of large capital; and when men with more enthusiasm than prudence urged initiatory experiments, he so strongly discouraged them that he more than once incurred the displeasure of persons who much respected him, but who thought he was aiming at more than working men needed as the commencement of a better state of things.

The great question, however, was how to acquire funds for co-operative purposes. The people who gave countenance to the social awakening produced by Robert Owen's experiments, discourses, and writings, never encouraged any idea of procuring pecuniary help, beyond what might be derived from their own industry and thrift. In the agitation carried on they made themselves responsible both as to means and ends. They excited in others only such hopes as they themselves entertained: such hopes as might be entertained after a full consideration of the

whole subject, as to its practicability by means of such power in number and in finances as the people actually possessed, or might hope to possess, by the exercise of a wise and reasonable activity. One thing is certain, namely, that any popular movement, depending for its success on the sobriety, thrift, intelligence, and forethought of the people, even though it fail in realising the precise object at which it aims, brings to those who engage in it such large gains in discipline, self-denial, and effort for improvement, that instead of incurring reproach it ought to be hailed with approval by all friends of progress.

From 1825 to 1834 co-operative action was confined almost entirely to the establishment of co-operative stores. The exact number of these cannot be accurately given. At the close of 1829, as we have seen, the number of societies was stated to be 130. It may be said, perhaps, that by the close of 1831 this number had increased to 250 at least. What is called the "bonus" or "dividend" in the present co-operative movement, was unknown at this time. There was, therefore, no personal interest of a palpable kind to hold the members together, should their faith in the ultimate results of co-operation cool. The profits were to be funded to the credit of the investors as capital for the employment of labour, and therefore the slowness of progress and the fact that the principal investors being the best situated of the members, looked more to immediate advantage, while the worst off were impatient for results, the promise of which did not approach with sufficient rapidity, caused at a given point the process of disintegration to become more rapid than that of growth; and gradually, though

the movement never completely died out, it ceased to carry in it any hope for the redemption of labour.

John Finch of Liverpool, a merchant in the iron trade, put the cause of failure, so far as it had then gone (1832), on its true ground. In that year the third annual Co-operative Congress was held in London, and at this Congress many of the stores had representatives. "The progress that has been made," said Mr. Finch, addressing a large public meeting held by the Congress, "in acting upon these principles has not been so rapid as the progress of the principles themselves. But the diffusion of knowledge is the first thing. There have been societies formed in various parts of the kingdom called trades unions or co-operative societies, the object of which is to unite their members in the attainment of knowledge, and also to obtain possession of capital. The first proposed object of these unions has been realised. Large numbers of persons, chiefly of the working classes, have been brought together in one common bond of interest and affection. But I am sorry to say that some of them have failed in the other object of their association; that is, the attainment of capital. I shall enumerate some of the causes, as I have observed them, of this failure. The first cause has been a want of union and active co-operation amongst the members. They have neglected their meetings, failed to make themselves properly and familiarly acquainted with the principles and proceedings of their society, and left the management of their concerns to a few individuals. Another cause of their failure has been the existence of a spirit of selfishness amongst them—a spirit which has been engendered

in some degree, perhaps, by those societies themselves. Shopkeeping has no tendency to improve either their principles or their morals. In the next place there has been a general neglect of business on the part of the members. They have not carefully audited their accounts, diligently looked after the purchases made for them, or superintended and regulated their stock. Another cause has been the members not dealing at their own stores. It was not to be expected that the trading societies should answer their ends if the shop were deserted by its own proprietors. Another difficulty attending these societies, and which has tended to render them sometimes abortive, is the great responsibility that attaches to the trustees, whilst there is no bond of union with the members. The trustees take upon themselves the responsibility of paying all accounts, and answering all demands upon the society. The members, on the other hand, take upon themselves no responsibility; and if the society should be found unprosperous, they walk themselves out, leaving the trustees with all the responsibility of a losing concern. The incapacity or dishonesty of storekeepers, or managers, has also been a cause of loss and failure."

This is, doubtless, a true picture; but it should be remembered that the combination laws had been repealed only eight years previously; that there was consequently no habit of association among the working people, and that the laws, giving security and freedom of action since passed through the instrumentality of the Christian Socialists, were not then in existence. The situation has, therefore, altered greatly in favour of successful operations by the people.

CHAPTER II.

Efforts to Improve the Condition of the Poor.

WHAT the store movement aimed at was, as we have seen, the accumulation of capital for the establishment of depôts, where the working people, by doing their own business, could appropriate to themselves the profit hitherto made on it by others. They were aware that such an attempt was attended by risks arising from inexperience, but they also knew that whatever they might attempt, risks and disappointments would have to be encountered. They knew, too, that their first efforts must necessarily be feeble, and progress slow; but this was an indispensable condition in connection with any experiment the people might make, where a knowledge of principle and requisite business experience were only beginning to be acquired.

The conception of this store project, whatever result it might have, was a bold one, and, considering the condition of the working classes at that time, though not encouraging, yet carried in it sufficient promise to tempt ardent reformers. In 1867 Leone Levi estimated the earnings of the working classes at £418,000,000 per annum; 10 per cent. on this would have been close on £42,000,000 a year. If we take £300,000,000 as the earnings of the working people in

1825, it will be seen that £30,000,000 a year was the stake played for. Those who commenced this movement knew very well that only a very small portion of this could be obtained by co-operative effort; but it was all there, and was every day increasing in amount, and therefore the attempt was worth making, however slight the success might at first be.

The idea included two important points, namely the accumulation of capital for self-employment, and the organisation of consumption by means of the store, with a view to controlling production, and thus removing the chief difficulty in the way of self-employment. That at first looked shadowy; but the experience acquired by perseverance made it daily easier, until gradually, and after much disappointment, changes of plan, new developments of business experience, and many vicissitudes, the new shape was assumed, and success may now be considered as assured. It was certain from the beginning that a large proportion of the earnings of the working people could not be dealt with by themselves. Their houses had to be found by the owners of property, professional services were beyond their control, while as to their enormous drink expenditure, the men of the co-operative movement from the first, refused absolutely to have anything to do with it as part of their trade. There can be no doubt that the idea embodied in the co-operative store movement, which the men in it have not yet completely realised, will, when they come to understand and apply it, work the most extraordinary revolution in the practices of trade. It might be going too far to say that Robert Owen

foresaw and understood what might be done by its full application. It is clear from his writings, however, that he saw very distinctly it would place a mighty power, capable of great results, in the hands of the working classes, and it is evident that even when its working was clumsy and unsatisfactory as a money investment, it was producing good in many ways to those who had gone into it.

It put on its members the necessity of keeping out of debt, at a time when indebtedness was the general condition of the working classes. It put upon them also the necessity of prudence and foresight, that by taking care of the wages, when earned, they might be able to conform to the ready-money payments of their new system. It led to an extensive association among its members, and to a daily intercourse in which economy and business were subjects of conversation; and, which was of still greater advantage, it gave them, by service on their committees, a knowledge of business the importance of which could not be over-estimated. It had also a most beneficial effect on the morality of trade. By their practice of ready-money dealing, they kept clear of speculative business, and risk of bankruptcy through bad debts. By the constancy of their custom, through membership, the demand became so easily calculated that their stock was, as it were, sold as soon as it was bought, and wholesale purchase could be easily fitted to retail demand. As they bought for themselves and sold to themselves, dividing the profit among themselves, there was no temptation to adulterate, to use false weights or measures, or to represent anything to be other than it was. These were moral and business

advantages which had a direct effect on the working classes. It may also be said that its tendency was to carry the people over to the side of order, as political disturbance was not likely to proceed from those who required peace and the pursuits of peace for the carrying out of their ideas.

That the men who had engaged in the store movement from 1825 to 1835 were working in the interest of the nation by promoting peace and aiding good government, may be seen by glancing at the state of the country at the time during which their labours continued. It is important to note that they were not seeking to disturb and alter a state of things that in any sense could be regarded as satisfactory. They were not recommending anything that dissipated the people's means, deepened their poverty, or excited their discontent. They were not making any class of men objects of special blame, or exciting the anger of the people against them. What they did was to recognise the miseries and the difficulties of the situation, and to put upon themselves the duty of practically remedying the evils of which they complained, and from which they suffered.

The deep distress of large numbers of the working population in the manufacturing towns, where the co-operators were most active, and where the workers ought to have been better off than in any other part of the kingdom, was simply appalling. Inquiries of a careful and minute kind had not then been carried as far as they have subsequently been, but when they were entered on, a few years later, they rendered vast service in laying bare to the public gaze a state of things that had existed for several years.

John Noble, in the appendix to his work on National Finance," has taken the following statements from "Hansard's Parliamentary Debates." "They afford," he says, "conclusive evidence of the condition of general distress and wretchedness into which the population had been plunged." Mr. Slanley, February, 4, 1840, says:—"In Liverpool in 1839, there were 7,860 cellars used as dwellings, inhabited by 39,000 people, or one-seventh of the then population of the town. In Manchester and Salford also a considerable portion of the population inhabited cellars. Out of 37,000 habitations which were examined, no less than 18,400 were ill-furnished, and 10,400 altogether without furniture. In Bury, the population of which is 20,000, the dwellings of 3,000 families were visited. In 773 of them the families slept three and four in a bed; in 209 four and five slept in a bed; in 67 five and six slept in a bed; and in 15 six and seven slept in a bed. In Newcastle-on-Tyne the residences of 26,000 poor persons were examined, and those who saw them gave a most appalling account of the misery, filth, and want of air, which prevailed." Mr. Scholfield, June 15, 1841, read from a letter to the effect that workmen, in Birmingham, with large families, "are receiving from 6s. to 11s. per week, and would be able, if they could work full time, to earn from 15s. to 30s. per week. How these families live and pay rent can only be answered by the poor creatures themselves." Mr. Baines, member for Leeds, in the same debate declared that in the town he represented there were no less than 10,000 persons out of employment, or dependent on those in that situation; the population at that time was slightly over 151,000, so that one-fifteenth

had no work. In the same debate a few nights after, Sharman Crawford, member for Rochdale, declared that in that town "there were 136 persons living on 6d. per week, 290 on 10d., 508 on 1s., 855 on 1s. 6d., and 1,500 on 1s. 10d. per week. Of these five-sixths had scarcely a blanket amongst them; 85 families had no blanket; and 46 families had only chaff beds, without any covering at all." Mr. J. Brotherton, member for Salford, said that there were in that town "2,030 houses untenanted, which, if occupied, would yield a rental of £27,000 a year. The poor-rates had doubled since 1836. In Manchester, during the last year, upwards of 10,000 families had been relieved by public subscription." Dr. Bowring said that, "at Bolton, 1,400 houses were unoccupied. Of the poor-rates, only two-thirds could be collected, in consequence of the distress." Mr. Cobden declared that, "in Stockport, twenty-nine large concerns were closed. A 2s. rate only yielded one-sixth of what it did two years ago, and a 1s. rate only two-thirds of what a 6d. rate did at that time." Much more might be added, but to register the growth of public distress in the manufacturing districts is only making known what, at the time, was admitted as a fact beyond contradiction.

In the agricultural districts, pauperism had become so general as to seriously interfere with the value of property. In a work dedicated to the members of the committee of the Poor-Law Conference, published in 1876,[1] J. R. Prettyman says, quoting from the report of the Poor-Law Commissioners: One witness, whose evidence is given in the Report for

[1] "Dispauperizature."—Longmans.

1834, says, in the parish of Cholesbury, all the land was offered to the assembled paupers, who refused it, saying they would rather continue on the old system, namely, receiving wages out of rates. The Rector, whose whole income had been absorbed by pauperism, says: "The rates, having swallowed up the rents, the parish officers threw up their books, and the poor, left without any means of maintenance, assembled, at my door, whilst I was in bed, and applied to me for advice and food. My income being under £160 a year, rendered my means of relief small, but I got a rate-in-aid of £50 from Drayton. The present state of the parish is this—the land almost wholly abandoned, the poor thrown upon the rates, and set to work on the roads and gravel-pits, and paid for this unprofitable labour at the expense of another parish." Mr. Majendie, an assistant commissioner, says: "In Lenham, Kent, some of the land was out of cultivation. A large estate has been several years in the hands of the proprietor, and a farm of 420 acres of good land and tithe free, and well situated, had just been thrown up by the tenant, the poor rate on it amounting to £300 a year." It is also reported to the commissioners that "the owner of a farm at Granden, in Cambridgeshire, could not get a tenant even at 5s. an acre, and that Downing College, which has a property of 5,000 acres, in the same county, found it impossible, notwithstanding the lowering of the rents to an extreme point, to obtain men of substance for tenants;" and at Great Shelford, in the same county, the absolute absorption of the land, it was anticipated, would take place in ten years. Cases of this sort might be quoted from a large number of

counties, extending almost throughout the kingdom, in proof of the manner in which the poverty of the country was rapidly eating away the value of property. Evidence on the subject is so overwhelming that special references need not be given.

The moral and intellectual condition of the people was on a level with their poverty. Forty-eight per cent. of the children in Birmingham were receiving some kind of scholastic training in common day and Sunday schools, while over 51 per cent. were receiving no education whatever. In Dudley, Walsall, Wednesbury, and Stourbridge, "the proportion that could read was represented as being unusually small, some who stated that they could read, when examined, were found unable to read a word, and out of forty-one witnesses under eighteen years of age examined at Darlaston, only four could write their names." The same report, page 203, says that in Sheffield, "two-thirds of the working class children and young persons are growing up in a state of ignorance, and are unable to read." So far as the welfare of the masses of the working people was concerned, the Government was not in any true sense of the word a real government. It repressed turbulence, and punished crime, in defence of property; but it neither sought to cultivate the faculties of the people, nor to satisfy by wise provision of law their legitimate wants; to give them the knowledge or opportunity which would enable them to do these things for themselves.

In such a state of things, it became the duty of every thoughtful man to exert himself for the promotion of needful reforms. The only action for such a purpose was associated action; hence the many

societies then at work, especially among those who strove for a cheap and free press, and Robert Owen and his friends, who laboured zealously for education, and voluntary endeavour on behalf of the workers of the country.

Luckily for Robert Owen, when he was most active in doing all that lay in his power for improving the condition of the working people, there did not exist one-half the books we now possess, explaining the intricacies of what is called political economy. If they had existed, however, it is probable he would not have read them, and if he had, it is impossible to believe that he would have been better fitted for the work to which he devoted himself.

He always insisted that we either had, or might have, a surplus of wealth over and above what our population could require, and the thought that most occupied his mind was not how to fit our population to our supplies, but how to distribute equitably our supplies among our population. How to get rid of the people by emigration need puzzle nobody who can find the money to carry the idle hands of Great Britain to the boundless unoccupied tracts of the United States, the Dominion of Canada, and the Australian colonies. If human creatures were simply a species of merchandise, in connection with which there was nothing to consider but the means of transport, our difficulty in connection with our population would soon disappear. This is not the case. Human passions, and affections, and prejudices, and interests, complicate the matter very seriously, and therefore Owen put before him quite a different problem, namely, how to keep the people undisturbed in the

country into which they were born, how to employ them productively, and how to distribute the produce of their industry in such a manner as to secure the necessaries and comforts of life to those whose labour had created the nation's wealth.

It was to him an astounding fact that with the power of creating wealth possessed by Great Britain, a large proportion of people should be in a state of starvation, or semi-starvation ;—that in a country where so many were excessively rich, large numbers were forced to remain idle, leaving unproduced what the people were dying for, simply because there was not statesmanship enough to use the unemployed hands for the purpose of filling the empty mouths. His pressing questions at this point were—How can the idle hands be employed ; how can the empty mouths be filled ?

Among the many things that have been estimated, it is questionable whether the value of the time wasted, wholly or partially, by the workers of Great Britain, through want of employment, has ever yet had a money value put upon it. Some instances were given in the last chapter as to how matters stood in this respect in 1839. One-fifteenth of the population of Leeds being out of employment altogether, we may safely say that 50 per cent. in addition were only partially employed. This applied to the whole population would mean many millions sterling in wages alone ; what it might mean in uncreated wealth to the nation it is, perhaps, impossible to say.

In his Labour Exchange plan, this was the question to which Owen tried to give a practical answer. That he had thought the matter out, is clear from his

"Report in the County of Lanark." In this report, which was made, at the request of a committee of gentlemen of the "Upper Ward of Lanarkshire, to a general meeting of the county, held at Lanark on the 1st of May, 1820," he insists, "*That the natural standard of value is, in principle, human labour, or the combined manual and mental powers of men called into action.*" I have referred to a small book,[1] which defines the words most in use among political economists, and I find no fewer than twenty-nine definitions of the word *value*; and I think I may say, that though the men quoted from for this purpose, are the very first as writers of reputation, it would be better, on the whole, if those who are really anxious to understand the meaning of the word, did not read the list of obscurities and contradictions given by Mr. Constable. Owen agreed with no one of the orthodox definitions of value. His idea was that gold and silver were artificial standards. These, which ought to represent the wealth of the country, lost true relation by a growth of wealth. When the circulating medium fails to meet the business requirements of the country, credit becomes a habit, inflation of credit follows, as a matter of course, and, as this rests on confidence, as soon as a panic can be got up, collapse and ruin follow, and idleness, through lack of employment, and deep suffering, through want of wages, result to the masses of the working people.

Beginning with 1817, Mr. Halbert[2] shows that out

[1] "Constable's Anatomy of Wealth."—*Simpkin, Marshall, & Co.*

[2] "Halbert's Exposition of Economic and Financial Science," page 83.

of sixty years, closing with 1877, there were thirty-two years of panic, depression, over-trading and commercial reaction. This state of things, with the awful misery attending it, cannot be explained so as to put it beyond the control of a wise statesmanship. In 1826 there was a crisis brought about by foreign loans and mining speculation. In 1837-38 there was the great American panic; in 1847 the great railway panic and Irish potato failure; in 1857 the Western Scottish Bank failure; 1866, Overend and Gurney's crushing fall, with "hundreds of limited liability companies and newly-started bank companies, bankers and speculators going down in one 'grand *mêlee*' of ruin and disaster." Subsequently to this, in one year alone, the year 1875, Mr. Purdy, in his "City Life, Its Trade and Finance," page 206, gives a list of great commercial failures, including Alexander Collie & Co., amounting to £37,058,373. There are words by which such business can be explained, but there are no words by which the awful suffering that attends it can be described. Commercial scheming and money-jobbing lie at the root of it, and in the folly and greed of men, not in the inevitable decrees of Providence, are to be found the causes for such a state of things.

These commercial dislocations, to whatever causes traced, may be regarded as hitches in our system of exchange. Either the money arrangements are at fault, or the system of supply and demand has got out of gear. In either case, the industrial machine becomes ungovernable, and breaks down. In connection with the working people, the constant fluctuations of trade are severely felt. When trade is not at

its best or at its worst, it is either improving or declining. When at its best, it can scarcely ever be said that all are employed. When at its worst, there is, among the unemployed, a general misery which no system of relief can meet, and no effort of private benevolence greatly mitigate. In the improving or declining condition, there are always large numbers wholly or partially unemployed, and suffering in a greater or lesser degree, so that, except in the rare intervals when things are at their very best, the condition of the labouring population in Great Britain is a condition of uncertainty, of competition for employment, of depressed wages, and comparative want. Out of the sixty years already alluded to in the work of Mr. Halbert, the term of decided and prosperous commercial enterprise is stated to be eighteen years, whilst that of bad trade and of decline and recovery stands at forty-two years.

Owen's Labour Exchange plan was meant to apply principally to the unemployed and partially employed. It accepted labour as the standard of value and as the source of wealth. He started in this from the ground laid down by Adam Smith, who, in his introduction to the "Wealth of Nations," says: "The annual labour of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all the necessaries and conveniences of life which it annually consumes, and which consists always either in the immediate produce of that labour, or in what is purchased with that produce from other nations. According, therefore, as this produce, or what is purchased with it, bears a greater or smaller proportion to the number of those

who are to consume it, the nation will be better or worse supplied with all the necessaries and conveniences for which it has occasion." M'Cullock says, p. 73: "That the great practical problem involved in that part of the science which treats of the production of wealth, must resolve itself into a discussion of the means by which labour may be considered most efficient, or by which the greatest amount of necessary, useful and desirable products may be obtained with the least outlay of labour." In this view of the matter it must be plain that, to have inactive any portion of the community that might be engaged in productive employment, is injurious not only to those who are forced into involuntary idleness, but also to society which has to support them in idleness, instead of deriving profit from their labour. The science of the political economist, if it can only attempt an explanation instead of accomplishing a cure, must be at fault, and in such a situation, instead of being satisfied with the explanation of the political economist, it is our duty to encourage such experiments as may promise a solution of the difficulty.

CHAPTER III.

Plan of Labour Exchange.

OWEN in many ways asked the question—why, if labour be the parent of wealth, the workers of the country were compelled to starve when they were able and anxious to work? The statesmen and politicians gave no answer. The political economists spoke of a falling off in demand—of the unremunerative condition of the markets; overlooking the fact that these idle people, if put to work, would of themselves create markets by the supplying of their wants. The producer was also a consumer, and Robert Owen and his followers felt that some intelligent effort should be made to at least produce as much by the labour of the unemployed as would enable them without injury to others to keep life in themselves.

It would perhaps be too much to expect statesmen to devote their time to any subject which has not first been discussed by the public, and the condition of the unemployed never received that kind of public attention which leads to a comprehension of principles and an understanding of details. Public discussion has always taken the form of how to feed and employ paupers at the least expense to the rate-payers, when the consideration ought to have been how to employ unpauperised workers with advantage to themselves

and the public, and at no cost to the rate-payers. The worker, forced into poverty by want of employment, may be said to have no refuge but pauperism; at first perhaps only partial, but, in the end, complete. When the pressure on the rates is not heavy, or when it is not expected to be of long continuance, out-door relief is given; but if the pressure increases and continues, out-door relief is gradually cut off, and the doors of the workhouse thrown open in the belief that large numbers would suffer anything rather than enter them. In this way there is sometimes a temporary saving in money, but there is always a permanent increase in the inmates of the "house," and there is an increase also in that abjectness of spirit by which pauperism is accepted as a permanent condition of life.

Owen, and those who thought with him, saw what was obvious to the world at the time when the Labour Exchange was organised (1830 to 1832), that the growth of pauperism, through want of employment, was enormous, and that multitudes of people, who had up to that time struggled to provide themselves with food, lodging, clothing, and fire, by heavy, disagreeable, and continous labour, were rapidly coming to the conclusion that the lodging, clothing, and food of the pauper were better than they had been in the habit of procuring for themselves, and that they got it in what was miscalled the "workhouse," without working. In this way the labour of the country was becoming demoralised, and there was no method of dealing with it understood either by the Government or the local authorities, that could prevent the complications and dangers rapidly multiplying and becoming worse as

they increased in number. It is true that wealth was increasing in the hands of certain classes of the community, and when this wealth was boastingly spoken of, as a national aggregate, there was reason for the boast; but the wide-spread poverty, on one hand, presented such a striking contrast to the growing riches and luxury on the other, that it was a question if the position were not more calculated to excite alarm than satisfaction.

It would be difficult to conceive any plan by which the whole unemployed portion of the labouring population could be set to work under the ordinary conditions of depressed trade. There were millions of people at this period unemployed and partially employed. It would have taken so much capital, and engaged so much of the managing faculty of the country, as would have disorganised the established system. Any project where such a tendency was to be apprehended was out of the question.

The Labour Exchange project interfered with nothing that formed part of the existing system. Its proposal was to establish a centre of exchange, in which every worker who produced anything of exchangeable value might dispose of it, and receive its value in time notes. The material that had to be purchased was paid for in these notes at market value, and the time spent in its manufacture calculated at the rate of 6d. per hour. Suppose the article to be a pair of shoes, the value of the material 3s. 6d., and the time occupied in making them seven hours. In material, leather, &c., and labour, this would bring the value up to 7s., which would be paid in the currency of the exchange in fourteen sixpenny notes.

With these the maker of the shoes might purchase, in the exchange, material for the continuing of his work, and food for his family. While he was engaged in making boots or shoes, other people were employed in producing things needed by him, in depositing them as he had done, and taking home for their use the shoes he had made. There need be no limit to the operations carried on in such an establishment, nor need there be any idleness among the people connected with it, so long as there is a want that can be supplied by mutual interchange.

In such a system every unemployed hand might be brought into employment, every particle of skill utilized to supply a demand otherwise non-existent, and the absence of which implied terrible suffering. In this way labour is exchanged for labour, and so long as men can produce what they mutually require, want, in the ordinary meaning of the term, would be unknown. This is the idea that was entertained by Robert Owen and his fellow-labourers.

The carrying out of this plan was in the nature of things a difficult task and required a larger capital, and at first, no doubt, a more matured experience than was possessed by its most ardent advocates. The organisation of a primary establishment in London could not but be costly. At first, only the working classes were likely to take an interest in the movement, and capital was the thing they were least likely to possess. Large premises would have to be taken and fitted up, men acquainted with the value of the different goods brought in for exchange would have to be engaged, and money wherewith to procure a stock of various kinds of raw material would be necessary.

FACSIMILE OF LABOUR EXCHANGE NOTE.

There would also be needed an office at which money at a moderate discount might be given for notes when the holders could not procure what they required on the spot. Ordinary articles of food ought to be added for the convenience of members, that the notes might not be carried out of the institution to neighbouring traders who might be disposed to take them at an injurious depreciation. As a matter of course the managers would be under no compulsion to receive whatever might be brought to them. They might refuse any article in which they were already over-stocked, or any article not in general or frequent demand. Indeed, one of the chief duties of the management would be to keep constant watch over the proportions of the stock. In this system it need not be supposed that every one of the evils growing out of want of employment could be overcome. There are many employments in which those who work do not produce what could be exchanged in such a place, but all who labour in the production of articles in common use among the masses of the people would not need to spend their time in idleness.

It is no objection to say that in great manufacturing establishments the articles exchanged could be made more economically than under a system of domestic industry; because in this case they would be the produce of a skill and industry that would otherwise be utterly wasted. They would not be made for competing markets, but for their own special market, and would not be made at all if this special mode of exchanging them to the advantage of the producer and consumer were not in operation. Once such a system as this was fairly established it would be

above the accidents of financial disarrangements. Whether a panic was brought on by over-trading, or bank-breaking, or war, or any other cause, the wants of the people could be satisfied, so long as they preserved a method of exchanging what they produced.

Had the capital at the command of Robert Owen been sufficient, it is almost certain that the business ability which secured to him a uniform success in all his private undertakings would have carried him safely through his labour exchange experiment. This not being the case, he was forced to do the best he could with the means at his disposal. One writer gives a description of the Labour Exchange, in which there is not one of its features truly represented, the description has not even the exaggerated resemblance of a caricature. In principle and detail it is misconception [1] from beginning to end.

The idea of the Labour Exchange was explained in Owen's report to the County Lanark, issued on May 1st, 1820; and again in the report of the proceedings in Dublin, in 1823. It had been extensively discussed in the public press, especially in the *Crisis*.

At the Co-operative Congress held in the May of 1832, Owen submitted a report to the meeting which is thus noticed under the head of "Exchange Labour Bank:" "Mr. Owen then observed, that to render their operations effective, money, which formed the sinews of war, was requisite. He then submitted a report, containing a proposal for facilitating and securing the exchange of labour for equal labour." Indeed the matter had been the subject of close and careful consideration for several years, and it was not

[1] Sargant's "Robert Owen and His Philosophy," p. 303.

commenced until it had been gone over in its minutest details by those who projected it, and who were anxious for its success.

Owen did nothing haphazard, or without requisite deliberation. Robert Dale Owen says: "My father found the political economists urging a reduction of taxes as a cure for existing evils; but his experience taught him to regard that as a mere temporary palliative. The very reduction of Government burdens might be taken as an all-sufficient plea for the further reduction of wages. Labour could be afforded for less. And down to the very point at which it can be afforded, which means at that point on the road to famine at which men are not starved suddenly, but die slowly of toil inadequately sustained by scanty and unwholesome food, down to that point of bare subsistence, my father saw the labourer of Britain thrust. How? Wherefore? By what leger-demain of cruelty and injustice? Thus the problem loomed upon him. We may imagine his reflections. Why, as the world advances in knowledge and power, do the prospects and the comforts of the mass of mankind darken and decline? How happens it that four or five centuries have passed over Britain, bringing peace where raged feuds and forays, affording protection to person and property, setting free the shackled press, spreading intelligence and liberality, reforming religion, and fostering civilisation; how happens it that these centuries of improvement have left the British labourer twofold more the slave of toil than they found him? Why must mechanical inventions—inevitable, even if they were mischievous, and in themselves a rich blessing as surely as they are

inevitable—stand in array against the labourer instead of toiling by his side?" "Momentous questions these!" exclaims the son, "my father pondered them day and night." They were constantly with him, and all that he said and did was the result of long thought and painful anxiety, never hurried, if for no other reason than that everything he undertook was delayed in its prosecution and robbed of its best chances of success by want of means and of preparedness among the people. Noyes[1] says that Josiah Warren communicated his views on "Labour Exchange" to Owen at New Harmony, in 1826. The reply to this is, as already stated, that Owen had published his views on "Labour Exchange" in 1820. It would be useless to attempt any refutation of the multitude of absurd things written on this project. It no doubt had its shortcomings, as most untried projects have, and it is certain that blunders were made at the beginning which were checked and corrected as experience begot knowledge. But the idea was simple, namely, to deposit manufactured goods, raw material, provisions, and so forth, receive their value in labour notes, representing time, at the rate of sixpence per hour, and then purchase with these notes anything the holder of them might require that was in stock. On the exchanges made, for the purpose of covering expense of management, a percentage was charged, so that with the exception of this charge, which was slight, everything that passed from the hands of one man to another went at the cost of production, *plus* 8½ per cent., or a penny in the shilling, which was the charge made as commission.

[1] "History of American Socialism," page 95.

At the outset Robert Owen had to contend against the impatience of his followers. He held them back as long as he could, but, as in such a business enthusiasm is worth a good deal, he had to give way, and commence before the necessary preparation could be completed. The building in which the business was carried on, and which was large and convenient, belonged to a man, who, under pretence of enthusiasm in the cause of labour, pressed it on them, free of rent. When this man saw how successful the undertaking was, his enthusiasm gave way to thoughts of self-interest, which led to a demand for £1,700 a year for rent and taxes. Up to this the success of the undertaking had been very encouraging. Even in their almost unprepared state they were doing a business of about £1,000 a week, and this would have rapidly extended, had time been given before a demand so unexpected and heavy was made. In the reports which the *Crisis* gave of the progress of the business, it is stated several times that the doors had to be closed to check a pressure of custom for which they were not prepared. In fact, everything being new to those engaged in conducting the project, the large number of transactions puzzled and confused the attendants, and frequently bred discontents that were, however, rapidly giving way to a better understanding, when the landlord, who had conceived the idea of possessing himself of the premises and the business, took possession of the bazaar in Gray's Inn-road, and turned the Exchange business and those who were transacting it into the streets.

It is true that its managers should not have commenced their undertaking till they had full legal

security for continued possession of the building in which it was to be carried on; but in such a movement there must be much real generosity, much mutual confidence among its most active friends, and it is not surprising that pretended beneficence should occasionally be used to cloak interested and sordid motives.

CHAPTER IV.

Causes of Failure.

THE Labour Exchange Bazaar was a failure. and it became so when, by improvement in its working and rapidity in its growth, it gave the fairest promise of success. So far as manufactured articles were concerned, there could be no question that it even surpassed the expectations of its projectors. Men filled up their spare time and taxed their ingenuity to produce something of exchangeable value. The notes given for the goods deposited, were used by the holders for the purchase of whatever they might require. Everything was marked at the price at which it was valued, with a separate ticket stating the amount of the $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. charged to cover the cost of the transaction.

When the people got to understand the routine of the business, complaints ceased. The officials could have no motive for under or over-valuing the goods brought to them. There was no private interest at work, and, therefore, no private purpose could be served by any description of false or fraudulent dealing. Everything was open to depositor and purchaser. Yet every person who in any way had suffered disappointment in any transaction, had the use of the public press for the purpose of attacking the institution, and

as a matter of course this was taken advantage of, more particularly by those who did not realise, in connection with their exchanges, advantages which the institution was never meant to confer.

Nor was this all. Up and down London, in districts where the working people most resorted for the purpose of marketing, shop-keepers announced their establishments as having adopted the labour exchange system, and large numbers of people, not being aware of the fraud, had to pay for their ignorance. In this way the officials of the bazaar were called upon not only to defend their own proceedings, but to defend themselves from attacks brought on by the proceedings of dishonest traders. Such impediments, however, could only have lasted for a time. As the public became better acquainted with the nature of the establishment in Gray's Inn Road, they would have disappeared, and the institution would have had a vigorous growth.

There were, however, two drawbacks for which the enemies of the Exchange were not accountable, and which will have to be carefully guarded against if any future attempt should be made to organise such a system. The first thing required is that the labourer, or worker, should be provided with the means of producing. That is, that in addition to his skill and his time, food and raw material should be supplied to him. At Gray's Inn Road, though an attempt was made to do this, it failed, partly through lack of accommodation, principally through want of capital. An attempt was made to add green-groceries, meat, and bread, by arrangement with tradesmen who dealt in these articles, payment to be half in labour notes

and half in money; but it did not work satisfactorily. The most necessary kinds of raw material should have been kept in stock, and in order that they might be supplied to members at the lowest price, should have been purchased in large quantity in the wholesale market; but an arrangement for turning notes into current coin was established, so that purchases might be made outside the bazaar. This was so much of a deviation from the original plan that it could only be justified by such a lack of capital as would indicate a dangerous financial weakness.

Had the machinery been complete, and the capital sufficient, every working man in London, and throughout the country, might have been exempt from want of employment, except through illness, intemperance, or indolence. Nothing need have been disturbed. The labour exchange project did not carry in it a revolution of displacement; that the old order might give place to an entirely new condition of industry. It simply sought to prevent poverty, distress, and discontent; to put a stop to the misery by which the homes of the workers were invaded, whenever slackness in business rendered powerless the hands of those without whose labour bread could not be procured.

Mr. Sargant tells his readers[1] that "Owen himself felt that the scheme had not proved to be what he intended. He said that really in this its first stage—its infant and imperfect state—it was little better than a superior pawnbroking establishment, but that he hoped it was proceeding to the second stage of a retail trade, and that it would eventually become a wholesale trade; a great falling off from first expectations."

[1] "Robert Owen and His Philosophy," p 315.

This passage does not represent Owen's meaning. He was speaking of the first imperfect stage of a plan that was improving in a most hopeful manner, and he in no way expresses disappointment. On the contrary, he described the progress as highly satisfactory; not at the beginning all that could be wished, because the means to make it so were not in his possession, but moving in a right direction; the branch at Blackfriars more particularly was from the commencement in a condition to pay its own expenses.

It is difficult to account for the narrow spirit of opposition in which this most legitimate and important experiment was criticised. There could be no possible harm in enabling the working people to exchange with each other, for their mutual benefit, the products of their industry. No economic principle was attacked nor was any interest interfered with. It would have utilised time, which must have been otherwise wasted; it would have increased wealth, which has a tendency to diminish during periods of commercial depression; it would have tended to preserve habits of industry, which at such seasons suffer injury; and, so far as its influence was felt, it would in every true sense of the word have been wholesome and profitable; and yet during the whole time it was carried on, it was made the subject of ridicule and misrepresentation. It may now be difficult to believe in the existence of a determination on the part of any particular class of men to designedly oppose or suppress such an undertaking. It must be remembered, however, that at the time when the experiment was made, associations for public purposes among the working people were only beginning to make their influence felt. Trade unions

were in their infancy, but were seriously feared by the manufacturing and trading classes. The 1832 reform agitation was over, but it had called out popular vehemence as an element in political discussion, a circumstance not very generally regarded with favour. A very determined movement was even at the moment on foot for an untaxed press, with a view to popular education for political purposes. The friends of Robert Owen, such as Henry Hetherington, James Watson, and John Cleave, were the leading actors in the cheap press movement, and were warmly supported by Owen's followers. In whatever way the prejudice arose, there can be no doubt it existed, and that, in consequence, Owen had to defend himself and his proceedings against misrepresentation and attack, in a way that occupied his time, and impeded the progress of that which he was seeking to carry out.

When the parent exchange left Gray's Inn Road, it removed, after a temporary sojourn at the Surrey Institute, Blackfriars, to Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, but the inconvenience and interruption to business proved fatal when taken in connection with the inadequate capital with which so large an undertaking had to be carried on. A resolute fight was made, but whatever the object of any undertaking, the business conditions of success must be present, and in this case they were not present. The want of money stood in the way of all improvements. No important difficulty could be overcome; no pressing want supplied; and, in such a state of things, whatever the zeal of the projectors, the general public fear inconvenience, and decline help even in cases where they regard success as desirable.

Those who have taken the trouble to study the plan of the labour exchange can hardly entertain a doubt as to the great benefit it was capable of conferring on the community, and on the working portion of the people in particular. It may now be said that the more forward condition of the co-operative store movement is rapidly preparing the people for it; and it is not too much to add that at no very distant time it is likely to receive a new trial, which, with the help of the store organisation, could hardly fail to be a success. A prepared public opinion, and abundant money power, will be capable of accomplishing much, when the public comprehend more fully the power of association and the fitness of the co-operative idea for grappling with the industrial evils which now seem to defy cure.

In one of his addresses in 1832, Robert Owen spoke of the Labour Exchange, then being tried in Gray's Inn Road, as a kind of bridge over which the people might pass into a more secure condition of life; but it may be said:

> They tried the abyss on wings unskilled,
> That wilful generation;
> Their children sound, and mete, and build,
> On deep and piled foundation.
> With slow increase of arch to arch,
> Across the dreary region,
> A bridge to bear the onward march
> Of many a victor legion.

The great difficulty, however, in all these early experiments, was the lack of wider knowledge and higher motives on the part of the masses. The leaders were for the most part intelligent and earnest

but a multitude of the followers expected to give little and receive much; and it does not require any large number of such to lower the character and impede the progress of any movement. Few men could have come out of such failures as Owen did, without suspicion or stain. The hopes that inspired him were genuine, and he was always personally a loser by the experiments he tried. But when the losses incurred by him, his friends, and followers, are counted up, they are as nothing in the gross to the failure of many a single trading firm in the ordinary business of the world. Robert Owen had one object in view, but he never brought himself to the belief that there was only one way of attaining it. The co-operative stores and the labour exchange were methods of approaching it, nothing more; and when these failed they were only failures in method; and, hence, he and his friends again set to work, in as strong a belief as ever that the condition of society led to the existence of needless evils and unnecessary suffering, and that it was the duty of men to labour for its improvement. In this faith they entered on the socialistic campaign which in its progress attracted so much attention and caused so much alarm to people, who, if they had known more, would have feared less.

CHAPTER V.

Preparations. New Movements.

BEFORE entering on what may be regarded as the last great effort made by Robert Owen on behalf of the people, it may not be out of place to refer briefly to certain previous events.

The Store Movement was commenced about 1822. The Labour Exchange in 1832. In 1834 the Labour Exchange effort may be regarded as closed, but in 1835 Robert Owen was again active in the cause of the working people.

The *New Moral World* was then in the first year of its existence, and in its columns may be found a record of the activity with which the efforts originated by Owen were carried on. At page 348, vol. 1, are the minutes of a meeting, held at the Exchequer Coffee-House, Palace Yard, Westminster, on August 11, 1835, Lord Dudley Stewart in the chair. The object of the meeting was to consider the practicability of adopting measures to give permanent useful employment and instruction to all who were incapable of obtaining such employment and instruction for themselves. At this meeting, Mr Thomas Attwood, of Birmingham, was the principal speaker, and being the first to address the meeting, he expressed his belief that some part of the plans recommended by Robert Owen might be carried into execution through

the means of a joint-stock company. There was considerable discussion on this, and a committee was appointed to take into consideration the various proposals and suggestions made, and Messrs. Owen, Attwood, and James Braby were appointed as a sub-committee to report, which they did at a meeting of the general committee, held at the same place, on August 19, Thomas Wyse, M.P., in the chair. This report is a well-drawn document, and contains much in reference to the actual condition of the country at that time that is well worth reproducing.

About this time the country was reduced almost to hopelessness by its pauper system. The only cure suggested by the usual counsellors consisted in sweeping those who needed relief, and applied for it, into the workhouses, and rigidly denying relief to those who would not enter these abodes of misery. The report above referred to contains the following words: "Your sub-committee perceived at once that the subject could not be understood until the cause of the evil was ascertained; for without such knowledge, it would be impossible to provide an efficient permanent remedy. From the information which is patiently collected, it found that there was no profitable employment for a large amount of the capital which is daily accumulating in the hands of comparatively few over-grown wealthy individuals, whether landed proprietors, manufacturers, commercial men, or great capitalists, trading on public securities, domestic and foreign. It also found that under the present system of individual competition, no large additional amount of capital could be beneficially employed in the extension of agriculture, manu-

factures, or commerce ; that there was, in each of these departments, much unemployed labour wasting most injuriously for all parties ; and that the professions were over-supplied with young applicants, seeking the means of very humble support. . . . Your sub-committee was also convinced that it will prove a waste of the most valuable powers possessed by society to attempt any longer to sustain a system, which the inventions, discoveries, and improvements of the age have rendered impracticable to maintain, except by the hourly increasing misery and degradation of the millions of the producers of wealth and consequent danger of non-producers. . . . Your sub-committee soon decided that evil only, to an incalculable extent, would arise to all parties by the mass being induced to look for relief from the possession of the wealth already created and possessed by individuals. It must be evident to those who reflect, that, if all the wealth now in existence were to be divided equally between the population of the world, without arrangements being made to produce more, that almost all this population would, for want of the necessaries of life, be in less than two years starved out of existence. This wealth has been slowly creating, through many centuries : and were it to be violently destroyed, and men ignorant of the effects of such a combination, were to attempt to govern the empire, the greatest disorder and misery would inevitably ensue."

The report goes on to state that whatever was attempted should be done in a sound knowledge of the facts, by the application of funds raised in the form of joint-stock company investments, and adds,

as a suggestion, that should emigration from this country become at any time necessary, individuals properly trained and selected from the establishments it was proposed to create, would be the best people for forming colonies abroad. No inducement seemed strong enough to draw from the wealthy classes the aid required for the improvement of the poor. The report, signed by Thomas Attwood, Robert Owen, and James Braby, was issued by the committee that appointed them, but the response was not such as to encourage further action.

The new Poor-law Act was relied on, and a great saving was made in the rates. The disease of pauperism was driven in, and the State doctors, like practical men, congratulated themselves on the improvement that had taken place. With all the wealth producing power they had obtained they could not manage to feed an industrious people who were ready to work, but they could manage to save the rates by imprisoning and starving paupers, and as the saving of the rates was the main thing to be desired, there ensued a tiding-over and a content which gave tolerably general satisfaction, where the convenience of the rate-paying portion of the public was the first and principal consideration.

The movement did not absolutely languish, though little of any consequence was done to enlist the attention of the public. In London, Owen delivered lectures at Burton Rooms, Burton-crescent, on the best means of trying a practical experiment on the land, with a view to the education and employment of the people. The real starting point, however, of the Socialist agitation was Manchester. Without the

newspaper press, in those days nothing could be effectually done in London ; small meetings held in the various districts of the metropolis might keep a belief alive, but could not spread it. In Manchester where the industrial evils complained of were acutely felt, and where the intercourse among great bodies of men was more complete, the case was different, and the words of Owen and his followers carried a meaning and significance which caused them to be taken to heart. It is true that those who entered on the new form of the agitation were, with few exceptions, working men, and entirely without influence; but they deal with matters belonging to their own lives and experience. They had not to go out of their own homes and workshops to find their facts, arguments, or illustrations, and their earnestness and zeal were stimulated by what they suffered themselves, and what they saw others suffer ; by the desire to lift the poor and ignorant into the condition of an intelligent and decent manhood. Living in a world of new industrial developments, they saw not only that old evils were perpetuated, but that there were daily coming into existence new ones that foreboded the worst consequences, not only to themselves and their class, but to society generally ; and they determined to fight against these by every legitimate means in their power.

The movement with which I am now about to deal began, as I have already stated, in Manchester. A store had been started in Oldfield-road, Salford, of which I myself was a member, but as we were for the most part young unmarried men, it was not in our power to to be good customers to our own business. We were,

as far as I can remember, utterly inexperienced, and it is, therefore, more than likely that the goods we offered for sale had little or no attraction, either on the ground of price or quality. We, nevertheless, went resolutely on, making no profit, yet not losing much on the business we did. This, if I am not mistaken, was in 1831, and when we discovered that we were not likely to make any headway, we prudently decided to wind up, and set to work in a different fashion. We had counters and shelves, and a few tables and chairs, so we took a couple of large rooms, close to St Philip's Church, and opened a school for the instruction of boys and girls, and of such adults as might think it worth their while to learn what we were able to teach. We had among us two carpenters, who were found useful in turning the shelves and counters into desks and forms, and in a short time our night school was ready for the reception of pupils.

We taught drawing, music, singing, and dancing, in addition to all the ordinary branches of tuition, my own position being that of writing master. We drew up a small handbill, which was distributed among the houses of the working people in the neighbourhood, and when this was done, we made a house-to-house visitation, begged the people to send their children, and if possible, to come themselves. The result of this was that in six months after we opened the school we had no fewer than 170 scholars of both sexes, who were steady and regular in their attendance, and whose ages ranged from about twelve to forty. No charge was made, nor did any of the teachers receive any remuneration. The majority of the pupils were factory girls and boys, but I can

recollect mechanics of mature years learning to write, with a desperate determination to be successful, though the difficulty was great.

We carried this school on for six years, during which time we also held Sunday meetings at which essays were read and lectures delivered, having reference chiefly to the condition of society, the changes that were taking place, the further changes that in the interest of labour were desirable, and the duties of the working portion of the population in connection with these.

The first two or three years of our co-operative effort were the busiest years in promoting and carrying the Reform Bill of 1832. I need scarcely say, that, as young men taking an interest in advanced thought, we were zealous political reformers, Manchester and Salford having then no parliamentary representation. This was also the time at which the struggle for an untaxed newspaper press began. Many of us were active in this agitation, and in promoting sound legislation. Those who were disposed to work found plenty to do, and for those who joined in the cry for education, factory legislation, social reform, and freedom of thought in matters of religious faith, there was little else than calumny and abuse; and it must be confessed that many of those most active in this regard themselves, were working people, though it is fair to state that they were among the most ignorant of their class.

Though the improvement which has taken place since then is not all that it might have been, it is so great that most men of the present day would find it difficult to realise the brute indifference, and the blind

hostility, with which the social and industrial reformers of the earlier part of the present century had to contend. A very considerable advance had been made on the condition of things in which Church and King mobs had their origin. The working people generally were acquiring knowledge, and were fast becoming independent and liberal thinkers, but there was a frightful residuum of gross ignorance and of the multiform brutality by which ignorance among the masses of the people is always attended. Multitudes were willing to sell their votes—where they possessed them, as freemen, in the old Parliamentary boroughs—and where they had no votes their violent opposition to liberal men was obtainable by drunkenness, and by the excitement of party passion.

In regard to the employment of their children in factories, the conduct of many of the working people was as bad as it could be. Habit in this matter had utterly brutalised large numbers, and improvidence and poverty tended to confirm evil habits. The masses of the factory workers were ignorant and poor, and they were assured by those interested in keeping them so, that any reduction in the hours of labour, or any change in the treatment of children that added to the cost of production, would inevitably lower wages, and, as this meant a deepening of their poverty, they looked upon the advocates of short time in the factories as their enemies. To this it was added that what we were recommending would drive the trade out of the country into the hands of foreigners, and, clumsy as this device was, and untrue as it has proved, the ignorant and brutalised portion of the population had come to believe that if they did not continue to sell

their children, body and soul, at the lowest figure, they themselves would suffer loss, and the trade of the country be ruined. Such persons did not, as a matter of course, patronise the cheap, unstamped press. Knowledge was, above all other things, what they did not desire, but, as the battle went on, these gradually, and especially the young, rising generation, came over to the side of justice and reason, and the old political and industrial masters had to give way before a reasoning they could not answer, and a force they were unable to resist.

A specimen of the manner in which what was called the Socialism of the day was combated was published at that time, as having been sung at St. Phillip's Sunday School, Salford, on Whit-Monday, May 23, 1831. St. Phillip's Church, when we first began our co-operative labours in Salford, had, as it were, a special duty to perform in counteracting the new and dangerous doctrines which we had the audacity to propagate within a stone-throw of the parsonage. My readers will understand how suitable the following song must have been to the kind of people I have just described :—

Here's a health now to honest John Bull,
When he's gone we shan't find such another ;
Here's a health to old honest John Bull,
Here's a health to old England his mother.
She gave him a good education,
Bid him stick to his Church and his King,
To be loyal and true to the nation,
And then to be merry and sing,
Fol de rol, &c.

For John is a good hearty fellow,
Industrious, honest, and brave,

Nor envies his betters, brave fellow,
For betters he knows he must have.
There must be fine lords and fine ladies,
There must be some little, some great,
Their wealth the support of our trade is,
Our trade's the support of their state.
Fol de rol, &c.

The plough and the loom would stand still,
If we were made gentlemen all,
All spinners, or weavers ! who'd fill
The senate, or pulpit, or hall ;
"Rights of man" makes a very fine sound,
Equal riches a plausible tale ;
But whose labour would then till the ground ?
All would drink, but who'd brew the ale ?
Fol de rol, &c.

Thus naked and starv'd in the streets,
In despair we should wander about,
Should liberty find us with meat,
Or equality lengthen our coat.
That knaves are for lev'ling no wonder,
You may easily guess at their views ;
But who would get most of the plunder ?
Why, those who have nothing to lose !
Fol de rol, &c.

Then away with such nonsense and stuff,
Full of treason, confusion, and blood,
Every Briton has freedom enough
To be happy as long as he's good.
To be ruled by a merciful king,
To be govern'd by juries and laws,
And then to be merry and sing
This, this is true liberty's cause.
Fol de rol, &c.

This is a sample of the way in which we were attacked in verse, and, as might be expected, the

attacks in prose were not less lively and well-intended. Many specimens of the advice given to working men, and the kind of reasoning used, might be given. The following is taken from a pamphlet entitled "Ten Minutes' Advice to Labourers," published by Hatchard and Son. After cautioning the poor against gambling, gin-drinking, and drunkenness generally, the writer tells them that they should be industrious, economical, saving, contented with their station, careful how they marry; that they should not grumble about taxes, nor be noisy about reform. Then the following satisfactory explanation of the world's deepest puzzles is given:—"It should also be remembered that, except a rich man locks up his money—a very rare case, indeed—he pays away his income to servants, labourers, and tradespeople, who again lay out the money in food and clothes for their families; so that, in fact, a division is at present made of his property among the poor, though not, indeed, an equal one. But all forced attempts at equalising property have ever failed in producing the end designed, and must ever fail, for it is as much a law of nature that some should be rich, and some should be poor, as that some should be tall, and some should be short." The writer then goes on to say, "It is the will of God that everything in this world should be liable to change—the sun does not always shine; a rainy day must come. Sickness will succeed to health, want to plenty. Those changes have happened in all times and countries, and no doubt will continue to take place as long as the world lasts. Many, however, are too apt to spend all they get in drinking and intemperance, perfectly indifferent as to the future, the con-

sequence of which is, when work is scarce and wages low, they are reduced to great want and distress; then they are ready to find fault with the times, the laws, the governments, &c."

We were always ready with our replies to this sort of criticism. We knew that the people who resorted to such shifts were not themselves deceived by them, and that in speaking of the poverty and sufferings of the people as Providential arrangements they were hypocritically disgracing religion, and destroying its influence for good among the people. We felt this very strongly, and did not hesitate to say so, though, for doing this, we incurred much blame from such as believe that the true policy in relation to the evils of society is to hoodwink the people and leave to time the cure of all the wrongs by which men are afflicted. I need not say that the ideas such opponents ascribed to Robert Owen and his friends were not those held by them. It was order, not anarchy, they sought for; and it was justice, not an impossible and absurd equality, they laboured to establish.

The Congress of 1836 was held in London, but nothing of a practical character was attempted. Delegates were sent from Manchester, who brought back favourable reports as to what had been talked about and done, with which we were not quite satisfied. We had among us in Manchester more life and energy, united to an active system of teaching. We possessed a number of men who had proved their fitness to teach, and we were, therefore, determined to throw ourselves into the movement and try whether or not we could secure a substantial following, with a view to further effort on behalf of the working people.

CHAPTER VI.

Agitation in Manchester.

BETWEEN the London Congress of 1836 and the Congress held in Salford in 1837, there was a great activity in Manchester. Robert Owen visited the town and delivered lectures at several places in the district. Not only were there crowded audiences in the New Hall, in Salford, but a three years' engagement had been made to occupy every Sunday a large new hall in Peter Street, Manchester, and this, which held about three thousand people, was always full.

Nothing of the kind had ever been tried before in the mannfacturing districts. There were doctrines, practical projects, and a continuous teaching by men appointed for the purpose by a solidly-organised association. A good band of music was formed, singers were drilled, a hymn book published, a form of service arranged, and everything connected with the Sunday meetings was orderly and decent. First, a hymn was sung, then a lesson read, a hymn again sung, an address delivered, discussion invited, applause or disapprobation being strictly prohibited, and when the time allotted to this had expired, another hymn was sung, and the proceedings were brought to a close.

The people attracted to these meetings, as well as

those who constituted the membership of the association, were, as a rule, the most respectable portion of the working classes, with a fair sprinkling of the most thoughtful and independent of the shopkeeping and middle class. Those who wished to join were entered as members, and became active in forwarding the work in hand. Nothing as immediate advantage was held out to those who joined the society. On the contrary, they were called on to pay regular weekly subscriptions, and to assist in many ways that involved trouble and expense. People from the surrounding districts flocked into Manchester and Salford on Sundays, and during the week-days held, in their own neighbourhoods, meetings which were usually addressed by deputations from Manchester. After a little time good rooms were opened in every town and village of any size, lectures and discussions were commenced, and brought into the field active young men, who, in this way, had opportunities of forming and uttering opinions in connection with this new awakening of the people.

It was not a sudden outburst of enthusiasm calling for nothing but the excitement of the moment to give it strength. The first thing it protested against was the ignorance of the people, and the vices that sprang from and flourished in this ignorance. Drunkenness, swearing, dog-fighting, man-fighting, and violence of whatever kind were attacked. The factory owners were condemned for taking no care for the educational and moral welfare of the people. The clergy of the Established Church, and the ministers of the various sectarian chapels were attacked for living without protest in the midst of a state of ignorance

and depravity, which it was their special duty to war against, but which was more than half tolerated by their mild, conventional, weekly censures. Perhaps, in the whole time, between 1816 and 1845, when the proposals and plans of Robert Owen were, in one form or other, constantly under discussion, there was no busier year than 1836.

Owen, himself, made an extensive lecturing tour, taking in all the manufacturing districts, from London to the West of Scotland. Writing from Manchester, on February 16th, 1837, he says:—"On Saturday morning I left Birmingham and found myself comfortably in my old quarters with my friend, Mr. E—, at Stony Knolls, about a mile from Manchester, at nine o'clock in the evening. The next morning our friends from Salford came to me to say that I was expected to deliver a lecture in their new large room, Peter Street, in the evening. I went there accordingly, and to my surprise, I found an audience of certainly not less than two thousand persons. It is a fine, spacious, magnificent room for the purpose. It is, as I am informed, the largest public room in Manchester."

The *True Sun*, one of the London daily papers, gave the following notice of the lecture:—

"On Sunday evening last, Robert Owen delivered a lecture in Bywater's Room, Manchester, to an audience of two thousand persons, upon his peculiar doctrines. He was listened to with considerable attention, and concluded by courting discussion, upon which Mr. Hewett, a gentleman of some literary attainments, rose and catechised Mr. Owen in a very clever and lucid manner, and, we think, evinced a

very sound knowledge of his subject. However, the venerable lecturer never lost that amiable equilibrium of temper which is such a distinguishing trait of his character."

I insert this paragraph, as, in connection with the agitation of Owen, it should be remembered how free his language and manner were from anger or hostility; how anxious he was to impress on friends and opponents the necessity of dealing calmly, though resolutely, with the evils against which he protested. And it is right to add that his friends, as far as they could, followed his example by accepting the most adverse criticism even gross misrepresentation, and occasionally violent abuse, without angry retaliation, or any protest, beyond what was necessary to check uncalled-for insult, or to vindicate their principles and proceedings.

The spirit that had for some time been growing in Manchester and its neighbourhood, was now taken advantage of. A double course of lectures during the week were delivered by Robert Owen, besides which the Sunday lectures were more than usually crowded. The press took the matter up, and while the papers of the old Tory type denounced the "socialists" as in every way wicked, and as deserving to be hounded from society, the liberal papers, the *Morning Advertiser* particularly, were eloquent in praise of Owen and his followers. He was at this time sixty-six years old, but full of vigour and energy.

Before Owen commenced his double course of lectures, he issued an address on the necessity of united action for the promotion of public good. "You live," he said, "in the midst of a society altogether different

from that in which your ancestors lived in this district one hundred years ago. At that period there was not the improved steam engine of Watt, nor Arkwright's improved spinning machinery; the power-loom, mail coaches, steamboats, gas lights, steam carriages; and a thousand minor inventions now familiar to you, were then unknown. There were no cotton, woollen, flax, or silk mills; there were no children employed in mills of machinery; there were no women taken from their domestic duties and from their homes to public works. There were no feelings of hatred between masters and servants; there were no poor wretches over-exhausted with labour in unhealthy atmospheres, doomed in bad times of periodical and frequent occurrence to live miserably, or to die by slow starvation, while surrounded by wasteful and extravagant luxury; there were light poor rates, and all ashamed to apply for them; there were many holiday periods in the year, much health, and a considerable degree of rustic enjoyment for the working classes, who were then chiefly employed in agriculture, living in the family with their employers, and working daily with them, or living and working in a similar manner." . . . "This change," he goes on to say, "has produced many advantages, but it has also produced many disadvantages. . . . The change from the agricultural system to the manufacturing, commercial, and money-dealing system is one of the necessary steps in the progress of what is called civilisation."

In a subsequent paragraph he points to the growth of combined action among all classes of the population for common purposes, and hails this as one of the

most promising signs of the time. "Thousands of highly advantageous results may be obtained by well-concerted union, not one of which would be obtained by isolated effort. But society is yet acquainted only with the puny operations of the individual system. The human mind will be astonished when it shall be enabled to compare what is accomplished by conflicting individual efforts, with those which may be immediately obtained by a well-devised rational system of union." Alluding to his proposed lectures, he goes on to say: "I propose to show the existing strong necessity for the change, and the benefit of it to every class, sect, party, country, and colour, as well as the easy means by which it may be commenced, and finally accomplished, without the slightest injury to the person, property, or conscience, of a single individual. In Manchester, the seat of my early aspirations after knowledge, I intend giving a full double course of lectures; in the mornings at eleven o'clock, for that class of the population who have most leisure; and the other at eight o'clock in the evening, for those who are too much engaged in the morning to attend. The proceeds of the lectures will be equally divided between the Athenæum and the Mechanics' Institution, Manchester." The morning lectures were but thinly attended, but the evening lectures were crowded, and excited the liveliest interest among the thinking portion of the working people.

It has been complained of Owen, that he spoke as one with authority, rather than as an inquirer; but those who made this charge should have remembered that he had been for at least thirty-six years practically experimenting on the two leading points he was most

anxious to enforce;—His theory as to the formation of character by education, wisely administered, he had demonstrated at a heavy expenditure of money and time, and by his experience he had convinced himself that if the people would save themselves from the growing evils of the new system of manufacture, then becoming everywhere established, they must possess themselves of the implements of production. The knowledge he had acquired during his early life, coupled with his special experience in connection with the effort to establish Co-operative Stores and with the Labour Exchange, had carried him beyond the position of a mere inquirer. He was neither dogmatic nor impatient. His manner was never offensive; on the contrary, inquiries and disputes which were forced on him in a cavilling and contentious spirit, when not met by silence, were treated with a respect and attention, neither they nor their authors merited.

During this visit, a discussion took place between Owen and a clever young dissenting minister named Roebuck. As might have been expected, the disputants ran side by side, scarcely touching each other on any one of the points in dispute. Owen based all he had to say on the influence of education on character, and on the necessity of so reforming society as to secure justice in all conditions of life. These points he enforced with eloquence and earnestness, producing a very powerful effect on his audience.

On the other hand, his opponent, who was also both eloquent and earnest, urged nearly everything that could be said in favour of freedom of will in the choice of doctrine, and the responsibility of man for the correctness or error of his opinions and the truth of

his religious creed. Of the wide range of subjects connected with the employment and condition of the people he knew nothing, and therefore could say little, beyond making a general defence of the existing condition of things.

The activity of Owen, during this part of the year of 1837, was the opening of a movement in favour of a social and industrial reform in England which since that time has borne noble fruit, and which is yet filled with noble promise.

When the annual Congress met at Salford; in the May of 1837, an active and vigorous agitation was in operation in the manufacturing districts. It was carried on, however, by purely local effort, and by the zeal of a few men who held themselves in readiness to answer any call that might be made on them.

When anyone was needed at any point within reasonable distance, to lecture, or to discuss, Manchester was applied to, and some person was sent. As a matter of course, as the principles spread the duties in this way became heavier, and when the work in the school is considered in addition to lecturing and discussing, sometimes at a distance of forty or fifty miles, it can easily be seen that no man who had to earn his own living could carry on such a work continuously.

The Congress had to take this into consideration—to find the means whereby the stress should be taken off those who had worked unremittingly up to that time. It had also to define the constitution and aims of the society, so that the character of the work to be undertaken and the objects to be achieved should be clearly understood by all. The purpose of the

agitation could be clearly stated; what could be realised would of course depend to a great extent on the amount of public support the agitation might receive. There was repeated at the Salford Congress the following declaration which had been made two years before: "The object of this association is to effect peaceably, and by reason alone, an entire change in the character and condition of mankind, by establishing over the world, in principle and practice, the religion of charity for the convictions, feelings, and conduct of all individuals, combined with a well-devised, equitable, and natural system of united property; which united property is to be created by the members of the association, without infringing upon the rights of any private property now in existence. This great change to be introduced and accomplished by devising and adopting new arrangements for forming a superior character for the human race; for producing and distributing in the best manner the best qualities of all kinds of wealth abundantly for all; and for governing mankind without artificial rewards or punishments."

This was certainly an ambitious undertaking. It may occur to some that the terms in which it is expressed might have been more moderate and more discreetly chosen; but an effort of the kind was needed, and though the result might fall short of the somewhat extravagant hopes many might entertain, it was better than that nothing should be attempted.

The method suggested by the Congress was to establish a central association with branches extending to every part of the world, and by means of this central association and its branches to create a new

public opinion in favour of an entire change in the character and condition of society, by the aid of public meetings, lectures, discussions, missionaries, cheap publications, and so forth ; by founding communities in which to educate and employ all the members of the association, under arrangements favourable to their health, intelligence, and happiness. Then follows the statement that the association discarded the fundamental errors by which the past and present deplorable condition of the human race had been produced. These fundamental errors are stated to be "that man is bad by nature, and that he can believe or disbelieve, feel or not feel, as he pleases ; that he forms his own character, and that, consequently, he ought to be rewarded or punished for it, both in this world and the world to come."

It would not be correct to suppose that the Socialists at this time entertained the common idea of popular education, or that their notions as to the better treatment of the people simply meant a change whereby more leisure and a greater abundance of food and other necessaries might be obtained by those who worked. They went much further. On the question of education, Owen took much trouble to explain himself, and, although the most active of those who opposed him on religious grounds, mistook and sometimes misrepresented him, his followers were sound believers in his principles, and regarded the education of the people as the first duty of society.

It was Robert Owen's dream that society might be brought to entertain and act on the belief that the moral faculties of man had never had the development they were capable of receiving, and while he

regarded the acquisition of wealth, and its just distribution, as necessary to the happiness of men, his leading thought was concerned with the attainment of the higher moral life in which all things are subordinate to a sense of duty begot of the recognition of a universal brotherhood. He believed in the gains that would result from earnest effort in the work of education, even in the limited sense in which the term was usually understood; but he, nevertheless, considered all that could be accomplished on the ordinary plans as trivial and disappointing compared with what might be done.

When the Socialists arranged their plans for the establishment of village communities, their first thought was directed to the land to be purchased, or held on long lease; their next to the organisation of labour on the land, especially of skilled labour in the ordinary trades of the country, with the view of making the worker the director of, and the chief gainer by, his own industry; of conferring on all the best education that could be obtained.

Society was then afflicted, as it is now, by the competition of individual interests. The multitudes were suffering whilst the few were being enriched, and all idea of a common interest was disappearing rapidly before the growth of personal selfishness.

The advocates of Socialism were not violent men. They had pleged themselves by their public declarations against violence of every kind. They had made known, as widely as they could, and with the strongest emphasis, their firm conviction that the wrongs they condemned could not be rectified by disturbance of the peace. Their constant contention was that reform,

political or social, must be thoughtful, deliberate, and peaceful; that violence is the offspring of impatience and ignorance, except where free thought, free speech, and the right of association are prohibited; in which case physical force as the natural defence of freedom is a necessity that justifies itself.

CHAPTER VII.

Manchester Congress. Extended Work.

THE Congress of 1837 was well attended. There were delegates from many of the important towns in Yorkshire and Lancashire, who reported encouragingly as to the growth of opinion in favour of co-operation, among the people in their various localities, and the letters received and read from towns that had not sent delegates were also encouraging.

It was strongly recommended that a system of teaching should be organised, and missionaries and tracts employed, to make the general public more thoroughly acquainted with the principles of Owen. A resolution was passed in favour of sending out missionaries, and two were appointed; but as much had to be done in the way of mere organisation, nothing further was accomplished in reference to this. It was also agreed to enrol the society under the 4th and 5th of William IV. The form of government was likewise the subject of much discussion, and as it created more division than any of the questions submitted to the Congress, I may describe the point on which the dispute arose.

The ordinary and popular method of governing societies was by the election of committees by general vote. At this period the habit of association was

new, and, in the management of popular bodies, led to delay, blundering, and endless talk. In the new movement it was determined, if possible, to check this, and the mode most in favour was to elect at the head one man, and in each branch one man, having the full confidence of those who elected him. To these was to be left the conducting of the society, with the aid of a council elected by the members of the society, or the branch to which they belonged. The chairman, or head man, was to be elected for two or three years, or, as the resolution expressed it, until a sufficient number of the members acquired the knowledge and experience necessary for conducting the affairs of the society. It was never questioned that the popular method of management was the best, but where those engaged in the work undertaken were deficient in experience, it was thought a fit exercise of the power possessed by the society to place it in the hands that could best use it. This has been construed into a despotic tendency on the part of Robert Owen and his disciples, but it really grew out of a desire to adopt the best method of carrying out that which they wished to accomplish. Practically, by monthly meetings and annual congresses, the members had ample power.

During the Congress, a great meeting of the working men of the West Riding of Yorkshire, was held on Hartshead Moor, near Huddersfield, for the purpose of protesting against the New Poor-Law Bill. The numbers attending this meeting are stated at 200,000, —an immense gathering, when it is considered that most of those present must have travelled miles from the surrounding towns. At this meeting a deputation,

of which Robert Owen was one, attended from the Congress. In accordance with the habit of the newspaper press, the speeches were but briefly reported in the London papers, and that of Owen was wholly omitted. A report of it was, however, given in the *Manchester Advertiser*. He said he "attended there that day not merely to say that he was opposed to every part of the New Poor-Law Bill, but also to say that he was opposed to every poor-law whatever. There ought not now to be a poor-law in this country —there ought not to be a necessity for one. There might have been a time, years ago, when a poor-law was necessary." After denying that the labouring classes required the interference of the idle and inexperienced rich to assist them in bettering their condition, seeing that they had such ample means to that end within themselves, he alluded to the following circumstance: "I have," he said, "interested myself from an early period in the condition of the labouring classes. When Mr. Sturges Bourne's committee was sitting I presented a report to it, which was admitted to be true in every part, and had it been acted upon, more than one hundred millions sterling would have been saved to the country ere now, and not one child need have been left uneducated. I communicated the plan contained in this report to the Dutch Ambassador, Mr. Falck, who saw its importance, and sent it to his Government, and the present poor colonies of Holland are founded upon it. Land was provided, and paupers were established thereon to cultivate it." He also referred to his education scheme, which had been communicated by him to the King of Prussia, and which, he believed, had in some degree

helped to found the first system of national education established in Europe.

The principal speakers at this meeting were Richard Oastler, Joseph Rayner Stephens, Robert Owen, William Stocks, jun., James B. Bernard, Geo. Fleming, and Alexander Campbell. These gentlemen met at Fixby Hall, the residence of Richard Oastler, and published, as the result of their meeting, the following minute, dated May 17, 1837:

"The present extensive and rapidly-increasing distress which is everywhere overwhelming the most numerous and most industrious portion of our home population, loudly demands the immediate, strenuous, and united efforts of the true patriots of all parties, inasmuch as, unless some plan for instant as well as ultimate relief be proposed, the interests of all classes must be sacrificed, the safety of all the inhabitants of the State endangered, and the whole country hurried headlong into anarchy and revolution. It is, therefore, resolved, 'That in the opinion of the undersigned friends, now present, of the unemployed producers of wealth, the first and most pressing duty of the people is to demand immediately from the Government of the country such an advance of capital as would be sufficient to set those who are now starving to work, so as to enable them permanently to support themselves, by a due mixture of agricultural and manufacturing operations in their native land, the surplus of which newly-created wealth, after fully providing for the wants of the producers themselves, to be applied to the payment of interest, and the gradual repayment of the principal originally advanced, after which the whole wealth and property thus created to be the en-

tire, sole, and undivided possession of its proper owners, after furnishing their fair proportion to the maintenance of the national government.'"

In connection with this document the state of the country at the period must be borne in mind. A rapid change for the worse in the condition of the people was going on. The charge for the support of the poor up to 1776 had not been more than one million and a half. Sixteen years previously (1750) it was only £690,000. It is true there was a considerable increase of the rates during the latter years of the century. The American War and the French Revolution had caused prices to advance without any advance in wages, and coupled with this the enclosure of the common lands had deprived the rural population of certain privileges, and deepened their poverty so as to cause a considerable increase of pressure on the rates. Manufactures had commenced to grow rapidly, and the agricultural labourers flocked into the towns; but this did not raise the price of field labour, through a number of causes which need not be stated here, as it is the fact only we have to deal with.

In the towns, which became rapidly overcrowded, things were no better. The power of production, in consequence of the substitution of mechanical for manual labour, reduced wages in such old handicrafts as had been interfered with; and the difficulty of finding markets for the large quantities of goods produced by mechanical power led to a want of employment among the working people of Great Britain such as all men regarded as undesirable and dangerous. In 1834 the poor rates amounted to the enormous

sum of £7,511,219. We have nothing to do with the number of ingenious explanations given to account for this. The £690,000 of 1750 had grown to be above seven and a half millions, while the trade of the country had been rapidly increasing, and most naturally there was great suffering and deep discontent among the people. The landlords were neither respected nor trusted, as their conduct over the whole time had been unpatriotic and selfish. By the alchemy of statecraft, while manufacturers and landlords grew rich the people became poor—a spirit of successful self-interest was the basis of loyalty on the one side, while, on the other, a wide-spreading misery made the people hate the kind of government their task-masters were profiting by. Byron's description of the landlords in the "Age of Bronze" can scarcely be regarded as over-coloured :

" See these inglorious Cincinnati swarm,
Farmers of war, dictators of the farm ;
Their ploughshare was the sword in hireling hands,
Their fields manured by gore of other lands ;
Safe in their barns, these Sabine tillers sent
Their brethren out to battle—why ? For rent ;
Year after year they voted cent. per cent. ;
Blood, sweat, and tear-wrung millions—why ? For rent.
They roar'd, they dined, they drank, they swore they meant
To die for England—why then live ?—For rent.
The Peace has made one general malcontent
Of these high-market patriots. War was rent !
And will they not repay the treasures lent ?
No ; down with everything, and up with rent ;
Their good, ill, health, wealth, joy, or discontent,
Being, end, aim, religion—rent, rent, rent ! "

The people who had to eat the tax-branded loaf

knew how just this denunciation was. In another way the same was true of the new manufacturing aristocracy. They had not got hold of the land, but they had got possession of the new implements of industry, and these they were applying without reference to anything but the profit to be derived from them. The state of things that grew out of this in connection with men, women, and children has been vividly painted, not only in the songs of poets, but in the plainest prose of parliamentary inquiry. Ebenezer Elliot's "Preston Mills" is a sad picture of factory child-life, but it is no exaggeration, and its two concluding lines:

> "O, who would be or have a child?
> A mother who would be?"

contain queries that must have perpetually haunted the minds of all who could understand or feel. The lines of Miss Barrett, too, were but an echo of the sorrows of the people, and the sufferings of the young:

> "Do ye hear the children weeping, O, my brothers!
> Ere the sorrow comes with years,
> They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
> And *that* cannot stop their tears.
> The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
> The young birds are chirping in the nest,
> The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
> The young flowers are blowing toward the west;—
> But the young, young children! O, my brothers,
> They are weeping bitterly!
> They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
> In the country of the free."

The air was loaded with the horrid factory grievances and with the wails of poverty, proceeding from workers whose lives had become almost unbearable by the uncertainty of employment, the insufficiency of wages, and the hopelessness of the struggle in which they were engaged. The evils protested against were not shams. Those who felt them in connection with their daily lives knew that they were real. The trade-unionists knew that a war was being waged against oppression in the factory and in the workshop; and the working people generally, when not excited in relation to some deeply-seated prejudice, gave everywhere a welcome to those who sought to carry it on.

During the Congress of 1837, the trade-unionists or the United Mechanics, held a meeting in Manchester, and a deputation from that body attended the Congress, upon which occasion Mr. Owen addressed them. His advice was that their efforts should be mainly directed to self-employment; but the impediment then was, as it is now, the difficulty of applying funds raised to resist aggression on the part of employers who were opposed to any scheme of self-employment, and the objection urged by Robert Owen to strikes was met by the assertion that though strikes were an evil, they were resorted to chiefly for the purpose of preventing a worse evil for which no other remedy was within reach.

But the two acts of the Congress that most influenced the progress of the Socialist movement, were the removal of the *New Moral World*, the society's paper, to Manchester, and the appointment of a Central Board in Manchester to superintend and direct the movement from that town as a centre.

Alderman Heywood, then a young man in the publishing trade, undertook the printing and publishing of the paper. The appointment of the Central Board was a matter of much consequence. Everything depended on the energy and intelligence of its members. It was felt that if they did their work well as organisers and propagandists, a great advance might be made; but, on the other hand, if they failed in this respect the movement might languish and die. Robert Owen was appointed general chairman, or, as he was designated, "Social Father," the idea being to constitute the society as much as possible on the model of the family, and to blend the authority and kindliness of the family tie in the officers of the society. Owen resided chiefly in London, while the members of the "foreign department," as it was called, were located there, and consisted of six members, whose duty it was to correspond with persons outside the kingdom, who, as believers and friends, took an interest in the proceedings of the society. There were also seven provincial directors who attended to the districts into which the country had been divided, so that action over the whole might proceed with harmony, and without troubling the directors at the centre, who had charge of the movement in everything connected with its finances, its principles, and its general management. There were six of these elected by the Congress, namely, John Booth, vice-president of the society; John Green, William Baxter, Joseph Smith, and myself; George Alexander Fleming being at the same time appointed as general secretary and editor of the *New Moral World.*

The effect of the change in the management of the

society, and the removal of the society's paper from London to Manchester, was soon manifest. The exposition and advocacy of the leading ideas of the movement began to find illustration in a wider field. Such public questions, moreover, as had any bearing on the objects of the movement were made the subject of comment and discussion. Mr. Attwood's currency views, as explained by him in the House of Commons, were not approved by Robert Owen, who made the following reference to them in a letter addressed to the population of the United States of North America :—

"I have just read Mr. Thomas Attwood's speech in the House of Commons on the currency question. Although I have great respect for this gentleman, yet I have no faith in his currency views. No private individuals or association of individuals ought to be permitted to make a profit by the currency. The currency ought to be the representative of real wealth, to be capable of expanding and contracting with the expansion and contraction of wealth, and to be issued solely by the nation and for its benefit."

In the same letter the same subject is dealt with:—

"Why has the cry of distress come from your shores —a cry of poverty among your wealthy merchants, and of traders in money—a cry that America never suffered so much since the struggle which gave her independence, and that nothing but ruin is anticipated to all her more wealthy classes? Have you lost any of your land? Have your industrious classes diminished? Have you been deprived of your skill, of your industry, of your mechanical and chemical inventions or discoveries, or of any of your other

powers of production? Have you experienced famine, or any devastation from fire or water to destroy your wealth, or has any party robbed you of any—the smallest portion of it? No! None of these things have occurred; but yet you cry, 'We are in the deepest distress for want of money, and if we cannot obtain it, ruin from all quarters stares us in the face.' You are really then in distress for want of money, and if asked what money is, you reply, 'It is the representative of wealth, and without it we are powerless, and all our means of producing wealth itself are consequently useless.' This is, indeed, a most strange position for a people who have obtained all the political freedom they desired to possess. It is an anomaly new in the history of man; but it is one from which the most valuable knowledge may be derived."

After enumerating what the nation possessed as real wealth and the means to abundance, he goes on to say:—

"Now, with these advantages, if you do not set the example of national and individual superiority, prosperity, and happiness, you must be the worst conducted people under Heaven, for no population has ever been placed within such domestic, or surrounded by such foreign favourable circumstances as you may now secure to yourselves and children's children through all future ages. But you are now overwhelmed with distress; yes, just such distress as a child would experience who supposed he could not be happy without he had the moon for a plaything, and therefore cried and was tormented because no one would bring it to him. You want more money or you will be ruined! Why? Because, say you,

money is the representative of wealth, and the substance is of no use to us without we have the representative. This itself is abundantly childish, for while you have a vast superfluity of the substance, why, in the name of common-sense, cannot you devise the means of making a useful representative of it, co-extensive with the substance? You vainly imagine you must starve without gold or silver money, or paper to represent gold or silver. Yet these are no more representatives of wealth than iron and steel, or paper to represent them would be. A real representative of wealth can be created alone by the wealth itself, and must possess the capacity of being increased as real wealth increases, of being diminished as real wealth diminishes, and of being unchangeable in its value or estimation throughout society. And this representative of wealth ought to be made and issued alone by each nation, through such officers under its immediate control as the nation may appoint; the nation itself being the responsible party for its value to individuals and to other nations."

I have given these views on the money question not as correct (being, as they are, without any explanation of the process by which they were to be carried out), but because they are as nearly as possible in agreement with the view since put forward in American agitation on the money question.

Mr. Wyse, in the House of Commons, was, at this time, pressing the subject of education, and the *New Moral World* supported him in a leading article which appeared on September 23, 1837.

"The question must be answered in some way, and speedily. Great Britain must no longer put up with

the disgrace of being almost the only European nation in which the training of the rising generation is left to chance; nor must we longer continue to suffer the manifold evils which result from such a wretched and irrational mode of procedure. Yet the Government will not move in the matter until the people compel them, and the people cannot move until they are made generally to perceive the desirableness and the beneficial effects of a change in our educational institutions. . . . All thinking men must perceive that this question lies at the root of all our schemes of reform, and that any other course is a lopping of the branches of the moral upas which desolates society, while the root remains untouched—a useless war with effects, instead of boldly attacking and removing causes. . . . But this state of things must not be allowed to continue. We must no longer be distinguished among the nations by our advanced and proud position in a knowledge of phyical science and the arts of producing wealth, and marked at the same time for the intellectual darkness and social degradation of our producers, and our profound practical ignorance of moral science and the arts of producing happiness. The elements of social progression, now scattered in many directions, must be gathered together and brought to bear with a concentrated and continuous force upon the public mind, until all other questions succumb to this primary and radical object, and every British child be provided from infancy with a good, useful, impartial (unsectarian) education by the State."

The article goes on to call for united action on this question, in the interest of the nation; and then adds:—

"We consider we are in advance of the views held by many of the parties likely to be active in its support, it being a fixed opinion with us that any education, to be truly effectual, must combine good physical circumstances with mental instruction; yet believing, at the same time, that every step we take towards the enlightenment of the masses would create fresh powers for future and beneficial reforms, that, as they advance in intelligence, they would see more clearly the true cure for our social grievances and anomalies, which they now fail to perceive, entirely in consequence of the ignorance forced on them by the present institutions of society; we say, seeing this, that we shall at all times be found in the ranks of those who advocate the extension and systematising of intellectual tuition, based on the principle of imparting a knowledge of facts, unconnected with party prejudices or sectarian dogmas; and we believe that the numerous branch associations we are now forming throughout the country will be found valuable auxiliaries in the good work—composed, as they are, of the most reflective, intelligent, and moral portion of the productive classes."

Another question was that of shortening the hours of labour. This was almost necessarily a part of such an agitation as the Socialists had entered on. They had made the general improvement of the condition of the masses their chief object, and long hours in the factories and workshops constituted a serious hindrance to such an undertaking. With arguments as to the danger to our foreign trade from shortened hours of labour they had no sympathy. They were convinced that such arguments were the pleadings of un-

scrupulous selfishness. Such public documents as threw light on the subject were as accessible to them as to the friends of the manufacturers, and they knew that these pleadings were not entitled to respect. They were personally acquainted with the interior of the factories and workshops, and were not to be misled by men who were employed to deceive the public.

Two years previous to the time of which I am writing, Dr. Andrew Ure published his *Philosophy of Manufactures*, which in many respects was a useful and interesting work; but when he described the appearance of the people employed in the factories, especially the young women, he excited the disgust of those who lived in the daily presence of the actual things, and who knew how false the description was. He says :—

"So much nonsense has been uttered about the deformity and diseases of factory children, that I may hardly be credited by some of my readers when I assert that I have never seen among a like number of the young women of the lower ranks in any country so many pleasing countenances and handsome figures. . . . Their light labour and erect posture in tending the looms, and the habit which many of them have in exercising their arms and shoulders, as if with dumb-bells, by resting their hands on the lay or shuttle bearer, as it oscillates alternately backwards and forwards with the machinery, opens their chest, and gives them generally a graceful carriage. Many of them have adopted tasteful modes of wearing neat handkerchiefs on their heads, and have altogether not a little of the Grecian style of beauty. One of

them, whose cheeks had a fine rosy hue, being asked how long she had been at factory work, said 'Nine years,' and blushed from bashfulness at being so slightly spoken to."

We had no occasion to enter into argument with the people in the manufacturing districts on this subject, nor to lose time in citing medical testimony. Those we addressed knew the facts, and they knew that we were acquainted with them. And we all knew that these monstrous misrepresentations were matters of sale and purchase. This writer, however, goes further :—

"Nothing," he says, "shows in a clearer point of view the credulity of mankind in general, and of the people of these islands in particular, than the ready faith which was given to the tales of cruelty exercised by proprietors of cotton mills toward young children. The system of calumny resembles that brought by the Pagans against the Primitive Christians, of enticing children into their meetings in order to murder and devour them."

We felt how useless it would be to lose time in combating the falsehoods of self-interest among a people the greater part of whom could not be led astray on a subject in connection with which they had to spend their lives.

Another important question was that of Free Trade. The Anti-corn-law League had not then come into existence ; and therefore it was not known whether or not the manufacturers, as a body, would lend their aid to repeal the Corn Laws. We had not any connection with them, nor any means of influencing them, but we knew that the working classes were very

much interested in repeal. The *New Moral World* of August 5th, 1837, contained an article on Free Trade from which the following passage may be taken. "The only true principles," says the writer, Mr. G. A. Fleming, "on which a foreign commerce can rest with reciprocal benefit, is the free and unfettered exchange of their surplus commodities, that is, after every individual employed in their production has been well and amply supplied with them, the remaining portion, small or large, forms the legitimate and natural export wealth of the community. Thus, each country possesses the means of lodging, feeding, clothing, and educating its inhabitants, and the natural application of these means is to shelter, clothe, subsist, and educate all the people, before sending any of these necessaries abroad; but if we neglect this, and export to other countries our necessaries, and receive from them only curiosities or things less necessary in return, we violate the principle of beneficial foreign commerce, and establish just such a free trade as now exists between Great Britain and Ireland, by which the inhabitants of the latter country are condemned to unending toil to ship from their harbours cargoes of grain, and all other staple productions of their country, whilst they themselves are cursed with an overflow of pauperism."

Ten years later in Ireland the madness of what is here referred to was proved by the starving to death of a million of the people of that country, while the food of the nation was being exported to pay exorbitant rent to landlords who were living in luxury in London, Paris, and other great capitals of Europe.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Disputed Question.

BETWEEN the congress of May, 1837, and that which took place the same month of 1838, the whole of the manufacturing districts were in a state of activity, and lecturers were sent up and down in all directions to address the people. Every week the pages of the *New Moral World* contained ten or a dozen reports, from the surrounding towns, of lectures delivered and discussions held.

Such a sudden awakening so aggressively manifested, had the appearance of a challenge to all recognized authorities. Ministers of all denominations were roused. Political economists denounced us as unscientific because we refused to accept their nostrums and because we protested against the wholesale manner in which they were doing the people to death on principle.

Owen was fiercely attacked from all sides. Public prejudice was excited to an extent which was both disagreeable and inconvenient. Halls that had been hired for public meetings, even when some of these meetings had been expensively advertised, were refused at the last moment. Owen was locked out of the Music Hall in Liverpool, notwithstanding a signed contract and a considerable outlay in calling the

meeting. This was a thing of frequent occurrence, but an appeal to the law would have done no good. The misconceptions and prejudices that existed had penetrated everywhere, and it was felt that the best policy was to bear with the wrong, and to endeavour to secure or build commodious halls for our own use. The objects Robert Owen and his followers had in view were strictly legal, and the means adopted to carry them out was in the highest degree peaceable. Legal proceedings were therefore avoided, and whatever the expedients resorted to, quietness and patience were, as a rule, relied on. In consequence of this policy, many very active opponents were in a little time brought over to the movement.

Looking back over the many years that have elapsed since 1837, it is right to acknowledge that the opposition met with, however irritating at the moment, was seldom vindictive or cruel. And although the questions we had undertaken to deal with, excited suspicion and alarm, the quiet manner in which we took the opposition, generally led to toleration of our proceedings, which, in the end, came to be regarded as legitimate, and as honestly entered on in the interest of the public. Religious people had come to believe that all religions were rejected and opposed by the Socialists, and therefore, their hostility was not to be wondered at. It is a curious fact, however, that a considerable party in the country, who openly professed unbelief and attacked religion in a sense of public duty, also opposed us very strongly.

Richard Carlile, who had suffered years of imprisonment for his unbelief, regarded us as his most dangerous enemies, though he had never met with opposition

from us. Carlile was a quiet man, of gentlemanly demeanour, but combative and determined. The following letter which he addressed to the editor of the *New Moral World* shows the spirit in which he opposed us :—

"Sir,—Having read over the professed discussion at Huddersfield about the principles of Mr. Owen, between the Rev. Mr. Dalton and Mr. Lloyd Jones, I was disappointed at not finding the subject really touched by Mr. Dalton. In connection with my intention to visit every town in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire in the course of the present year, to oppose wherever I may find an association under the name of Mr Owen's principles, I offer to meet Mr. Fleming at Huddersfield, on the same terms as Mr. Dalton met Mr. Jones, if arrangements can be made. I care not how early the day or days, so as they be not Sunday or Monday.

"I do not make choice of Mr. Fleming, but use his name because he has put it forward; and as I wish to avoid all impertinence, I hope I may be excused in saying that I would rather meet Mr. Owen himself anywhere—in Manchester, Liverpool, or where best. I hereby offer to meet one or all of the associated body of men calling themselves socialists—a silly and unmeaning title, by-the-by—having the feeling, the conviction, and the will to show that on their proposed ground they can make no beneficial change in the present state of society, and that as to their building scheme they are not acting on one sound or rational principle.—I am, &c., RICHARD CARLILE.

"Oldham, Jan, 31, 1838."

It fell to the lot of the writer to undertake such discussions as were entered on with Richard Carlile. One was held in Manchester, one in Bradford, and one or two elsewhere. Carlile was a man of cool temper, and in discussion behaved with candour and fairness. He had, as a publisher, issued a large amount of anti-Christian literature, chiefly of an argumentative and philosophic character, which had brought him under the notice of the Attorney-General. He was several years in prison, much to the disgrace of the Government of the day, and it, perhaps, was not pleasant, when he came out, to find a new party in possession of the field, with a new set of ideas, and a new policy which attached no importance to mere negative ideas. It was the business of the Socialists to teach the people what to believe, instead of what not to believe. It was a conviction with them that when truth took possession of the public mind error would die out of itself.

Mr. Carlile had been so long in active conflict with what he believed to be mischievous error, that he could not agree with our mode of action, and, therefore, we had his opposition. The habit of his mind necessarily rendered him feeble in discussing questions nearly altogether positive and practical. It was necessary to be acquainted with the condition of education in the country, and to have some conception of plans for its improvement. It was necessary, also, to know the effect of the manufacturing system on the condition of the people, and to entertain and understand measures for altering it. Mr. Carlile's mind had been employed on quite a different class of subjects, and in the discussion of these the Socialists

found little to interest them. He was really a clever man, but he seemed more at home in exposition than in discussion, and to feel that the principles and facts to be dealt with required more examination and study than he had been able to give them. I judge this to be the conclusion he had arrived at, as his antagonism was in a short time abandoned, although some of his less able followers continued long after to offer an active though not a very effective opposition.

The fact of not adopting extreme anti-Christian views was brought as a charge against Owen by anti-religious zealots. They thought they had hit on the right way of establishing truth, and not to accept their method and their views was considered as cowardice. But from the beginning the Socialists condemned and opposed such a policy, and held that criticism of false ideas on general subjects is an endless task; that when such criticism is applied to the dogmas of religious sects, it draws after it prejudices and hatreds that had much better be avoided, if for no other reasons than that they constitute the most effectual hindrances to progress.

It has, on the other hand, been insisted upon that the socialism of Robert Owen was actively and intentionally hostile to the Christian faith. The charge that it was a deliberate and combined attack on religion was used as a justification of the conduct of those who so unscrupulously misrepresented and denounced the movement as anti-religious and anarchical. Facts have already been adduced to repel this accusation. The great aim of the leaders of the movement was to suppress all attacks on religious opinions of whatever kind, and for this purpose every

possible effort was made to hold enthusiasts and bigots in check.

The society insisted on the most complete toleration of each other by the members, whether they were fervid believers or extreme unbelievers; but as the members were drawn indiscriminately from the public, a kindly toleration all round was a most difficult thing to enforce: as men brought with them their old habits of thinking and speaking, and frequently gave pain to each other without intending it. A discipline of charity and kindness had been introduced, which in time produced excellent fruit, but a society daily drawing new members into its ranks was always more or less subject to have its peace disturbed by bigotries difficult to control. Besides this, certain of the members and others in their criticisms of religion and religious opponents, had, though speaking on their own authority simply, led to the belief that the movement was hostile to religion, when, in fact, its opposition was solely directed against an intolerant condemnation of freedom of thought. Large numbers of people who were sincere believers were eager to join the movement, but they were unwilling to do so without guarding, so far as they could, against being mistaken on a point so important. The mode of affiliating branches was to receive an application for a charter, and if there were no reason why it should not be granted, a framed and engraved document was issued to be hung up in the branch institution, and by this the branch was known to have accepted the laws and principles of the society.

An application of this sort was made from Edin-

burgh, accompanied by a communication which fully raised the question of religious policy, and as the document and the replies to it from the officers of the society are unreserved and explicit, the simple reproduction of such parts as deal directly with the religious aspects of the subject will explain the position taken up by the Socialist movement. When this application was made to the Central Board, with a request that it might be published in the society's paper, the editor at once complied, prefacing it with these words :—

"The following application for a charter has been forwarded from our friends in Edinburgh with a request for its insertion in our pages. We cheerfully give it a place, and trust that the manly independence of its sentiments is universal among the social body. The world has been ruined by man and name worship, and its happiness wrecked upon the rocks of verbal disputation. The projectors of a new state of society must take care to avoid both errors."

In this case, what applied to Edinburgh applied to the whole society in all its branches, and, as the documents now under consideration were published for the perusal of the whole society at the time, the explanations asked for and given, should leave no doubt in the mind of any candid person in regard to the policy pursued by the society.

If there was anything true of Robert Owen as a public man, it was that he never sailed under false colours at any period of his life. It never troubled him that people differed from his views, or condemned him for entertaining them. He knew that to be mistaken and misrepresented was inevitable

when the ideas promulgated were new, or difficult to understand, or if they were opposed to the interests or prejudices of any large section of the public. With this sort of impediment, he had to deal in the best way he could. But neither he, nor those belonging to the society at the head of which he stood, studied how to lay before the public the principles in which they believed, for the purpose of entrapping proselytes under false pretences. They stated their objects with care, and what these were declared to be at the beginning, they remained to the end, while their advocacy from first to last was open and consistent.

It has been said that when attacked by the Bishop of Exeter and others, the policy of the Socialists was changed out of fear for the consequences. There is not a single fact by which such a charge can be justified. The principal accusation brought against them is that they made it part of their business to attack religion, whereas, in fact, they made it a special duty to discountenance attacks on religion. What the leaders of the society desired was the most unreserved expression of thought on matters of public interest, especially those connected with their own proceedings, provided always that no offence was unnecessarily given.

It could not be expected that liberty of speech would not be sometimes abused by those who in advocating their opinions, were betrayed into a want of consideration for the opinions of others; but the following correspondence to which allusion has just been made, will, I think, show that the general spirit of the association was not antagonistic to religious belief.

"We, the undersigned inhabitants of Edinburgh, in the county of Midlothian, having been made acquainted with the objects, principles, and laws of the 'Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists,' and being desirous of promoting the objects of that society, and willing to abide by the laws which are now promulgated, or which may be from time to time enacted, in accordance with the constitution of the society, do hereby request that a charter may be granted to us to open a branch of the society in Edinburgh."

To prevent any mistake, however, as to what the Edinburgh applicants meant by this step, the following was added :—

"We regard the objects for which we seek to be associated with you as strictly of a moral and economical, and not at all of a theological character, as involving no collision with the different religions of mankind, except in so far as these religions are opposed to the fundamental facts of our system. . . In other words, by assuming the name of Rational Religionists, we do not intend to found or to form a religious sect, but only to declare that we consider the public or professed religion of this society, in so far as it lays claim to any peculiarity, to consist in the pursuit of knowledge, and in the love and practice of goodness in all its forms. But we do not mean to say that other religions may not or do not possess these characteristics, whose excellence we acknowledge in whatever sex, class, sect, party, country, or colour they may be found."

One of the paragraphs of the Edinburgh letter had reference to the use of the pronoun "It" as applied

to the Deity, but this was rather a matter of taste and form. Another contained the following declaration.

"Our adhesion to the constitution and laws of the society shall not be held to infer the slightest relinquishment on our part of the great principle of Protestantism—the right of free inquiry and of private judgment in matters of religion—a right which is destructive of the domination of all Churches or bodies of men over individual opinions, or which may rather be said to constitute every man, in his own proper person, a separate and independent church, amenable to no other jurisdiction than the court of his own conscience, and from which right flows the corresponding duty of respecting the conscientious convictions of our neighbour."

These extracts bear upon two or three points of some consequence; one, that the men who joined the movement were not those who entered lightly and thoughtlessly on the labour the society imposed, without understanding the relative rights of the society, and the individuals who made up its membership; another, that the principles and policy of the society were clearly defined, and the spirit in which the work was carried on distinctly stated and understood—also that arbitrary dictation in matters of opinion on the part of the leaders, and submission on the part of the members, was neither expected or permitted.

In its reply the Central Board declares the objects of the society to be "moral and economical, not of a theological character, and involving no collision with the different religions of mankind." It considers the

sentiments of the applicants "perfectly in accordance with the objects and principles of the society."

To an objection on the part of the Edinburgh men to be bound by any of the writings of Robert Owen, except such as the constitution of the society accepted, it replies: "The Board consider that the subscribing to the principles and laws of the society does not in any way involve assent to all the writings of Robert Owen, and they further conceive that the great Protestant principle—the right of free inquiry and private judgment in all matters of religion—is a right which is especially set forth in articles 19 and 21 of the laws as pertaining to all members of the society, and they consider it to be a most sacred privilege."

"Many of the applicants," the Edinburgh letter said, "are Christians from sincere conviction. They see in the principles of the society nothing but an attempt to reduce to practice the precepts of the religion of Jesus Christ, which, unfortunately for the world, have hitherto existed in theory only. The philosophy of the system, even to its minutest details, they find to be not only in harmony with, but to spring directly from, the principles of that religion, interpreted by enlightened reason; and they cannot therefore but regret the false position, as it seems to them, into which Socialism has been thrown, of apparent antagonism to a religion whose corruptions only it opposes. Mr. Owen has, like every other human being, his own peculiar notions in regard to religion, and expresses these freely in his works; but by joining the society we wish it to be distinctly understood that we embrace neither Mr. Owen's religious opinions, nor those of any other man or body of men; but

assert our own individual right to form an independent judgment on all such matters."

The following words express very distinctly the views of Mr. Owen on the religious part of the subject, and may be taken as indicating the position occupied by the Socialists:

"The Board most readily express their complete concurrence in your opinion, that Socialism is in harmony with the Christian religion, interpreted by enlightened reason, and they would add that they consider it to be the only means by which that religion, so interpreted, can ever be established in universal practice over the earth. . . . The Central Board most earnestly desire that the society may be an effectual means by which all may be brought to hear the voice of truth, that disunion of feeling may be destroyed, and that all mankind may become one fold under one shepherd."

It may be mentioned that during the whole agitation the Edinburgh branch was one of the most active and loyal.

When the missionaries and teachers were appointed in 1838, Robert Owen, as president of the society, published an address to them, containing instruction and advice. "If," he said, "you should be challenged to hold discussions on religious mysteries or dogmas, you will kindly and respectfully decline by stating that the authority by which you are appointed, and under which you act, will not permit you to occupy your time in discussions which arouse angry, irrational feelings, tending to separate man from man."

The policy indicated was deliberately adopted, and it will be seen how little it sanctioned attacks on religion.

CHAPTER IX.

The Bishop of Exeter. Popular Agitations.

FROM what has been stated, the objects of the Socialists and the methods they adopted for the purpose of carrying them out, will be understood. Education of the people; village communities, where production and distribution were to be carried on equitably, were the primary objects; but, in connection with these, all Liberal questions were to be taken up and advocated. Free trade, a free press, short time in factories and workshops, free discussion, and all else that directly, or indirectly, had a tendency to improve the condition of the masses.

In addition to the missionaries appointed, numbers of young men became active for the furtherance of the work in hand. These proceedings attracted too much attention to remain unnoticed, and hence zealous advocates for the preservation of things as they were, took the field in opposition. Chief among these was a man named Brindley, whose zeal was of that violent kind which defeats its own object, and by exaggeration assists refutation. The most formidable of all the opponents of the socialist movement, however, was Henry, Bishop of Exeter. It has been said that he fought his way to his bishopric by his energy and unscrupulousness as a writer of pamphlets. He

was the busy, and not over-scrupulous person satirised by Moore as "The Rev. Pamphleteer":

"All prais'd the skilful jockeyship,
Loud rang the Tory cheer,
While away, away, with spur and whip,
Went the Reverend Pamphleteer.

"The hack he rode how could it err?
'Twas the same that took last year,
That wonderful jump to Exeter
With the Reverend Pamphleteer.

. . . . . .

"'Stop, stop,' said Truth, but vain her cry
Left far away in the rear;
She heard but the usual 'gay good-bye'
From her faithless Pamphleteer."

The bishop, whatever his zeal, possessed no real power to impede the socialist movement. He could only excite anger against it, in men of the same spirit with himself, from the pulpit; and lamentations and exclamations of horror in the House of Lords, where his denunciations were delivered. It was too late to frame laws against new heresies, and as the few years during which the agitation had been carried on had to some extent opened the eyes of the people, his misstatements and exaggerations were seen through by thinking men, and by those who possessed influence among the masses of the people. There was in reality no apprehension on the part of the Socialists as to the capability of the bishop to injure them, and, therefore, from the platform and in the columns of the *New Moral World,* he was treated as an angry man who had lost his temper, and with it a respect for

truth. The first proceeding of the bishop was to present a petition, on the 24th of January, 1840, to the House of Lords, signed by 4,000 of the clergy, bankers, merchants, manufacturers, and other inhabitants of Birmingham, setting forth the evils of socialism, and praying that means might be taken to put a stop to its progress. The speech accompanying the petition was long and laboured, and crowded with mis-statements; and it is certain the information on which he spoke was gathered with no greater scrupulousness than usually marks such proceedings.

The bishop seems to have employed certain people to attend the social halls, and report to him the horrible things said, and, certainly as given by his lordship to the House of Peers, they were bad enough. He also related stories of dreadful deaths of unbelievers, and old tales that had served for a long time to frighten people into the ordinary orthodoxies of the world. Lord Brougham, with courage equal to his ability, defended Mr. Owen's character, first on the testimony of Mr. Wilberforce, and next on his own personal knowledge of Owen. He assured the House that he had never before heard of the outrageous charges brought against the Socialists by the bishop. The Marquis of Normanby also made a long speech, in which he threw doubt on the correctness of the bishop's statements, and twitted him with supporting his charges by extracts from papers printed a considerable time before the Government took office. Lord Melbourne took some trouble to defend himself for having presented Mr. Owen at Court, with an address signed by a large number of people, and protested against being held responsible for Socialistic

opinions, because he had performed a mere formal act. The Duke of Wellington delivered himself indignantly, especially in regard to the presentation to the Queen. The Earl of Galloway was more indignant still at the atrocity of such an act. On the same night the Socialists petitioned the House for inquiry, but this their lordships did not want, being satisfied w th the matter in the form in which the bishop had given it to them. It is a curious fact that during the delivery of all this indignation it was never mentioned that Robert Owen was a friend of Her Majesty's father; and that, of all those who assisted in the promotion of his views, there was no one more zealous or constant than the Duke of Kent. Possibly the noble speakers did not remember that while they were labouring to insult and degrade Robert Owen, their effort included the father of the Sovereign for whom they were expressing such unbounded reverence.

The society met the bishop in the following way. They extracted from his speech every accusation it contained, and appended to each a distinct refutation. Most of the charges made have already been dealt with, and need not be again referred to, except in a few instances. One of the points most strongly urged in the House of Lords by the bishop, was the danger and wickedness of the doctrine of non-responsibility. It is true that the Socialists insisted that to rely for the prevention of crime solely on the punishment it entailed, was a mistake; that it was unreasonable to punish miserable creatures for the commission of crimes which, in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases, were the result of the state in which they were suffered to grow up. It was held to be an immoral act on

the part of society to leave the young to ignorance and misery, and then punish them for doing those things which their ignorance and frequently the cruel necessities of their lives led them to do. But the idea of non-responsibility was never urged as capable of being acted on in the existing state of society, but rather as an argument to stimulate public action in the direction of national education, and the establishment of a condition of things in which the natural and legitimate wants of all should be considered.

It was a condemnation of an unwise reliance on penalties, and not a doctrine the promulgation of which was likely to lead to the commission of crime by insisting on its impunity. In fact, the charges of the Bishop of Exeter were in the very worst spirit of unjust accusation, and the part played by the House of Lords in listening to them with approval was not calculated to elevate its character in the estimation of sensible and fair-minded people.

The bishop declared that "he had always deemed Mr. Owen not to be a bloody-minded man. Up to this period he had considered him a visionary; but he was now of opinion, from a part of the controversy that Mr. Owen had had with Mr. Roebuck, that he must look upon him in a different light. In that passage there was an appearance of a tendency to bloodshed." Owen replied to this uncharitable imputation by describing the many evils of society, and stating his reasons for seeking to make such improvements as he thought conducive to the welfare of the community. The sanguine belief entertained by Owen, led him to conclude that the new ideas he was engaged in teaching, and the new practices he

was recommending would supersede the old ideas and practices which he condemned. He says in the "Manifesto," by which he replied, "The new moral and sane system cannot otherwise interfere with the old immoral and insane system of the world than by causing its gradual and peaceable destruction and entire annihilation: and this is now evident by the consternation of all who have been taught to think that they have some pecuniary interest in maintaining this old worn-out irrational system." It is clear that while the bishop believed that he meditated abolishing every old law and institution by bloodshed, Owen himself was fully convinced that the bishop and his Church establishment, and many other things that he held to be irrational, would by mere pressure of a reformed public opinion pass into disuse. The bishop's error, it need scarcely be said, carried him far away from truth and Christian calmness of spirit.

There is given in Owen's manifesto, a brief account of the labours of his life, touching by its simplicity of statement, and the evidence it bears to his activity and devotion to the welfare of others. The bishop was not bound to know what Owen had done, or what manner of man he really was; but before making such abominable charges, it is not unreasonable to think that he ought to have entered on some inquiry as to their truth. Robert Owen had been known to the world for his humane exertions for above thirty years, and his reputation was without stain. His worst enemies admitted the purity of his motives, and when the worst imputations were made, and public prosecution solicited, some little investigation should

have been regarded as a decent if not a necessary preliminary.

Robert Owen bore the abuse and threatenings of the bishop without any kind of personal disquiet. To the threat of a legal crusade, he replied, "I am the discoverer, founder, and open promulgator of this system, and of all the error, immorality, and blasphemy which it contains (if a particle of either can be found in it). I alone am the author, and, therefore, I alone ought to be, if anyone shall be, prosecuted and punished for the wickedness that may be extracted from it." This manifesto goes on to say :—

"From the beginning of my career, when I had no one to support me, I had, for the cause of truth, to place myself in direct and open opposition to all the most deeply-rooted prejudices of the past ages. I then anticipated and made up my mind to incur fines, imprisonment, and death; and what are these to an individual when his mind and feelings are deeply imbued with a desire permanently to benefit the human race? But instead of fines, imprisonment, or death, I have been a favourite of the world, have lived a quiet, peaceful, and unostentatious life, happy in myself, and in my family; which in New Lanark, in Scotland, and in New Harmony, in America, has been one of the most happy families on either side of the Atlantic. It is true, I have always expended to the last shilling my surplus wealth in promoting this great and good cause, for funds have always been much required to hasten its progress as I desired. But the right rev. prelate is greatly deceived when he says, as he is reported to have said, that I had squandered my wealth in profligacy and luxury. I have never ex-

pended a pound in either. All my habits are habits of temperance in all things; and I challenge the right rev. prelate, and all his abettors, to prove the contrary, and I will give him and them the means of following me through every stage and month of my life. Having made this statement, I mean not to trouble myself with what any parties may say, in or out of the Houses of Parliament. My life is the true answer to any falsehood that may be stated."

From 1830 to close upon 1850, the working men in England and Scotland were active in agitating for measures which they believed to be of importance to their class. At the commencement of this period, Tory influence, in connection with the Government of the country, was in the ascendant. It had received a serious blow by the forced abolition of the penal laws in 1829, and it was again threatened by the introduction of a Reform Bill that was declared to be revolutionary; but the old spirit of exclusion and monopoly, in the holders of office, was still rampant. The people, however, had begun to feel that they possessed power which might be turned to good account when they could come to an understanding with each other as to how it could be best used. Impressed with the conviction that agitation was necessary before anything desirable could be obtained, they went into combination with the middle classes for the purpose of forcing on Parliament the reform measure of 1832.

The training acquired in connection with the agitation necessary to carry this measure, was of great value to them in their battle for a cheap press; which was followed by the Chartist agitation. There was,

in addition to these, the short time agitation, all being intensified by the distress which existed among the people and which was made doubly unbearable by the enactment of the new poor law, and its administration. There were disturbances in the manufacturing districts, and plug-drawing; while in the agricultural districts there were swing riots and nightly fires, lit by the match of the incendiary, blazing in all directions. Robert Owen and his followers had no influence in the agricultural districts, and, therefore, could do nothing to check such a spirit; but in the big towns of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and other counties, where manufacturing operations were carried on, they were active, while doing all in their power to help forward the measures agitated for by the people, in preventing resort to any kind of violence or lawlessness. This was, in the circumstances then existing, a difficult work. Robert Owen believed that if the people committed themselves so far as to come into collision with the troops, the worst consequences would follow. He had many times stated, in his addresses, that the working men should in every way short of a sacrifice of principle, labour to get the middle classes on their side. He was convinced that the knowledge of business they possessed was necessary for working out effectively the plans he had promulgated for improving the condition of society, and he deprecated anything calculated to widen the breach already existing between them and the masses of the people. He felt very strongly that any kind of extensive outbreak of violence would lead to much bloodshed and destruction of property. The troops which were spread throughout the midland and

northern counties, were under the command of Sir Charles James Napier. There can be no doubt that they would have put down any popular rising that might have taken place, but nobody felt more keenly than Napier himself how difficult the task would be, if, through discontent in the large towns, simultaneous risings and widely-diffused attacks on life or property should take place. He was a man full of resource, ability, and courage, yet he repeatedly protested against the scattering of the force under his command for the protection of outlying places, where manufacturers and other persons were alarmed for their safety; and he complained of the disinclination of such persons to do anything, either by enrolling themselves as volunteers or providing proper accommodation for detachments of the soldiery sent for their protection. He was also apprehensive that billeting the soldiers in the public-houses, where they would almost necessarily become friendly with the discontented people, endangered their loyalty, and that even should their loyalty not suffer, they would be at the mercy of those who, in case of a raising, would defeat, and, it might be, destroy them piecemeal.

In the journal kept by Sir Charles at this time, we find the following entries:

"Manchester, May 8, 1839.—All quiet for the moment, but all information speaks of a rising on Whit Monday. May 9.—I have over and over again stated the danger of having billets. Why will they not let me hire barracks? The country cannot be protected by detachments. Let the gentlemen and yeomanry defend themselves; local defence should meet local attacks; I cannot, I will not give troops.

Yet I have not called in any detachment, because if that were now done the people would rise, and the blame be cast on me; moreover, with so little knowledge of this district it would be too decided a step—all that can be done is to put some infantry in buildings where the cavalry are in billets. I have, by letter, endeavoured to animate magistrates and colonels of yeomanry, but all were apathetic, all wanting soldiers, and doing nothing for themselves."[1]

Writing on May the 23rd, of the defence of Manchester, he says:

"All the north-east of Manchester is riotous, the south quiet. Which of the seven positions indicated should be occupied would depend on the place where the mob assembled; but in each my left is protected by the river, my right by the canal, and they are shorter than they look, as only the openings of streets need be guarded, and a few windows occupied. The bridges could be easily barricaded and defended by the armed citizens, and from any one position men could be detached against the rioters if needed, or an advance made with my whole force."

There follows this account of the preparations made for suppressing Chartism, a proclamation, unsigned, calling on the Chartists to see that their arms were ready and that their ammunition was sufficient, as in a day or two, at a moment's notice, they were to be called upon to take the field. "Now or never," concludes this sanguinary document, "is the time. Be sure you do not neglect your arms, and when you strike, do not let it be with sticks or stones, but let the blood of all you suspect moisten the soil of your

[1] Charles Napier's Life, vol. ii., p. 26.

native land, that you may for ever destroy even the remembrance of your poverty and shame." Sir Charles was very anxious to call out the yeomanry, but got no encouragement from the Government, or, with but few exceptions, from the gentlemen of the district. Writing to Mr. Phillips, he says:

"It is an operation of great expense; but when I consider the extent of the present bad spirit, and of the armings, I cannot but hold the opinion that it is absolutely necessary to concentrate the greatest possible force to overcome the people of this district. The primary object is to save the country from devastation, expense must therefore be a secondary consideration. The Chartists affirm that they have 250,000 men armed in Lancashire alone. This is probably a lie, but if they can assemble 50,000 the most dreadful ravages would be committed by the march of such a body; hence any inconvenience it may cause to gentlemen in the yeomanry, to put them on permanent duty will be trivial to what they would suffer if the Chartists get under arms."[1]

I give these extracts to show the state of the manufacturing districts, the spirit of the people, and the apprehensions of the authorities. During this time the leading men in the Socialist movement were not idle. They felt how deplorable a rising of the people would be, not only in its consequences to the people themselves, but in the effect it was almost certain to have on the future propagation of liberal opinion. They knew better than the authorities did what was going forward. The only mode the latter possessed of obtaining information was by their spies, and the

[1] Vol. ii., p. 31.

information these communicated seems to have been full of invention and exaggeration. The Socialists were in the habit of visiting the various neighbourhoods where disaffection was most widely spread and most active. The people came to them to consult them and ask advice. Fathers and mothers, whose sons had become participators in the preparations for the intended struggle, came to solicit their aid in holding them back; while many of the men themselves, who believed in the propriety and necessity of what they were doing, also consulted them. The members of the society considered it a duty to go among the Chartists to beg of them not to risk the cause of progress by an outbreak, which could only end in failure and needless bloodshed.

Having done all they could privately, they met in council to discuss the propriety of taking some public step for the purpose of expressing strong disapproval of physical force as a means of pushing forward reform. It was decided to call a large public meeting, and instead of several resolutions and a number of speakers, to have but one speaker and one resolution, the seconder to confine himself simply to formally seconding the resolution. I was the person appointed to deliver the address, and I felt that a very important and delicate task had been imposed on me. The announcement caused a lively commotion among the Chartists of Manchester and the surrounding towns, and when the time for the meeting arrived, the Carpenters' Hall in Manchester, which held about 2,000 people, was densely packed, the audience for the most part standing, while outside there was a crowd of people amounting to between four and five thousand.

My friends were apprehensive that an attack would be made on me, and massed themselves between me and the body of the meeting. For myself I can say that I never for a moment considered myself in danger. I had at that time much experience in addressing public meetings, and always found that the people were disposed to listen patiently and act peaceably when addressed in a spirit of sympathetic earnestness.

I had carefully arranged what I had to say, not in words, but in regard to the general order of my ideas, leaving to the inspiration of the moment the form in which I should utter them. I referred to the wrongs of which the people complained; to the existence of popular ignorance, together with ample means for a system of national education; to the long hours of labour in the factories, mines, and workshops of the country; to the denial of political power, which rendered the people impotent to peaceably remove the evils they were called upon to endure; to the taxation of the newspaper press, which constituted a bar to the acquisition by them of political knowledge. When I had dwelt briefly on their grievances and admitted the evils resulting from the abuses against which they protested, I found myself on the best possible terms with my audience. I then told them that the only difference between them and the Socialists was as to the best means of putting right what was wrong. Having stated this, I referred to their chance of success in opposition to a drilled and disciplined army skilfully led, and backed by every influence that the prejudices or fears of the middle and upper classes could bring to bear in such a conflict. I contrasted this with the lack on the part of the people of every-

thing necessary to ensure success in such a struggle. No arms, no discipline, no military leaders, no money, no commissariat; nothing, in fact, but their cause, their poverty, and their angry impatience, which, if for a short time successful, would lead to plunder and destruction of property, and, in the end, to such disorder as would make it the business of every man who had anything to lose to assist in hunting them down.

I then told them that up to that point my argument dealt chiefly with the practicability, not with the propriety or the justice, of attempting to rectify the evils of society by violence. As I went on to show how difficult it was to make the required rectifications, except in peace, and with thoughtfulness and care, unless the intention was to set up one set of wrongs on the ruins of another, the meeting seemed to assent most willingly. I concluded by pointing out how failure in a physical conflict would throw them back, and fasten them down as thralls of brute force, while in a peaceful and intelligent endeavour for the establishment of justice, every step forward was secured. I conjured them to give up all thought of putting matters right by remaining idle, for a month's holiday was then the intention of the Chartist leaders —a sacred month, as it was called. I told them there was nothing sacred in idleness, that redemption to them and theirs must come, and could only come by thinking and working, that all else was delusion and must end in disaster. The most marked attention was paid to every word I said. Indeed, I can truly say that I never addressed a more orderly and attentive meeting.

When the resolution embodying these views was moved and seconded, it was carried, with only about half-a-dozen dissentients, and amid great applause. The test as to the temper of the people was thus fairly made. It proved to us, at least, that though there might be local disturbances, there could be no revolution, and in this conviction we laboured, not without success, among the Chartists; not to persuade them out of their opinions, which in the main we regarded as correct and sound, but out of whatever intention they had of carrying them into effect by the help of physical force.

CHAPTER X.

Progress and Opposition.

It is not necessary to claim for the Socialists any special credit for preventing an outbreak of violence in the manufacturing districts during the Chartist agitation. They knew that the reports made day by day in the newspapers were gross exaggerations, and they suspected that those who were labouring to create a political terror had unworthy purposes of their own to serve which would be defeated if the people could be prevented from breaking the law.

The principles and policy of the social reformers alike made them active with this object. Their influence was, therefore, zealously exercised to prevent any destruction of life or property, and while the Bishop of Exeter and others were busy exciting the anger of the general public against Robert Owen and the Socialists, whom they denounced as promoters of bloodshed and enemies to property, these were labouring to prevent violence. That the authorities were not quite so ignorant of this matter as the bishop, may be seen by the following fact. When the fever created by the bishop was at its worst, Sir Charles Shaw Kennedy, who was at the head of the police of the district, and whose headquarters were in Manchester, sent to the Social Institution, requesting

that a deputation might wait on him at the Town Hall, and four or five persons were sent of whom I was one. When we arrived, and were shown into his private office, he told us that what he had read in the papers had made him desirous to inquire for himself what groundwork there was for the extraordinary reports about us and our proceedings that had found their way into the press. He then went over the heads on which he desired information, and without hesitation or consultation we replied fully on every point.

Sir Charles expressed his belief in the truth of what we told him, and became, in his turn, quite frank in relation to his own views of the action we had taken. He referred to the great meeting held in the Carpenters' Hall for the purpose of protesting against the national holiday, and told us he was so apprehensive that violence would be offered to me, that he had sent to the meeting in plain clothes every officer that could be spared. Before parting, he said, "I quite believe what you have told me, and I utterly disbelieve what is said against you. I have means," he continued, "of finding out what you are doing, and if a committee of inquiry should call on me, I am prepared to state that you have laboured honestly to preserve the peace, and to express my belief that had it not been for the influence exercised by your people in this district, nothing could have prevented bloodshed."

During this period the *Times* newspaper abused Robert Owen in "good set terms." His practices were spoken of as "monstrous abominations," "beastialities," "matured and infernal atrocities,"

while he himself and the men who agreed with him were described as "execrable monsters." The following extract deals with a reference made by the Marquis of Normanby to Owen's benevolence :—

"That this egotistic old Welshman has spent a deal of money in the diabolical attempt to Owenise the community we do not mean to deny, but where did that money come from, and under what understanding did he receive it? When Owen, who originally had scarcely a shilling of his own, married Miss Dale, of Glasgow, with whom he obtained a large fortune, he was a rigid orthodox Dissenter. In virtue of his religious profession alone he inherited the immense funds of David Dale, his father-in-law, who, had he entertained the slightest anticipation of Owen's apostacy, would sooner have engulfed them in the Clyde. It is very true there was no testamentary destination of these funds to prevent the application of them in any way whatever; but, with the perfect knowledge which the legatee had, as well of the testator's pre-eminent devotedness to the interests of pure religion and morality, as of the horror he would have felt at the possible prostitution of his property for the subversion of those interests, there was undoubtedly such a moral obligation not to misapply Mr. Dale's estate to purposes foreign to the convictions under which he bequeathed it as must have effectually controlled every upright man in determining its practical application. What is called Owen's benevolence, therefore, is substantially a breach of trust."

With the exception of the statement that Owen was married to Miss Dale, there is not a particle of truth in this abominable attack on the character of a

public man. Owen did not receive a large fortune with Miss Dale, nor did he spend for the propagation of his principles a penny out of any funds but those made in his own business. Out of his fortune obtained in trade, he purchased lands in the United States, which were settled on his family, an annual sum being reserved for his own use. Whatever money he spent was, in the strictest sense, his own, and neither his necessities nor his inclinations led him to traffic in his principles. It is doubtful whether there ever lived a public man whose motives were more pure or whose conduct was more free from anything approaching to merited censure.

I have been informed by those who were with him when these attacks were made upon him, that he wrote to the *Times*, to correct its misrepresentations, but his letter was not inserted. He then sent an advertisement of his works, that those who were so disposed might judge for themselves of his aims and intentions, but this was also refused insertion. Against this sort of attack there is no defence, unless other members of the press are disposed to open their columns. This was the case to some limited extent when charges of assassination were brought against Mazzini. It was the case, also, when charges of exciting to plunder were made against Messrs. Cobden and Bright. Owen, however, had no means of reply. He was declared to be an enemy of religion, family, and property, and the press generally felt it a duty to pour its wrath on his head, and at the same time prevent, so far as it could, explanation, denial, or protest. In these days, when the character of a public man had to be destroyed, there was an auda-

city, an unscrupulousness and a dash not to be surpassed.

It is a curious fact in connection with popular leaders and their efforts, that the chief force by which they are, as a rule, opposed, should be the force of personal calumny and malicious imputation. It is questionable whether the history of popular movements can furnish one case in contradiction to this statement. The purest motives, the most blameless life, the noblest aims, give no security against this vile custom, whenever, in the cause of truth or of public justice, an interest is disturbed or a prejudice touched. Owen's life was altogether exceptional, by its temperance, its kindliness, its devotion and sacrifice. He thought no ill, he practised no wrong, and never under any provocation returned evil for evil, and yet he was represented day by day as a monster of iniquity, whose life had been spent in planning and advocating spoliation of property, corruption of morals, and of everything that men prize as tending to sanctify human life.

During these days of conflict, Robert Owen was employing himself in preaching and teaching the leading ideas of his system, by the adoption of which he hoped to see the comfort of the people and the prosperity of the nation increased ; and, above all, the intelligence of the people so improved by sound education as to secure a satisfactory progress for the country. An examination of the *New Moral World* will show that at this time increased opposition only produced increased activity and determination ; and while misrepresentation and falsehood may have caused timid and bigoted people to keep at a distance

from the movement, the courageous and inquiring were in large numbers attracted to it.

Those who were active as writers and speakers on behalf of Robert Owen's ideas, so far as these ideas were accepted by the social movement, did not confine themselves to mere defensive action. The war was carried into the enemy's camp. The plan was to collect the statistics of education for the purpose of proving a criminal neglect of duty on the part of the Government, the Church, and others in authority, who, while wrangling over political party differences and rival sectarian dogmas, were allowing the people to remain in an ignorance so deplorable that they were incapable of understanding, much less performing, the most ordinary and necessary duties of everyday life. The socialist teachers had free access everywhere to the homes of the people. Even the very poorest and most degraded communicated freely with the leaders of the movement, as they were brought into contact with them by working men, who were known to them, and could converse with them without suspicion or distrust.

I myself visited the worst parts of Glasgow—the "Goose Dubbs," the "New Vennel," and certain parts of the wynds in the "High Street" close to the college. When I undertook this visitation, I was prepared to see much that would shock and distress me, but I had no conception of the actual state of things. To write a description of all that I saw would be impossible. The dirt, the rags, the squalor, the evidences of hunger, the expression of hopelessness on the faces of the women, the appearance of the children, and the horror of the whole thing as the condition of life for multi-

tudes of people generation after generation, shocked the heart and almost paralysed the understanding. I was compelled to abandon the exploration on which I had entered. Nerves of steel would have been required to carry such a task through to the end, and I had not got them. What I did see, however, filled me with determination to go forward with the work I had commenced, and it was in this way, by investigations into the facts of life, that we met those who opposed us. Our weapons were not forged out of anger, springing from the unjust attacks of our opponents, but from a sympathy with poor human victims of neglect, whose sufferings and vices had come to be regarded by the community as necessary concomitants of a progressive civilisation.

In addition to the Bishop of Exeter and his prompter, Mr. Brindley, there were four of less note in the field against Robert Owen, namely Joseph Barker, John Easby, a person named Hawthorne, and another named Pallister. Joseph Barker possessed considerable cleverness, but the other three had little or no skill in argument. They could repeat misrepresentations, and in this way sometimes caused the discharge of a few men from their employment, and on two or three occasions excited the mob to violence; but beyond this their opposition was serviceable to the movement rather than otherwise. These persons played on the prejudices of people, many of whom, among the working classes, were ignorant and easily excited, but there were large numbers who knew that however much we might disagree with them on certain points, we were their active and zealous friends on all political and social questions in which they took an interest.

The progress made in spreading the principles advocated by the Socialists was rapid during this time. Large halls for holding public meetings were erected in the various towns in the manufacturing districts. In Manchester, a hall was built, which was afterwards purchased and opened as the free library of that town. These halls were used for lectures, classes, social gatherings, and discussions on all important public questions. It is doubtful if there was ever a period during which, in connection with the manufacturing population of the country, there existed so much activity in the direction of earnest inquiry; and the importance of a training such as this for working men can, I think, scarcely be over-estimated in a country the progress of which depends so much on an enlightened public opinion.

CHAPTER XI.

Riots at Burslem and Bristol.

THE crusade against Robert Owen and the Socialists was, at certain places, becoming dangerously active, in consequence of the anger excited by those for whom the Bishop of Exeter was acting in the House of Lords. The people generally, even though they could not be regarded as encouraging the agitation, did not actively oppose it. Nor did the Government oppose it. The proceedings of the Socialists were carried on within doors, they made no offensive public demonstrations, nor did they do anything to arouse public anger. Still, during the years from 1838 to 1842, an opposition was organised for the purpose of hunting down, by public clamour, persons, who in the promulgation of their principles, refused to be intimidated by men incited to activity by ignorance and prejudice. Mr. Brindley was the principal instrument in this work, and whether to his credit or discredit, it is right to say that no one could have laboured with more zeal. It was he who instructed the Bishop of Exeter. What the bishop uttered in the House of Lords gave the cue to the press, and between him and the newspapers, most extraordinary conceptions of Robert Owen and his plans took possession of the minds of large numbers of people,

who became warm in their antagonism, without taking much trouble to ascertain whether or not they were justified in what they were doing.

Mr. Brindley went up and down the kingdom, and wherever he went, by placards and meetings, he managed to inflame the minds of the violent, the bigoted, and the ignorant. In the June of 1840, he visited the Staffordshire Potteries. The patronage of some few of the bishops, and a considerable number of the clergy of the Established Church, together with an adverse address by the Wesleyan Congress to the people of that denomination, caused many of the employers to give open support to Mr. Brindley, not only by subscribing to defray the expense of his efforts, but by dismissing from their employment persons known to be friends and adherents of Owen. Mr. Brindley's success in the Potteries was very considerable; public buildings were engaged for him, in which he delivered exciting addresses, and the tickets of admission to such meetings were bought by the employers, and distributed among the people who worked for them. Arrangements were made for a discussion in the National Schoolroom at Burslem, between Mr. Brindley and Mr. Robert Buchanan, but without consulting Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Brindley and his supporters changed the place of meeting to the covered market, and took the precaution to have it well filled with their friends before the other side was aware. In fact, so violent and unscrupulous were their proceedings, and so great the number of people who suffered through being thrown out of employment, that it was considered best to act quietly, though firmly, until the worst of the storm

had blown over. The years 1838 and 1839 were years of great depression in trade, during which the working people suffered much, whilst 1840 was a year of slow recovery, and as the pressure of bad times on the workers was becoming gradually relieved by increase of employment, it was decided not to do anything that could be avoided through which suffering might be brought on struggling men who were at the mercy of those disposed to act at the instigation of Mr. Brindley and his friends. During this time arrangements had been made for a course of lectures to be delivered by Robert Owen, at different towns, and the principal public halls were engaged. In each case the agreement was violated, and the halls refused. In addition to this, the following placard, without signature or printer's name, was extensively posted. "Owen again! at Dalehall. Mr. Owen, after being driven out of Newcastle and Stoke, is coming here to-night, at six o'clock, to propagate his blasphemous principles. Will you have him after Friday night's exposure? If not, assemble before the meeting, in a peaceable and orderly manner, and respectfully, but firmly and decidedly, declare that this poison shall no more be retailed among you." That this peaceful and orderly assembly might not be deficient in the element needed, drums and fifes were sent through the town in various directions, and a crowd of several thousands of the roughest portion of the inhabitants was collected, while a platform was erected for the purpose of holding an opposition meeting exactly opposite the institution where the meeting of Robert Owen was about to take place. The playing of music and

the processions through the town led to much drinking, the liquors being, for the most part, supplied free of cost. Addresses of a most violent kind were delivered from the platform, and everything was in a state of preparation. Mr. Owen arrived a few minutes before seven o'clock, in a gig, accompanied by a young friend from Stoke; but before he could alight, an effort was made to upset the gig, for the purpose of inflicting personal injury. To prevent this, his friends went to his assistance—he was at this time seventy years of age—and got him safely out of the gig, though several were savagely beaten while doing so—one young man having his jaw bone broken. The police, being, no doubt, previously instructed, looked calmly on. The mob, being overwhelming, forced Mr. Owen through the streets to the house of a man who was one of his most active enemies, where he had to remain for two hours the object of gross insult. At the end of this time Mr. Williams, a friendly solicitor, arrived to take him home with him, but the moment Owen appeared he was assailed with stones and mud, from which he had to again take shelter. After a time, however, he got safely off to the neighbouring town where he was staying.

Mr. Alexander Campbell, the social missionary who attended Mr. Owen, not knowing what had become of him, was making his way through the mob in search of him, but found that he had got off. Mrs. Williams, the wife of the solicitor above referred to, was with Mr. Campbell anxiously looking for Owen, who was her guest. As soon as they discovered that he had escaped they began making their way back, but Mr. Campbell was recognised. He was at once separ-

ated from the lady who accompanied him, and severely beaten. In his efforts to escape, he had to pass over a field and a canal bridge, and here an attempt was made to throw him into the canal; he escaped, however, and took refuge in a house where he had to remain for several hours.

The persons who had assembled in the hall to hear the address fared no better. The account published at the time says that when it became known that Mr. Owen was forcibly prevented from lecturing, the audience was dismissed; but on leaving the institution they were most inhumanly treated, their clothes being torn, and, in some instances, the hair pulled from their heads. Those who organized the meeting remained behind, and were at once besieged. An attempt was made to force the door, which had been strongly barricaded. This failing, a room adjoining the lecture hall was taken possession of, and a breach made in the party wall. Here a fierce battle ensued, the attacking party being driven back. A double attempt to enter was then made—one from the cellars, and another from the roof of the building. A clergyman and the head constable then put in an appearance, and tried to obtain a surrender, offering a free and save passage if the parties promised not to assemble again in their own hall. This offer was refused, and after some further parley it was agreed that they should be allowed to return home unmolested. It was then arranged that several women who were there, the wives of some of the party, should leave first, on the supposition that no attack would be made on women. The men, not being sure of this, followed close behind, and their suspicions were well founded.

One woman received a severe blow on the head, while the secretary of the institution had his head badly cut through his hat by a stone. They again took shelter in a private house, and here they had to remain till late into the night when the mob dispersed. No attempt was made to check these proceedings, and bands of music were allowed by the police to parade the town for the purpose of keeping up the excitement till late at night, and, although several persons were severely wounded, nobody was arrested. The press took the same approving view as that taken by the authorities. The *Staffordshire Gazette*, describing the treatment of Mr. Campbell, says :—" A large party of individuals pursued and overtook him, and proceeded to treat him without ceremony. They rolled their victim in the field, and afterwards anointed him with that more useful than agreeable material, clay, likewise subjecting him to that elegant process called 'bonneting.' Eventually he made his escape to the Britannia Inn, Navigation Road, and we apprehend that the worthy people of Longport will, after this spectacle, not be inclined rejoicingly to sing 'The Campbells are Coming.'" Such proceedings as these, however, are not to be considered as fairly exhibiting the spirit of the people towards the Socialists. Nothing approaching to riot or personal violence was indulged in by the people when left to themselves, but only where Mr. Brindley, or some person like him, in league with one or two clergymen of the fanatical sort, set themselves to work to excite them. Besides, this sort of opposition never spread. Where the irritation was provoked it occurred, and as soon as the incentive was withdrawn all became quiet again.

About six months after this, Mr. Brindley exerted himself to create in Congleton and Macclesfield the same spirit he had called into existence in the Potteries. He was so successful that large numbers of persons were discharged from their employment, and this method of dealing with the progress of Robert Owen's views was spreading so rapidly, that it produced quite a panic among all who had in any way expressed opinions favourable to them. Mr. Joseph Smith was sent to Congleton to neutralise the effect Brindley was producing, and when things were in this state I happened to arrive in Manchester on my way from Glasgow to London. A deputation from Macclesfield and Congleton waited on me, with a request that I would go among them, and help in the defence they were making. I at once started, and had Congleton placarded for two addresses. Mr. Brindley had possession of the Town Hall, and had meetings on the same night. Some half-dozen of the leading men of the town waited on me, and begged me to go to Mr. Brindley's meetings, and discuss the matters in dispute between us there. I at once refused, being determined not to be drawn from the line I had laid down for myself and announced to the public. My first meeting was crowded and most successful. Next morning an insolent placard was issued, for the purpose of forcing me into compliance with the wishes of Mr. Brindley and his supporters. It ran thus:—"Mr. Lloyd Jones—will you, dare you, meet Mr. Brindley to-night, no shuffling, no evasion; but a fair manly open discussion? Unless you are a downright coward, turn out. Unless you feel assured that Socialism is the foul abortion that it is, come and submit it

to a fair trial. Now all will be able to see who it is that is afraid the truth should prevail."

To this absurd bombast I replied by a refusal, given from the mouth of that ancient authority, the bellman, to depart from the programme already arranged. My meeting that night was densely crowded, the door having been fastened to prevent pressure. The men who had got Mr. Brindley's tickets from their employers to attend the meeting at the Town Hall came to my meeting, and left Mr. Brindley, the employers and clergy to comfort each other. In the middle of my address the door was forced open, and the mayor, several of the corporation, and other gentlemen of that class, rushed into the meeting, forced their way to the front of the platform, and put Mr. Brindley forward to commence a discussion. I had made my arrangements, and at once told Mr. Brindley that if he persisted in speaking he should be ejected. He did persist, and at a word from me two strong young men lifted him up, carried him to the door, and deposited him outside, his clerical and manufacturing friends following of themselves. This was very quietly done, and when they were fairly gone, the mayor got up to address the meeting. I asked him if he intended to speak as the mayor of the town or as a private person—if as the mayor, I promised a respectful hearing, but if as a private gentleman he should be put out as Mr. Brindley had been. He meant to speak, he declared, in a non-official capacity, but after what had been said, he would withdraw. He did so, and my meeting proceeded to the end in perfect order, and to the satisfaction of those assembled.

The next day I waited on the mayor at the court-

house, and talked matters over with him and his brother magistrates at a private interview, which ended in an understanding, at once carried out, that they would use all their influence to get the discharged men taken back by their employers. During the following week I held a three nights' discussion with Brindley, in the large schoolroom at Macclesfield—the vicar, Mr. Burnett, in the chair. I fully explained our principles and objects, exposed the falsehoods so industriously circulated, and established a peace that was not afterwards disturbed.

While these things were taking place in Congleton and Macclesfield, a legal crusade was being carried on in Manchester, to compel the taking of the dissenting ministers' oath by the social missionaries. There were some law proceedings, and finally Mr. Buchanan took the oath. At Bristol, some few months after, being summoned before the magistrates to do the same, I did it without a moment's hesitation. This proceeding has been declared as having caused a revolt in the society. This is not the fact, inasmuch that in the movement led by Robert Owen no man was questioned as to his religious belief, so no man was controlled as to his willingness or unwillingness to be sworn. It was never made a subject of discussion in the society, as in such matters every man was left to do what appeared right in his own eyes. Our halls were, as a rule, licensed as places of worship, and a license was necessary to make speaking in them lawful, should it be demanded. The demand in two or three cases was made, as an obstacle to our proceedings. It failed, and there the matter ended, without causing disturbance, discussion, or division of any kind.

The Bristol riots were the most serious that took place in connection with the public teaching of Robert Owen. Like those of Burslem, they were designedly and wantonly produced, but the danger attending them while they lasted never extended beyond the spot on which they occurred. There was no extensive and powerful organisation behind them. Mr. Brindley, as the agent of certain parties who subscribed to pay his expenses, appeared at certain points at certain times, and from the moment he made his appearance to the time he took his departure, there was excitement and sometimes riot; but when he withdrew everything became quiet.

About six months after the Burslem attack, Owen visited Bristol, his friends there having taken and fitted up a large hall in Broadmead. He was to address the public on the occasion of its opening. Mr. Brindley got to the town before him, and by the time he arrived, had stirred up a very strong feeling against him by resorting to his usual system of false representation. Owen's books were publicly burned, and a serious attack was made on his life. As he was entering a cab to drive to his hotel, it was suddenly seized by the wheels, and on the point of being overturned, when he was dragged from it by his friends, and surrounded by a party of resolute men, who kept the mob off by sheer fighting. In an entry into which his friends pushed him, at the same time firmly guarding the entrance, some sort of disguise was adopted, and by the friendliness of one of the residents, he was led through a back passage, and in that way got to his inn without suffering injury.

News of the danger to which he had been exposed

arrived next day in London, and I started at once, travelling all night, so as to be with him as soon as possible. At that time (the January of 1841), the railway only went as far as Reading, and from there the coach continued the journey to Bristol. It was a hard winter, and the night was bitterly cold, so that when I got to Bristol in the morning, I was by no means in a comfortable condition. I found that Owen's friends, being convinced that his life was in danger, had begged of him to return at once to London by the early coach. After much pressing he complied, and I must have passed him as he was leaving the town. The condition of things was not very cheering. The large hall in Broadmead, which had been newly fitted up, was in a state of utter wreck. The seats were all broken, the rostrum torn down, the gas fittings demolished, the doors and windows smashed, and all that could be done in the way of destruction fully accomplished. This had taken place on the previous evening, so that between the wrecked building and the excited state of public feeling, I felt that however my visit might end, its beginning was not of the most propitious kind. I went that night to a meeting of Mr. Brindley's, held at a large circus in the town, and on the following night held my first meeting, the hall in Broadmead having been hurriedly fitted up again by a crowd of young volunteer workmen. Somewhere about three thousand persons were packed into the building, while outside the crowd was dense and excited. No discussion was allowed until I had said all I intended to say, and though Mr. Brindley and his friends did all they could to throw the meeting into disorder, it

finished peaceably, and with good effect in allaying prejudice.

When I got into the street to return home, I was surrounded by a furious mob, that yelled at me and made other angry manifestations. In a short time stones began to fly, several of our party, including myself, being struck. We took refuge in a public-house, and barricaded the doors and windows on the ground floor. The police, hearing of the riot, soon arrived, and we escaped, under their protection, at the back of the premises; and, though we were discovered and the mob signalled to, we managed to get a cab and drive off too rapidly to be overtaken. The police acted very well. While one of them jumped on the box-seat to direct the driver, the others faced round and kept back the advancing crowd.

The next night I lectured again, and everything went off quietly inside the building. The mob outside was, however, more numerous than on the previous night. There was no way of getting out at the back of the building, as the premises in that direction abutted on a river, and had neither door nor windows, nor was there any means of egress at the sides, while in front a long passage built in on each side made it necessary to pass out right into the midst of the mob. The constables, who had been sent into the meeting, arranged that they would walk at some little distance before and behind me, while about twenty young men were placed around me. In this order we moved right into the crowd and along the road leading out of the city toward the place where I was staying.

The struggle began the moment we left the hall, and for about a mile it was carried on fiercely.

Sometimes by a determined pressure of the crowd we were forced back; then again we were forced to the right or left, as the opening of a street gave opportunity. It was quite clear the mob was under the control of certain leaders, as their object the whole time seemed to be to separate me from those who were protecting me, and deal with me singly. The police saw that the situation was becoming very dangerous, and instead of advancing straight to where I had taken up my quarters, they turned suddenly into a police station, close to the street we were in, and as soon as they entered fastened the doors. Reinforcements arrived, the portion of the mob nearest the building was driven back, and for the moment I was safe. A rumour that I had been killed by the mob got circulated, and several persons of respectable position in the city came to the police office, and when they found that I was safe, offered me refuge in their houses; but I declined, and having changed my overcoat and slightly disguised myself, I left by a back door, and, passing through two divisions of the mob which were on the look-out for me, reached home in safety.

The morning after, as I sat at breakfast, a man called and inquired for me, and when he was shown into the room, where I sat alone, he looked at me and said, "I am glad you are safe." I asked him his business, and he told me that he was appointed to attend all my meetings, and report to the Government; that this was his business in Bristol, and that he was most anxious I should not get into trouble. He had, he said, to report what I said, and if I at any time talked wildly, harm would come of it. "I do

not think you will," he said, "but as I entirely believe in the work you are doing, I am anxious you should continue it without injury to yourself." Having thus delivered himself, he bid me "Good-morning," and hurried out of the room. After he was gone, it struck me that there was on his face, as he spoke, a painful look of self-accusation, and I have from that moment entertained a kindly remembrance of the man who, being placed in such a position, could perform such an act. Nothing very particular occurred after this, beyond an attempt at assault one night when I was alone, but as I carried a good stick, I had no difficulty in getting rid of my assailants. I remained in Bristol for some weeks, but was never again in similar danger.

After this Mr. Brindley tried his fortune in London, where I, through my friends, arranged for a debate in the theatre of the Coliseum, Regent's Park, which attracted a good deal of attention, and did much in bringing Robert Owen's views under discussion with the general public. There was no disturbance of any kind, and everything went off satisfactorily. Then Mr. Brindley made his appearance at Birmingham, to which town I followed him, Robert Owen going with me. At Birmingham, as well as in London, the verdict of the public, taken by resolution, was overwhelmingly with us. It became apparent that what was meant to crush us was rapidly giving us strength, hence in a short time Mr. Brindley ceased to trouble the public as an active and noisy opponent of Socialism, and after some small tribute to him, got up chiefly by the clergy, he disappeared so far as we were concerned, and was no more heard of. An attempt was made in the early part of 1840 to burn the

Manchester Institution, and there occurred some minor attempts at assault in different parts of the country, but beyond this there is nothing to record of any consequence as violent interference with the proceedings of the Socialists.

The impression made on the mind of Robert Owen, and on the minds of those who joined with him in this agitation, which extended fully over ten years, was that a fairer, more tolerant, and well-disposed audience cannot be got together, than one composed of the average run of the working class in the manufacturing districts of Great Britain. Had Owen and his followers not been grossly misrepresented, and the doctrines they taught designedly misinterpreted by men whose object it was to excite the worst prejudices in a class below that of our ordinary working people, it is fair to surmise that no disturbance would have taken place. Having had a special experience in connection with excited crowds at public meetings, I may say that where a hearing was granted, I never knew sound argument fail in producing a satisfactory result. There is, no doubt, much unfairness in sectarian contentions, in contentions where money interests are at stake, and when the conflicts of party politics become hot. In such cases there are fixed, foregone conclusions, and heat and violence too frequently take the place of argument; but away from such questions and the excitement they beget, it may be asserted that there is in Great Britain as clear a "stage" and as little "favour" as men of the world desirous of preserving the amenities of debate need wish for.

In passing on to the effort to establish an industrial

community, it must be borne in mind that from the commencement of the agitation, its promoters had two objects in view. There was, as it were, a society within a society, each society having its own duties and objects, though at all times in strict agreement one with the other. The larger section may be described as purely propagandist. Its object was to make known to the general public the principles of Robert Owen in regard to the formation of character, and the necessity of education as a check to vice and crime. In addition it exposed existing evils in connection with the industrial system of the country, and urged the necessity for practical effort with the view of bringing the worker into better relation with his work, that poverty and misery might cease to be the general and almost constant attendants on labour.

The expenses necessary for carrying on the agitation were paid by weekly subscriptions imposed on the people by themselves, and there was no responsibility incurred beyond this, as, while education was insisted on as a national duty, and improvement in the condition of the people urged as a matter of supreme necessity, nobody was pledged to any special effort for the purpose of realising either of these objects. The great aim was the extension of a belief in the truth of certain principles and a faith in their practicability. In fact, the propagandism carried on was simply a preparation of the ground with a view to practical action, and as there was nothing to rely on but public opinion, and the support to be derived from it, the efforts of Owen and his friends were to create such public belief in their ideas as might lead to these ideas being acted upon.

This society was called, very ambitiously, the "Association of all Classes of all Nations," but this was not so much in the expectation that it had any chance of becoming what such a title implied, as to express the fact that it was open to all, without any kind of exclusion on grounds of country, class, or creed.

Inside the larger society, and worked by an organisation of its own, was the "Community Friendly Society," which had for its object the promotion of practical effort. It enrolled members who desired to see a model village for industrial and educational purposes established, and who were willing to subscribe for such a purpose. Its members were not so numerous as those of the propagandist association, but they paid a much larger and a separate sum as a weekly subscription. In the one case a penny per week was found sufficient to carry forward the general work, while the members of the "Community Friendly Society" paid one shilling a week each in addition. This society was recruited from the other, but those not subscribing for community purposes could not interfere with the conduct of its business, nor could they be elected as inmates to any establishment that might be set on foot. During the whole of the agitation described in previous chapters, the "Community Friendly Society" was going quietly on with its own special work. It gathered in adherents, collected subscriptions, discussed projects and plans, kept in view offers for the sale or letting of lands, such as might suit the purpose it had in view, and considered how best to proportion trade, education, and agriculture, so as to promote the success of the projected undertaking.

CHAPTER XII.

Practical Operations.

At the annual Congress of 1840, the Central Board made the following report to the society in relation to practical operations on the land.

"Since the last annual session of Congress, the estate, situate at East Tytherly, in the county of Hants, has been secured by the directors on a lease of ninety-nine years; and it is now vested in trustees on behalf of the society, and preparatory steps for the establishment of a community have been taken to the extent that the collected funds of the society admit. The estate consists, as stated in page 140 of the report of last Congress, of two farms, one of 301 acres, named Queenwood, which is tithe free; the other of 232 acres, which is extra-parochial, named Buckholt. The annual rent is £350, having been fined down from £375, by payment of £750; and the society have power further to fine down the rent to £300, £250, and £200, on making three successive payments of £1,500 each. Possession of this property was obtained on Tuesday, the first day of October, 1839, when the directors paid the sum of £1,694 for the stock upon the farms, it having been valued, according to the custom of the country, at that sum."

This was an important step. A great deal had

been done in propagandism as a preparation for it, but over the whole time, there had been much difference of opinion as to the policy to be pursued in practically working out the society's plans. There was always a party in the society that professed not to believe in talking, and who grumbled at lectures, discussions, or public meetings of any kind that did not directly insist on practical work on the land. They saw no disadvantage in an inadequate public support, and not much in a deficiency of funds, or even in a lack of agreement as to necessary preliminaries. On the other hand, there was a very strong party who were thoroughly convinced as to the necessity of continued and extended propagandist effort. Excellent results were becoming daily manifest from the teaching that was carried on. Large numbers of people were joining the movement, in the manufacturing districts more particularly; and not only were these, as members of the association, giving life and progress to the agitation, but the general public, notwithstanding the opposition of Mr. Brindley and his supporters, was rapidly coming to understand that although our proceedings stirred up religious disputations, the main, in fact, the only object of our association was to promote education, and to improve the condition of the working people of the country, without disturbing order, or in any way attacking property.

Our missionaries were, for the most part, young, active, and zealous men, who acted by direction of the central authority; while the district lecturers operated locally for the branches by which they were engaged, and, hence, there was a constant, properly

supervised system of teaching going forward in thorough sympathy with the people. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that if ten additional years had been given to this kind of work, a mass of public opinion would have been prepared, by which the inertia that was allowing things to go their own way in the direction of ignorance, vice, and misery, would have been effectively antagonised. It was an old dispute that cropped up among the social reformers, just as it had done in past days in all sorts of movements, and as it will in future, whenever men have to act together for common ends. The tendency of persons who cannot talk will always be to believe that they can work, and in this belief to do much mischief by attempting to act without the necessary conditions of success; while the tendency of eloquent propagandists will be to avoid such practical experiments as they think unlikely to bring the desired results. There is, no doubt, a true point of action between the two; but, like many true points, it will be difficult to hit. On the other hand, where contention is strong, it will be easy to miss, and in this instance there can be no doubt that it was missed.

Robert Owen himself stood stoutly out against premature action, and up to the last moment he insisted that that which was contemplated was too hurried. At this time, however, there were outside causes operating to produce premature activity. A small landed proprietor had declared himself a convert to the principles, and a believer in the plans of the Socialists. He was a man of good address and some ability, and he took advantage of the organisation to go from place to place, address meetings, and

make offers to such as were disposed to join him. There was also a man of the same sort in Wales, who had land to experiment on, and who was anxious to set up a colony. A third experiment of a different kind was also in preparation. Rightly or wrongly, these things influenced Owen's movement, and helped to throw obstacles in its way, as both the men above alluded to got money and labour invested in their land, without giving any security for either, and, in the end, kept possession of what they had obtained. These did not start before the society, but their preparations hurried forward its project.

Owen at first declared he would withdraw himself from the movement, but as this would have amounted to a breaking up of the whole thing, he reluctantly consented to continue, though under very distinct protest against the policy of rashness that had been adopted, and with an understanding that nothing of importance should be done without his knowledge and consent. Upon this understanding he was appointed governor on condition that he should hold office nominally until, at the following Congress, the whole matter should be fully discussed. It will be seen from what is stated here, that the acquisition of an estate was not regarded by many people connected with the movement as an unmixed good. The initial difficulties ought to have prevented the step taken. The capital in hand was utterly inadequate to the carrying through of such an undertaking. A good deal was promised, and much of this was forthcoming when wanted, but a certain outlay, that had to be made, and could not be postponed, was not adequately provided for by a contingent and uncertain income.

There were no buildings on the estate beyond an old farmhouse and some ordinary farm buildings, in consequence of which the foremost requisite of the new colony consisted in accommodation for the first batch of residents. Three gentlemen were appointed as deputy governor, agricultural manager, and resident trustee, to direct and manage the undertaking. A good-sized brick building was first erected, which was intended to subsequently serve for a school. The upper floor was divided into apartments for the first people who arrived, the ground floor being used for giving lessons to the children already there, and as a dining-room.

The land was not good and did not promise average crops, but, by proper treatment, in a season or two it yielded very satisfactory returns. Large garden grounds for the use of the people were laid out, and an abundance of the best vegetables planted and grown. Good gardeners who were members of the society were sent to the estate, together with a number of skilled artisans. The stock on the farm was increased, and a larger breadth of land manured and sown than many of the neighbouring farmers thought prudent, but it turned out well, and on this head no difficulty arose.

In a few months there was quite a little colony settled on the land, but as the members of the society had been sent from the manufacturing districts, and were skilled workmen, their labour was employed in skilled work, while the agricultural labourers of the neighbourhood, instead of being superseded, found themselves fully employed, and on better conditions as to wages and general treatment. "Queenwood,"

though in its situation and surroundings already a beautiful place, gradually began, in the hands of the industrious people who had been sent there, to assume an improved appearance. Those who were set to work out the experiment were sober, industrious, intelligent men, who had been led to study the conditions of society as they found it in their own experience ; who had revolted against the painful lives led by the working people, and who determined to make an experiment with a view to elevate and improve them. The difficulties which had to be encountered did not detract from the merit of the attempt, as these difficulties were nearly altogether of a pecuniary kind, such as often defeat the best understood and most ordinary business. The land had to be properly cultivated ; buildings to be erected suitable for residence, and for carrying out efficiently the several objects in view. One of the first of these objects was to establish a good school in which to educate the children of the people resident on the estate, and also the children of such as could afford to pay a charge to cover the cost of good plain living, and teaching ; and, at the same time, leave something towards defraying the expenses of the establishment.

As a principal source of income, the intention was to draft workers in various skilled trades to the estate, whose labour did not require extensive and costly machinery ; and the produce of whose industry might be disposed of to the general public and to the various branches of the society. The difficulties attending such an undertaking were never overlooked. From the first it was felt that unless

sufficient funds were supplied from the outside, it could never be successful. The sums supplied were not sufficient. Active operations were scarcely commenced, when it was discovered that the money at command was scarcely enough to stock and work the farm, and that if the experiment had to rely on the support of the society, it would collapse before the plan could be tested on its merits. This was no time to bandy accusations; the impatient practical men were rapidly discovering that impatience is the least practical thing connected with human affairs, and that "raw haste" is not only "half-sister to delay," but is also the mother of endless disappointments and failures.

Mr. John Finch, of Liverpool, who was appointed deputy governor, was a very excellent man, full of honesty of purpose and good intention; but rather deficient in insight and tact. He was kindly in spirit, and prepared to do all in his power for the comfort and welfare of the people with whom he had to deal. He had, however, a half joking way of saying unpleasant things which made him rather unpopular, and though the differences that occurred between the people and the deputy-governor, seldom involved anything which was not referable to faults of temper on one side or the other, they constituted an unfitness that rendered Mr. Finch's withdrawal desirable. A severe illness rendered it necessary to Mr. Finch himself, and it therefore took place without any unpleasantness. Mr. Heaton Aldam, who managed the farming department, was an able and pleasant man; but he undertook his duties without calculating the difficulties of his new position. On his

own farm he was master, possessed ample resources, and ordered what had to be done in the certainty that it could be done, without demur or objection. He was out of place, therefore, where consultation was occasionally necessary, and where "ways and means" required to be discussed. Charles Frederick Green, the resident trustee, in a few months was called away, and settled in America. His practical training and general usefulness would have made his help of value, but he had to leave, and thus the management had to be re-arranged, with an improved knowledge of the requirements of the new colony. The three gentlemen named did not over-weight the establishment with expense, as they gave their services without charge of any kind beyond their board; but as mere depositaries of authority, the work to be done did not need them. There was over-much of management, and, as there was not always agreement, this was felt to be an evil.

At the Congress of 1841, held in Manchester, the difficulties at Queenwood began to be apparent, and though they were not at that time very formidable, it was evident that unless the financial resources of the society could be developed they would rapidly become greater. There existed in the community pressing need for an increase of members to carry on operations that could not be postponed without loss. There was also a desire in the branches throughout the country to send additional residents, that the business of the establishment might be carried actively forward. But as the sending of each additional person involved a permanent increase in expenditure, it was felt by the more cautious that the pursuit of such a

policy would be ruinous, unless at the same time provision could be made to permanently enlarge the income of the society. There was no branch of industry on the estate that could bring any immediate return, and, therefore, whatever might be necessary for carrying on farming and building operations, as well as what was needed for the support of residents, had to be found by the non-resident members of the association.

Up to that time loans could not be resorted to, if for no other reason, because among the members generally, lenders of considerable amounts could not be found. There were people in connection with the society who could lend, but they were not likely to do so while the members in the various branches had the power (by hurrying forward operations so as to overweight the establishment) to render the capital invested unprofitable. These persons, as matters stood during the early stages of the attempt, showed no disposition to come forward. Many ways were suggested of encouraging small investors by making the money they advanced available in certain forms that might meet their requirements. It was proposed that a certain portion of the money so advanced should be at call, while another portion should be subject to conditions of deferred payment. As many of those who subscribed funds never meant to reside at Queenwood, a system of mutual insurance was proposed, from which, at a certain time of life, annual payments were to be made. There were other suggestions, but obviously such plans were useless without some guarantee for success and profitable working, and this was precisely what such an experiment could not offer.

If money was to be forthcoming, it was quite clear that those able and willing to lend must be consulted, and, as far as possible, their views adopted. Matters could not remain as they were in the early part of 1841, except at the risk of an immediate failure, and there were many who would have very much regretted such a result. Several of these were willing to advance money, but they were not disposed to do so without stipulating that they should in a certain way control its expenditure. Naturally, their first desire was to prevent the society, acting through its branches, from sending residents at will. For this purpose they formed themselves into a society called the "Home Colonisation Society," and by contributions, principally taking the form of loans, got together large sums of money, and, as afterwards became known, received promises of other large sums, which were not kept when the money was required. Practically, the "Home Colonisation Society" superseded the old society, by causing such alterations to be made in its constitution as reduced it to a subordinate position, in which it became a follower and helper with little or no power of initiation in anything that required the spending of money, or that involved the safety of what was, or what might be, invested.

The changes thus brought about, though many of them were necessary, all of them well-meant and made with the assent of the members of the society, had a deadening effect on the spirit of the most active and zealous. Enthusiasm was not needed, and, as a natural consequence, it began to disappear. Such variations were made in the laws as caused the will of the president and governor to be paramount in almost

everything connected with business. Robert Owen combined both offices in his own person, and as he had the common weakness of regarding those who agreed with him as the fittest to be trusted in the carrying out of his views, the soundness of judgment arising from a comparison of ideas was hardly to be expected, and, in many instances, was not to be found.

Another important result of the proceedings referred to, was the breaking up of the organised system of propagandism that had been at work from the beginning. There were seven district missionaries, whose salaries, it was thought, would be better spent in assisting practical operations on the land, and within a year after the new system was brought into operation, their services were dispensed with. Most of them had rendered unpaid service, before they had imposed on them the duties of missionaries, and after their services in this capacity were no longer called for, they passed into the ranks, and again took on themselves their share of the volunteer work necessary for carrying on the operations of the society. Another effect of this new policy was to diminish the value of the halls which had been erected in several of the large towns. Up to this time, these had been managed in the interest of the movement, and though not profitable as money speculations, they served the purpose the shareholders had in view, being well employed in the improvement of the people who attended them for instruction and amusement. When the members of these institutions slackened in their zeal, in consequence of the pure business action of the new management, attendance fell off; and other means of

using the halls had to be resorted to for the purpose of preventing a serious loss.

At this time trade was so bad that the working people were suffering greatly, and although those who had joined Robert Owen's movement were not of the poorest—were, indeed, as a rule, the most provident —yet in times of bad trade all suffer, though naturally the improvident have to endure most. Whatever the cause, the attendance at the various institutions slackened, and the enthusiasm the people felt when they themselves were the directors of their own experiment, subsided to a considerable extent, leaving the management nearly altogether in the hands of those who, as a Home Colonisation Society, had taken on themselves the duty of furnishing the chief portion of the funds.

The Congress of 1841 was held in Manchester at the time when this change was being carried out. The reports of the various delegates were encouraging; but several of them pointed out that the building of halls in many localities had so absorbed the means of members, that they were unable to subscribe as largely as they had previously done for aiding experiments on the land. They were as much alive as ever to the importance of pushing forward social reform; but it was difficult to raise money among people suffering through want of employment, and this fact furnished an additional reason why such resources as could be commanded should be more exclusively applied to operations on the land, seeing that these had been commenced, and could not be brought to a standstill.

The Manchester Congress was marked by a spirit

of cheerful confidence, and it may be added that at these Congresses the business was conducted without any view to outside effect. Such a thing would have been very difficult had there been any disposition to attempt it. The "family meetings," as they were called, which were regularly held in all the branches, kept the members thoroughly acquainted with the minutest details of their business, in consequence of which the delegates, who were as a rule active and intelligent men, came to the annual consideration of their affairs with minds so informed in regard to the subjects with which they had to deal, that any attempt to impose on them, or on the public through them, would, had it been contemplated, have been impracticable. Outside, matters were progressing as well as could be expected, and if nothing had required attention beyond the influencing of public opinion, the prospects of the movement at the time of the Congress of 1841, would have left little to be desired. The lecturing was carried on with great activity. Eighteen missionaries and paid lecturers were constantly at work. In addition there were discussion classes in all directions, and a tract distribution so active that it was declared publicly at a meeting in Birmingham, of the Auxiliary Church of England Tract Society, that the Socialists had distributed more tracts in that town in a week than the Church party had circulated in a year.

Notwithstanding this, many were already apprehending trouble from the experiment on the land. Future progress, even in regard to propagandism, depended very much on its success, and it was every day becoming more clear that an experiment entered

on so hurriedly, would be a cause of much danger, and, unless saved by some fortunate set of circumstances, likely enough to end in disastrous failure. At the Manchester Congress, Mr. James Rigby, who had been appointed deputy governor, reported as to the then condition of the estate; and though his report was hopeful, it gave hints of disagreements and difficulties that, even though they might be overcome, were not encouraging. The inmates were dissatisfied, and they were written to, and asked to state frankly the causes of their dissatisfaction. In reply, they complained of the head farmer acting without proper control, and rendering his accounts irregularly. When asked their opinion of the new deputy governor, Mr. Rigby, they expressed approval of his kindness, and the general character of his policy, but more than hinted a want of faith in his infallibility. To a query as to the domestic arrangements, they complained that their bedrooms were too small and had no fireplaces, so that during the winter months they had to be too much together in the common sitting-room. This, however, was but a temporary inconvenience, as the building they were in was not intended for their dwelling, and was only to be occupied while better buildings were being erected. They complained also that the cooking accommodation was defective, being simply what had been used in the old farmhouse, but of their food, which was the most important item, they had no complaint to make, as it consisted of a good variety of dishes, and was as a rule well-served. Neither had they much complaint to make on the score of their clothing, though they could have done with more; they declared, however, that they did not

desire to press any claim that would interfere with the necessary expenditure in seed and manure for the land. Indeed, all were disposed to do the best they could, for the purpose of overcoming the difficulties consequent upon the hurried commencement of a scheme which, before it was entered on, required careful and ample preparation. From the reports given in, it appeared that they had been working hard, and that everything connected with the land was in a thriving condition. The account given by the deputy governor of the manner in which they conducted and employed themselves during the week and on Sundays, was interesting, and as it touched slightly on the Sabbath question it may be repeated in his own words. "On Sundays no more cooking is performed than cannot possibly be avoided, as on Saturday this operation is done for both Saturday and Sunday, so that Sunday may be as much as possible a day of rest. Our people never hurt the religious feelings of their neighbours by not paying all the attention they are able in this respect, and the feelings of their neighbours have altered much in their favour." Indeed, Mr. Rigby himself had been proposed as churchwarden, and would have accepted the position had his residence in the parish been long enough to qualify him.

On a week day, "they rose at six o'clock, and went out to work before breakfast till eight or half-past. For breakfast there was milk, cocoa, bread and butter, salad, &c. They then pursued their labours until dinner-time. Dinner was served up in a good style, and generally consisted of puddings, bacon, beef, mutton, vegetables, with hare and rabbit occasionally,

and an hour was allowed for the meal. At five all came in from work, and having dressed and partaken of tea, either joined in some amusement or attended to study."

In many respects the life at Queenwood was better than that of ordinary workers outside, and in some respects it was not so good. Had it included a sense of security, there can be no doubt it would have been greatly superior to the life led by our artizans in the large towns of the kingdom. As it was, there was a great desire to get there; but the change from a crowded bustling town, to a neighbourhood which was comparatively a solitude, was trying to men whose previous habits had tended to unfit them for such a life. Upon the whole, however, the people there suited each other, and so far as agreement in association went, there was very little to complain of. Watch making and printing were introduced at an early stage of the experiment. In printing there was a good deal to be done in the society; and the weekly journal, which was a large sixteen-paged paper, furnished, together with tracts and pamphlets, a fair start. But in every step taken there were many difficulties, every one of which, however, could have been overcome had there been ampler means at the disposal of the managing body.

CHAPTER XIII.

Change of Policy.

IT will be seen that what may be regarded as a fatal error was committed in commencing operations on the land before obtaining possession of the funds necessary to carry them out. Such changes as resulted from a better knowledge, and a wider experience, might have been useful; but changes made under the pressure of necessity, were likely to be mischievous, as they were almost sure to touch, at some point, the convenience or comfort of those concerned, and by so doing to beget differences of opinion and mutual opposition. In this way the passing of the authority, that had up to this time belonged to the members of the association, into the hands of those who composed the "Home Colonisation Society," though it produced no positive dissatisfaction, furnished ground of complaint to a small minority. These indulged in unfriendly criticism, which led, for the first time, to the development of a party spirit, and occasioned disagreements which might have been avoided, if a more sober view of the situation and its necessities had continued to be taken.

During 1842 and the first half of 1843, building and farming operations were carried on very briskly.

Two farms, called the Great and Little Bently Farms, were added to the land already held, and were entered on under a long lease. The foundation stone of a very handsome structure, estimated to cost a large sum of money, had been laid, and building operations were commenced. The Home Colonisation Society, having the controlling power in their hands, found funds to carry on these new operations, and, as the progress made was a source of much satisfaction, very little fault was found with what was being done, and no questions were pressed that those in power were indisposed to answer. In the branches, among the members, who belonged nearly altogether to the working classes, the buildings in course of erection were not approved of. They said that in themselves, and in the accommodation they offered, they were far beyond what working people were used to, or desired; and if instead of what appeared to them a palace, comfortable cottage houses were built, the expense would be less, and the comfort greater. On the other side, it was urged that although the expense per head might be more, the extra convenience would be such that, after a moderate period, the superior buildings would be found in many ways more economical; also that the habits of the residents would gradually alter. Expressions of dissatisfaction were also heard in the branches, among certain of the members, and might be considered as purely local. In the management there was no difference of opinion. The report of the central board to the Congress held in 1842, on the Queenwood estate, says :—

"You will have to witness during some days the

extent of these operations, whereby you will, no doubt, come to the conclusion that they must be entirely under the direction and superintendence of one controlling mind. It will become equally obvious that this mind must be enabled to comprehend the whole subject, or confusion will soon arise. And not only must the governor comprehend his plans, but he must be assisted in carrying them into effect, even to the minutest detail, by the best parties that can be selected, in whom he has confidence. This will be the great means of future success or failure. If dissension, even the most trifling, can arise as to how our objects are to be effected, the time has not come when they can be carried out. To the board it appears impossible—and they speak with considerable experience on the matter—that the slightest interruption can be permitted to the decision of the governor, and it will be for the Congress seriously to consider how far they coincide in this opinion, and to make their regulations accordingly. It will be requisite now, in the early stages of community arrangements, that all should clearly understand the terms on which they are admitted, and where the authority is vested."

The meaning of this cannot be mistaken. The governor's orders were not in any way to be disputed, and though this discipline of submission was meant honestly in the interest of those on whom it was imposed, it was nevertheless certain that the position of people dwelling in such an establishment might be made unbearable, should the governor lack either equity of spirit or soundness of judgment in regulating the affairs placed under his control. The

experiment was not altogether satisfactory. The personal disagreements and disputes were few, the people having lived together in peace and friendliness, but the blunders made in general management were sometimes serious, and might have been prevented if the right of free discussion had been more fully permitted.[1]

Much may be said in favour of so much authority as may be necessary to control factious opposition; but authority itself has a tendency to become factious, and to be in such circumstances more dangerous than opposition. The evils of arbitrary power, and those of factious resistance, when balanced, tend to create a belief that free discussion, with all its drawbacks, is very much to be preferred to an enforced silence that can neither approve nor condemn. For good or for evil the power the central board asked for was granted, and the proceedings in Hampshire went vigorously forward. A large amount of money was expended, much the greater part of which was furnished by the members of the central board themselves, in their character as representatives of the "Home Colonisation Society."

At the 1842 Congress, everything was done in regard to the estate in Hampshire without any approach to interference, either by the residents at Queenwood, or the members of the general society; yet though matters looked encouraging in May, when the regular yearly Congress met, three months after, the central board was compelled to call a special

[1] The writer was almost alone, amongst the leading members of the society, in opposition to this plan of management from the beginning.

Congress, for the purpose of considering the position of the society; the whole thing having been brought as nearly as possible to a standstill. It may be mentioned that the crisis which had then arrived, and with which the special Congress called in London in August 1842, had to deal, was not brought about by unreasonable, extravagant, or foolish conduct on the part of the people at Queenwood. The plans on which the place was conducted, the cost of carrying out these plans, and the means of defraying it, rested entirely with the central board, acting in conjunction with the "Home Colonisation Society."

It is more than likely that the colony in Hampshire would have come to a standstill if the society had been left to itself. The work undertaken, however economically conducted, was beyond the means at the disposal of the society. To erect buildings for farming, for schools, for workshops in various industries, and to find capital to carry on these industries, meant an enormous expenditure; and as every branch of business was, at its commencement, a mere experiment, though one might succeed, another might not, and it is plain that the probabilities were on the side of failure.

An outlay was incurred which, though perhaps not extravagant for the work which had to be executed, was quite out of proportion to the capital at command, or to any amount of capital that could be reasonably expected. Mr. Owen was at this time surrounded and assisted by men as sanguine as himself, who shared to the full his hopes and expectations. They were as disinterested and sincere as men could be, and did not expect from others more than they were themselves

prepared to do. Those who had capital advanced it liberally, but when they had gone as far as they could, those upon whose sympathy and assistance reliance had been placed, did not fulfil the expectations which had been entertained. When, therefore, the special Congress was called in August, 1842, the confession had to be made that there were not funds wherewith to meet the current expenses. Mr. William Galpin, General Secretary, a man of high honour and strict integrity, who possessed an amount of quiet determination that usually carried him over difficulties before which most men would have given way, explained the position with the utmost frankness. He said :—

"At the Congress held in May last, the proceedings of the president and the central board, for the past year, had given such general satisfaction that the confidence before reposed in them was carried to an extent greater, perhaps, than was ever previously placed in any officers of a public body. The position we then occupied, and the unanimity with which the various measures were passed, led me to believe that we should continue to progress, without any material check, to the accomplishment of all those great objects for which we are associated. This belief still exists to a great degree, but I must confess that I have felt most strongly the unsoundness of our position in being even momentarily deficient in the funds to meet our liabilities, inasmuch as all the arrangements were based on the understanding that such a deficiency should never exist, and I most fully determined on being a party to no other."

After a few more paragraphs, he added :—

"The temporary inconvenience now felt has been brought on by the operations being extended beyond the means advanced to carry them forward, and it will be for you to ascertain in what manner this has been done, and whether it is calculated to effect more permanent advantage to the cause we are engaged in than would have resulted from an adherence to the arrangements previously agreed on."

With regard to the expenditure that had been incurred it was, Mr. Galpin said, made by order of the governor; but though this might be true, it did not entirely excuse the men in conjunction with whom he acted. In truth, so far as miscalculation led to difficulties in this case, no one of those concerned was more to blame than the rest. They were all oversanguine, and instead of checking each other by prudent calculation or business-like protest, they encouraged each other by mutual enthusiasm. This, though a serious error, was not fatal; and in proof of the good faith of the men who committed it, not one of them for an instant incurred suspicion in respect of anything that had been advised or executed. At this special Congress there was nothing called in question beyond the business ability of the men who had been appointed at the Congress of 1841, in accordance with the new system, and what the special Congress had to do was to appoint successors to the board, and decide on plans for future management. This was done without any kind of disagreement or personal unfriendliness between those concerned. There was much explanation and some sharp enough criticism, but at the close of the discussion a long resolution was passed unanimously declaring:—

"That this Congress, having heard the address of the governor of Harmony and explanations from members of the central board, and examined the accounts and liabilities of the society, Resolved,—That in the opinion of the Congress, the present financial condition of the establishment in Hampshire has mainly arisen from the too great confidence of the governor in the disposition of capitalists, not immediately connected with the society, to advance capital for its purposes when practical operations had been advanced to a certain stage, which confidence induced him to press forward practical operations in the said establishment at a rate which exceeded the actual income and available funds of the society. And the Congress further considers that this result has been aided by the implicit and unbounded faith reposed in the late governor by the principal officers of the society, which prevented them from exercising that judicious and prudent control over the expenditure of the funds which their uniform business-like and satisfactory conduct in other respects shows that, under other circumstances and but for such confidence, they would have felt it to be their duty to exercise. This Congress, however, after mature consideration, fully exonerates all the parties concerned from the imputation of any intentional error in policy or practice with reference to these operations, and declares its firm belief that every step they have taken has been dictated by a sincere desire to benefit the society, and accelerate the realisation of its principles. The Congress further expresses its fullest conviction that the temporary difficulties arising from too sanguine hopes and implicit confidence may be easily removed by a united

and energetic effort on the part of the members and friends of the society to give full effect and profitable employment to the extended arrangements and greatly improved capabilities of the establishment; the explanations which have been given fully satisfying the Congress that the principal officers of the society perceive the error that has been committed, and that the experience thus gained will prevent a similar course from being pursued by their successors."

It would be wrong to infer from what has been stated that there was any revolt against Robert Owen on the part of his followers. He and those who had been acting with him made a very serious blunder, and the gravity of this was understood. The necessity of changing the policy of the society was seen by all parties, and to change the policy it was necessary there should be a change of men. Robert Owen and his friends of the "Home Colonisation Society" felt this. They had advanced over £14,000 for the purpose of forwarding the operations at Queenwood, and now that they were compelled to call a special Congress, in consequence of the difficulties that had arisen, it was found that, in advancing this large sum, they had exacted no security, and in handing their power back again they asked for no terms beyond such as the future condition of the concern might afford.

When the new men were appointed to carry out the new policy, the retiring officers did not withdraw themselves so long as they could furnish information or advice, and in many ways the plans that had been set on foot to make the establishment remunerative were pursued to the end. In a carefully-written ad-

dress, Robert Owen advised that the farms and gardens should be brought into the highest state of cultivation, and that the hall and other buildings should be completed and furnished, so as to provide accommodation for a number of well-to-do friends as paying boarders. There would have been no lack of these, as it was a desirable place of residence, and many eligible persons were ready to go there when suitable accommodation should be provided.

At the special Congress a delegate from Queenwood was present—Mr. William Sprague, who lived there as saddler and harness-maker. He brought with him instructions from the residents, and an expression of opinion in regard to the work in which they were engaged. He said, "They had met to consider the situation, and to express their opinions in connection with it. What the resident members asked for by resolution was a share in the government of the establishment." On discussion by the members of the Congress, however, it was feared that such an arrangement might lead to inconvenient interferences with the management, and, in the end, it was negatived: but a strong desire was at the same time expressed by the delegates present, that in everything seriously affecting them they should be consulted Inside the establishment a very good feeling prevailed. Mr. Sprague said, "That with reference to the feelings of the members on recent occurrences, at first considerable consternation was created, but, subsequently, explanations had restored confidence, and the strongest determination now existed to do all in their power to aid the success of the establishment. They hoped that any past occurrences would not be reverted

to by the Congress except for the purpose of future guidance."

New officers were appointed, plans of action were settled, a budget drawn up, and the Congress separated without anger or ill-will, in consequence of what had happened, Mr. Finch, the new governor, declaring that in whatever he might do, he would seek the advice of the gentlemen who had just retired from office. It is needless to reproduce here the many unfriendly statements made by the press on these proceedings. There was never the least attempt to make a secret of anything connected with the situation. Critics might have informed themselves very accurately, at any time, of all that was done. But instead of taking the trouble to find out the actual condition of things, the newspapers sent abroad the wildest charges against all concerned with the Hampshire experiment. The whole thing, according to the press, had broken down disgracefully and dishonestly, while Robert Owen and those who acted with him were denounced, and hunted by their deluded and infuriated dupes. So far was this from the fact, that the new president, in his first address to the members of the society, made the following remarks :—

" In commencing the administration of your affairs, I must declare to you that I consider the society in a better position than it has ever yet been placed in. It is true that some temporary inconvenience has arisen from the energy and perseverance with which our venerable founder, the late governor, has pressed forward the grand and glorious objects which are ever present to his mind ; but the extremely generous manner in which those friends who advanced the

funds which have been expended within the last twelve months have met the society on this occasion has given the Congress the firm assurance, that with anything approaching to zeal on your parts it will speedily be found that the position we occupy is a most advantageous one."

This statement was true, but the danger at Queenwood did not lie in the temporary embarrassment, to deal with which the special Congress was called. It was far deeper than this, and even though every inconvenience had been effectually removed, the danger, though postponed, could not have been prevented. It must not be forgotten that the purpose of the experiment was to discover whether labour on the land, labour in the workshop, labour in the school, and such labour in management and government as might be needed, could be so united, and rewards so distributed, as to prevent excessive wealth and excessive poverty existing side by side as a social necessity. Successful farming and gardening, or a successful school and boarding establishment, or any other kind of success outside this, would not have solved the problem. It is a mistake to suppose that the form of government made any part of the danger. This was simply a trial for the purpose of discovering how best to carry on a difficult and special work, and was adopted and abandoned without creating hostile divisions among the members of the society. At the special Congress, one or two men objected to the form of government, and used strong expressions in reference to it, but such language was utterly disregarded by the body of the delegates. Mr. Galpin spoke out of a very intimate acquaintance with the

working of the establishment and the general condition of the society, when he said, in closing the debate on the question of government :—

"As to the unity form of government, the general alterations made in the laws at last Congress embodied entirely his own views as to what was essential to good government. One thing, however, must be understood, every member must now know what measures the executive had in contemplation. This must be known throughout the society. None but ordinary operations should proceed unless they were first published in the *New Moral World.* Their present liabilities must be speedily and entirely got rid of, and no additional ones contracted. The errors that had been committed were financial ones, and in future the amount of funds should always be clearly known by all the members, that their confidence might be obtained."

In fact, all felt that too much had been undertaken considering the means at the command of the society. The work could not be brought to a standstill without serious loss, nor could any other be entered on without additional capital to an amount beyond their power to obtain. The blunder committed could not be rectified, but notwithstanding this the work went on.

Alexander Somerville, who acted as an agent of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and who wrote, in 1842, a series of very interesting letters from the farming districts in the *Morning Chronicle*, visited the Queenwood establishment, and gave a very full account of what he witnessed there.

"Though," he remarks, "I think the Socialists were

foolish to waste three or four years of their time and £30,000[1] or £35,000 of their money in other works than the improvement of the land, they now have such works, and they now are improving the land. And if there are any of the elements of Socialism dangerous to our high land-owners and our venerable institutions, let them be defeated by stepping in front of the Socialists with the spade and the plough, giving to each labourer an implement and his wages, showing him what can be done without being a Socialist. Though there may be fundamental errors in their system, and though much has been said against them, this community, holding one thousand acres of land, giving employment and wages, and reaping profits more liberally than other land-holders around, are not to be despised. And, moreover, it is not to be overlooked that, while they refrain from proselytising by lecturing to the neighbourhood around, they are spreading their influence by their industrial schools. They offer to take, and to some extent have already taken, pupils from all parts of the country to be brought forward in every department of useful knowledge now taught in the best schools, which will be combined with *practical* as well as theoretic instruction in the arts and sciences; besides an infant school, presided over by a lady of great experience and acknowledged talent in this department, whose attention will be mainly directed to the development of the physical powers of the children, the inculcation of good habits, the manners and dispositions, and the formation of correct moral feelings. As their educa-

[1] The amount spent was £30,000, only one half of which was laid out in buildings.

tional prospectus states, they have an elementary school for children between seven and fourteen years, and also a polytechnic school for the instruction of youth from the age of fourteen years and upwards in the theory and practice of agriculture and gardening, and the arts connected therewith, and in various other arts and trades carried on within the establishment. 'The farms,' he continues, 'are managed by a bailiff and assistants of great practical experience, and comprise many varieties of soil and surface. A very extensive and well-arranged garden is being laid out and cultivated, under the direction of an able superintendent, and the other departments of art and manufacture are under the management of persons of acknowledged skill.'" [1]

Mr. Somerville adds:

"The people in the neighbourhood dreaded them when they came at first, but now they respect them. They are bringing from all parts of the kingdom the best improved implements and methods of working; the scattered facts of well-authenticated experiments they are collecting from all the improved agricultural districts and introducing them to a part of the kingdom eminently defective, and in those respects neglected. Amid a poor population they are creating and enjoying wealth; amid an ignorant population they are dispensing education; amid an imperfectly employed population they are spreading employment; amid a population not remarkable for correct moral conduct they are showing themselves as an example which compels the respect of all who know them, and who at first distrusted them."

[1] *Morning Chronicle*, Dec. 23rd, 1842.

The industries carried on were returning a profit, and there was nothing to prevent the undertaking being prosperously continued, had not the extent of the operations to which they were committed, together with the insufficient means at their disposal, hung heavily on those concerned in it.

The aim was to set an example, in the following of which the condition of the people might be improved, by means of education, well-directed employment, and equity in distribution. The task was difficult, the sacrifice considerable, and it is hard to see why those who undertook it should have been subjected to misrepresentation and abuse.

CHAPTER XIV.

End of the Queenwood Experiment. Misrepresentations.

MATTERS went on after the change had taken place much as they had done before the special Congress was held, except that no new extension was made, nor any new obligations incurred. The work already entered on could not be abandoned, though the strictest economy, wherever it could be usefully applied, was enforced. Beyond this, existing obligations were successfully grappled with. Nothing that could be done to overcome existing difficulties, and to bring out a satisfactory result in the end, was left untried.

In the April of the following year, Mr. Finch, whose health was feeble, decided to resign the presidency of the association, and the address in which he made his intention known, published before the meeting of the May Congress, explained the position of the society's affairs at that time.

"The special Congress of our association, called by the late Central Board, in July last, and held in John Street Institution, London, having by unanimous vote called upon me to take the office of president of the association, and in conjunction with an excellent and long-tried friend of the cause, the situation also of

governor of Harmony, as the best means of removing difficulties which had unexpectedly occurred: animated with a love of our divine principles, a determination to use our best endeavours to bring them into practice, and fully relying on the integrity, zeal, and persevering support of the members and friends of the society, we cheerfully accepted the invitation, went down to Harmony, and devoted ourselves to the work assigned to us. I have now the pleasure of stating to our friends, that though very much still remains to be done before Harmony is complete, the objects for which we were chosen have been accomplished. All the most pressing engagements of the society have been discharged in full, the buildings are nearly finished, many improvements in the farms and gardens have been made, the schools have commenced, proper teachers have been engaged, a considerable number of pupils and boarders have arrived, more pupils are promised ; and from these a large revenue is already realised, which, with the surplus produce of the estate, there is every reason to believe will make this interesting experiment self-supporting before the end of the present year. In the meanwhile public opinion has greatly changed in our favour ; the calumnies and falsehoods circulated respecting us have been exposed, the excellence of our system is extremely appreciated, and the receipt of nearly £5,000 since the Congress of July, is the most convincing proof that confidence in the society is undiminished."

The question as to whether the society could have got over its difficulties, if it had pursued the policy acted on by Mr. Finch, need not now be discussed.

When the Congress of May, 1843, met at Queenwood, its first business was to elect a president, and Robert Owen was unanimously chosen to act in that capacity during its sittings. The recommendations of the central board were sufficiently clear, but it will be seen that the means of carrying them out were not absolutely at the command of the society's officers. The report says :—

"In proportion as funds are placed at their disposal, after the completion of the works already commenced, the board will recommend the occupation by the society of the additional estates of Rosehill and Great Bently, and that the cultivation of the whole be carried to the highest pitch that agricultural science will permit. They also recommend that the garden be proceeded with as rapidly as possible, as it will be a great means of support and occupation for the members and pupils, and a source of attraction to all who visit the establishment. They next advise that the schools be placed in the best possible state of organisation, and that the education be made practical, in accordance with the principles of the system, to the greatest possible extent. That a printing press be established to print the general works and tracts of the society, and, as early as possible, the *New Moral World.* That the present trades carried on in the establishment be extended, where desirable, and that additional trades be introduced. That machinery be brought, wherever practicable, to the aid of human labour, and that profitable manufactures be introduced in the order of their utility. The board is convinced that the great means of procuring a profitable return will be derived from the society possessing the most superior skill

and intelligence in performing all the operations they undertake."

The advice given here, however good, does not positively indicate a policy. It is to be followed if funds are forthcoming, but nothing is said as to what shall be done should the funds not be obtained. The original intention having been to combine labour in the workshop and on the land, and to unite with this scholastic instruction, it could not be satisfactory to those who had made this their ideal, and who had subscribed for the purpose of realising it, to see success aimed at by establishing boarding-houses. This was possibly the best thing that could be done in the circumstances, and it is not unlikely, that by trusting to this under the pressure that had arisen, success might have been in the end attained; but to patiently labour on in the expectation that such would be the case required much self-denial, and much of that deferred hope which maketh the heart sick. There was, for a time, a mitigation of the money pressure, activity in pushing forward improvements, and apparent ground for a growing confidence; but the progress which was made was of a nature to suggest, at every step, questions as to whether this was the kind of success originally aimed at. There were not wanting men throughout the society who encouraged a feeling of dissatisfaction, and although a determined struggle against this feeling took place, it continued to spread, so that in a little time it became clear it would produce most undesirable results, and that the unity so much to be wished for was in danger of being destroyed. A distinct party grew into existence, and several persons, from the best

motives, connected themselves with it as leaders and supporters. Widely different views were taken, those in power believing that the first thing to be aimed at was success, if not by the most preferable means, by those that lay nearest. The objectors, on the other hand, believed that if the establishment were managed in accordance with the original intention, by increasing the number of residents and finding work for them, and by limiting the labourers or dispensing with them altogether, so as to provide more accommodation for resident members, the necessary funds would be found.

At the Congress of 1844, such alterations were made in the laws of the society and the selection of its officers as were found necessary to ensure the carrying out of the new policy. Mr. George Simpson of Manchester became general secretary, and Mr. John Buxton, of the same city, president. Mr. Simpson was a man of very good ability as an accountant, and of high character. Mr. Buxton was a man of good intention, and beyond this little could be said.

Had both, however, possessed the best possible qualifications, they would have found the plans they undertook to carry out utterly impracticable. In such an experiment it is necessary not only that the principle should be sound, but also that there should be the utmost confidence placed in the man at the head of it. Robert Owen and the friends who worked with him, were known and respected all over the country in connection with the Socialist movement, while Mr. Simpson and Mr. Buxton, though of good local repute, were not known throughout the society,

and, therefore, did not obtain so general a support from the members.

Besides, it became very evident to those acquainted with the actual condition of things, that any attempt to increase the expenditure must soon bring the whole thing to a standstill. Apprehensions were aroused among the boarders and the parents of the children, who were now a source of fair revenue to the schools. The prospect which thus disclosed itself of an increased expenditure and a decreased revenue became alarming. Outside enthusiasm did not fulfil the expectations of those who trusted in it, and ultimately the experiment was brought to an end. The value of the property as security for the liabilities began to diminish. To stop this the trustees took action, and such distribution of the assets was made as left all connected with the proceedings without any kind of imputation on their personal honour. There was much difference of opinion, some recriminatory argument and opposition; but during the proceedings by which the estate was wound up, no charge or scandal ever came out of this in reference to any one concerned.

I have endeavoured to explain what I take to be the principal reasons why the experiment at Queenwood failed, though many minor defects of policy may have contributed. Many people rejoiced at the defeat. Mr. Booth, in his book "Robert Owen," seeks to account for the ill-will manifested towards the society and those belonging to it, by saying that, "The Socialists certainly advanced their views in the most offensive manner, and the leaders of the movement courted controversy." This is the reverse of the truth.

Everything possible was done to prevent the giving of needless offence, and in proof of this as much might be produced from the pages of the *New Moral World* as would fill a volume. That harsh and offensive expressions were sometimes used is certain, but it should be remembered, in extenuation, that there were many speakers and much provocation, and it is a fact that offensive language was uniformly condemned. The same writer says that "the 'Book of the New Moral World,' in which Mr. Owen had fully explained the new system, was adopted as a sacred writing, and read in the services of the Church;" the fact being that a belief in Mr. Owen's writings was authoritatively declared unnecessary, as will be seen from the correspondence given in connection with the Edinburgh charter. Mr. Booth, at page 194, also quotes a number of exceedingly offensive expressions, as used by Robert Owen and his followers in speaking of the Christian religion; and in a footnote refers his readers to vol. 4, page 239, of the *New Moral World.* Having referred to the volume and page given, I can say that it contains not a single word to justify Mr. Booth's charge. The page is occupied by a long letter extracted from the *Coventry Standard*, in which the writer attempts to fasten the growth of unbelief on the influence of mechanics' institutions.

It is a pity that a writer like Mr. Booth, who seems to be a zealous professing Christian, should have sought the promotion of any good object by circulating groundless charges, conscious, as he must have been, that such charges were personally injurious to those against whom they were made. There cannot be any doubt that much of the rejoicing over the Queenwood

failure was the result of a false conception of Robert Owen and his associates, as well as of the work in which they had engaged; and while on this subject, it may not be inappropriate, before concluding the present chapter, to refer to certain misguiding statements which occur in the books of those who have dealt with Owen and his proceedings. I do not propose to examine the many errors to be found in the several works treating of the labours of Robert Owen; but in some of the cases where these errors are unjust to the character of Owen, or tend to lower the credit of the movement he originated and led, a few words of correction cannot be considered out of place.

The statements made by Mr. Booth nearly always tend to degrade Owen both as a thinker and a man of business, while his friends and followers are spoken of as if they were in the constant habit of advocating every kind of extreme thing in the most offensive manner. Nothing can be more reprehensible than this method of dealing with public men and public movements, than to select odd passages from the speeches of extreme or indiscreet men in proof of such statements. Mr. Booth, however, goes beyond this, in dealing with the things which he attributes to Owen and his adherents. I have followed him in his references to the documents from which he professes to quote, and have so frequently found his assertions to be without foundation, that I have come to the conclusion he made them in the belief that no one would take the trouble to test his accuracy. Among other things, he says of the Socialists that they "never lost an opportunity of outraging the feelings of Christians." Nothing can be further from the truth, as every reason-

able affort was made to avoid giving offence to all men of honest conviction. At page 199, Mr. Booth gives the following extracts from a lecture delivered against Owen and his system by Mr. Giles, a Baptist minister at Leeds; observing that the reverend gentleman was remarkable for much energy of thought and expression. "Socialism was a union of all sects but the worshippers of God, and all practices but those of charity and virtue." Of the Socialists' paper, the same gentleman remarked that it "offered a way to perfect happiness by blending the blasphemy of the atheist with the sensuality of the brute." This language is certainly as energetic as it is untrue and libellous. Yet this is a fair example of the accusations which were brought against Owen. Because he denied that punishment was an effectual method of dealing with crime, where, through a want of education, there existed so much ignorance and brutality, it was said that his design was to remove all obstacles to individual vice and a general corruption of morals. The wild absurdity of this did not carry it outside the region of belief. Reiteration amounted to proof, and hence a man of unblemished character, seeking the promotion of justice, had to bear through life the heaviest weight that unscrupulousness of accusation could lay on him.

His ideas on the marriage question were dealt with in the same spirit, but Mr. Sargant puts this matter in its true light when he tells us that Owen's object "was not to abolish marriage, but to improve and render it a more effective means of promoting happiness and virtue," and it goes on to say that "he demanded less than Milton and Luther would have granted him;

that his aim was by no means to lessen conjugal fidelity or the permanence of marriage, but to promote to the greatest possible extent true purity, delicacy, virtue, and happiness." He desired to see marriage a civil contract, accompanied by a law by which divorce, under wise arrangements, and on principles of common sense, might be obtained equally for the poor as well as for the rich.

In justifying the Bishop of Exeter's attack on Owen, Mr. Booth says!—"It is not in the interest of truth that each noisy prophet should strengthen the number of his adherents from the ignorant who are attracted by his violence. And the Bishop of Exeter, and those who thought with him, had exceptional cause for anxiety. A dangerous heresy was abroad that might entail misfortune to which no limits could be assigned; and if, as they well knew, it is no longer possible to maintain truth by law, they might at least claim for the majority of the nation an exemption from the outrageous blasphemy of reckless men; they might, with perfect justice, insist that the propaganda should be carried on with a due regard to the feelings of respect and awe with which those who are most entitled to consideration are accustomed to contemplate the solemn mystery that hangs around the destiny of man."

I have already described the part played by Robert Owen, and by those who acted with him, at the time referred to; and I repeat that neither he nor they ever addressed the people in language such as that indicated by Mr. Booth; that they never attracted or sought to inflame the passions of the ignorant by their violence; but, on the contrary, did all in their

power, during a period of dangerous popular excitement, to prevent violence of whatever kind. It is not very easy to exonerate Mr. Booth from intentional misleading; but whether he erred intentionally or otherwise, the charges he makes are as unfounded as they are calumnious.

Mr. Sargant, who has written his work, "Robert Owen, and his Philosophy," in a fairer spirit, commits serious mistakes in speaking of Owen's character. He insists strongly on his "egotism," "vanity," "conceit," or whatever else an offensive self-assertion may be called; and this charge is supported by reference to the undue importance he is said to have attached to the work in which he was engaged. But even if this implication be true, did that to which it has reference really arise from any disposition on his part to underrate other men, and the efforts with which their lives were connected, as compared with himself; or from the consequence he attached to the work of human improvement which the condition of the people rendered so necessary? His behaviour and speech, in his intercourse with others, was considerate almost to a fault. His deportment was as unassuming as it was amiable. He seemed never to consider anybody below him, so that his bearing had in it neither the reserve nor the arrogance of patronage; and very often those who were least in agreement with him in opinion were attracted by the kindliness of his manner. Mr. Sargant also speaks of Owen's drawbacks as a self-instructed man, and condemns the slight respect which, he tells us, Owen had for the higher culture of educated men. This is certainly a mistake Owen frequently censured what

he called "learned ignorance," and we have the authority of Milton for saying that "though a linguist should pride himself to have all the tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet if he have not studied the solid things in them, as well as the words and lexicons, he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned man, as any yeoman or tradesman competently wise in his mother dialect only." No one had a higher esteem than Owen for true culture, which he regarded as embracing among other things, the knowledge which enabled its possessor to be of practical service to the living world round about him; and as allied to a wisdom that had nothing in common with the mere vanity of scholarship. I acknowledge very willingly the number of kind and just things Mr. Sargant has said of Owen; but the charge of undervaluing the importance of education can hardly, with any justice, be brought against the man who considered the education of the whole people the truest foundation for national morality, and surest means to a safe and steady national progress. When, in addition, we are told that the opposition with which Owen and his fellows met was caused by their own offensiveness and by their habit of giving insulting expression to outrageous opinions, this statement may be met with an unhesitating contradiction. The more correct explanation of the opposition alluded to, lies in the fact that people, as a rule, object to have their opinions, their prejudices, or their interests interfered with, even in the most gentle and considerate manner. Owen's movement alarmed many persons of very honest and sincere convictions; also many with strong prejudices, and

others whose fears sprang from what they believed to be an attack on their interests. To admit this is simply to recognise facts which have been developed in every stage of the world's progress, and is therefore no special reproach either to the men who opposed, or the men who led the agitation. It is true that zealots, in whatever cause, have usually found it difficult to act temperately towards those who oppose them, or to at all times pay the most scrupulous respect to the opinions of others. This will, no doubt, to some extent apply to those who took part in Owen's agitation, as well as to those who were antagonistic to it. To claim for the former an absolute immunity in this regard, would be to claim for them infallibility; a freedom from human imperfection; but this admission being made, it is only right to couple with it the assertion that the movement generally, and its leaders, never sanctioned, but, on the contrary, invariably condemned anything that could justify the charges to which I have referred as having been brought against it.

In concluding these references to Mr. Sargant's book, I may mention that he is in error when he states that Owen entertained, as a pet fallacy, the "vulgar" belief that "machinery supersedes labour, and causes distress." Mr. Sargant himself admits that it does so in particular cases and for a time, and I think it has been shown that Owen never insisted on more than this, and never entertained the idea condemned by Mr. Sargant. He had the highest appreciation of the value of machinery, but maintained that increased power of production should bring to all a commensurate increase of comfort. The assurance is also

given that "Owen's grand error" was his entire neglect of the population question. This is certainly not the fact, as he expressed himself very strongly on the subject. He regarded the ideas of Malthus as mischievously untrue, and stated his reasons for so doing. He may have been wrong in the position he took up, but it cannot be said that he entirely neglected the population question. He held, in fact, very clear ideas on the subject, which were the result of much study and deliberation.

CHAPTER XV.

Close of Leadership. Parentage of Store Movement.

WITH the winding-up of the Queenwood experiment Robert Owen's career as the leader of a public movement may be said to have closed. His activity in what he sincerely believed to be the cause of truth only closed with his life; his earnest desire for and hope in the progress of the human race never deserted him; and what is perhaps more remarkable, he never suffered himself to be cast down or dejected. Most men who set their hearts upon the attainment of some great end, have been troubled with painful moments of despair, when they turn their faces to the wall. He never despaired of the work to which he from the first set his hand; though over and over again he was defeated and driven back. This indomitable courage and unwavering hopefulness was not in him the result of perversity of spirit, of recklessness as to consequences. He believed that when once a true principle in relation to life was seen and accepted, its triumph was but a question of time, and that whether the time should be long or short depended on the activity and wisdom of its advocates. He was not indifferent to failure, but he believed that the work in which he was engaged was good, and that it was

his duty not to lose heart. When his last great defeat came at Queenwood he was seventy-five, but though younger men were cast down he was as calm and confident as ever. When things were at the worst, and one of his friends expressed regret at certain occurrences which, as it was thought, were mainly instrumental in causing the disaster, he replied, "I am an old man, and I have watched narrowly the events which have most influenced my life and my fortunes, and have noted that things which when they happened appeared to me most unfortunate, when their consequences were developed proved themselves to be most fortunate, while others which, at the moment of their occurrence, brought me pleasure and satisfaction, frequently turned out to be unfortunate and unsatisfactory. This being the case, I wait until I can fairly estimate the consequences—if good, I rejoice in them; if otherwise, my disappointment arrives gradually, and is rendered less painful."

It has been alleged that there was a tendency towards despotism in Owen, and that at Queenwood he endeavoured to set up a kind of oligarchy with power to compel obedience. This has been started by several persons who knew little or nothing of Owen personally. A better knowledge of his character and motives would have prevented such a misconception. Owen had a strong belief in settled pre-arranged plans as an indispensable preliminary to successful action. He also believed in one man governing with full power to work out the plans agreed upon; while he distrusted the kind of management that was open to interference and intermeddling on the part of others when practical operations were going forward. On

the other hand he never advocated an authority which should be above criticism and censure, or in conjunction with which there did not exist an opportunity for the expression of discontent and disapprobation.

As already pointed out, however, the setting up of the kind of authority that existed in the movement at the head of which Owen stood, especially in connection with the experiment at Queenwood, was a mistake. It is necessary that every leader of the people whose object is to obtain for them political power, and who desires to see that power properly used when it is obtained, should above all things seek to train them to a wise use of whatever influence they may possess during their preparatory struggles. When they begin to distrust themselves up to the point of self-exclusion from participation in public affairs, or when they permit others to exclude them under any plea whatever, especially the plea of incompetence, from that moment are they apt to become the tools and the victims of those who may desire to mislead them. Since government was first instituted, as a necessary part of the business of mankind, the injustice that has been suffered may be in the main measured by the extent to which the people have been excluded from power. This being recognised as a fact in connection with the past history of the world, the first thing to be aimed at is the admission of the people to a share in the management of national affairs. This is what the friends of the people should assert, and what the people themselves should enforce. That such a system might, like other systems, lead to blunders of various kinds may be admitted, but when we have given such an assertion all the force it is

entitled to, it is but an assumption that becomes less and less in its probability as the people increase in intelligence and in the habit of exercising constitutional rights. On the other hand, the exclusion of the people and the wrongs suffered by them in consequence of the powerlessness such exclusion involves, cover the pages of history in connection with every country in the world in every age.

It is not to be maintained, either in regard to politics or religion, that whatever has, with slight variations of form, preserved its influence for centuries, can be suddenly destroyed, and new dogmas, however suitable to a newer era, be as suddenly set up. What can be done, however, is to endeavour to instil into minds of men an instinctive love of truth, justice, and humanity, so as to qualify them to wisely mould and modify dogma and usage in deference to the changes demanded by an advancing civilization.

Robert Owen had a new doctrine to preach, and a new practice to recommend; but instead of giving new and improved applications of old methods for the purpose of introducing and establishing these, he and his fellow-workers invented a new system which, by its novelty, excited differences of opinion and became a difficulty in their path, and was, so far as it led to discussion and division, an impediment to success.

It must be admitted that however good the object aimed at, a failure, however honourable, places those who have incurred it at the mercy of the unfriendly. The failure of Owen's movement has been attributed by many people to his ideas in regard to certain of the beliefs and habits of the world: to his ideas on

religion, marriage, education, and human character. With the exception, however, of the doctrine of the formation of character, and the idea of industrial villages, Owen's followers were not pledged to his special notions, and no more sought to carry them out than did any other portion of the British community. His ideas on religion, whatever they were, were not accepted by those who engaged in the Socialist movement, or those who sought to carry out the Queenwood experiment. They were no doubt occasionally discussed, but never with a view to their general adoption, and when, after the collapse, the inhabitants of Queenwood went back to their ordinary occupations, each carried away his own special convictions, just as he brought them. With regard to Owen's views on marriage, he considered the marriage laws of Great Britain unjust, and advocated a system of divorce that should not need a previous criminality to make it available. He went on this question beyond the subsequent alteration in the marriage laws in England, but not so far as the law goes in certain of the States in America. He lectured on the subject, and a brief report of what he said was published, which, though perhaps correct so far as it went, lacked the fulness necessary to prevent mistakes and misinterpretations. But whether the views expressed by Owen on this subject were objectionable or not, they were his own, and in no way mixed up with the proceedings of his followers, who never professed to go with him in all things. No marriage was disturbed for any reason in connection with Owen's views on this question. It is true that the Bishop of Exeter and others made charges against the society on these

grounds ; but they utterly misrepresented the views of Owen, and in addition committed the error of attributing them to a body of men who never accepted them, and by whom they were more than once openly repudiated.

Robert Owen's friends remained as numerous and as constant as ever, but to whatever cause his failure may be attributed, it was so generally referred to a want of soundness in his principles, rather than to the want of means to carry them out, that any attempt at a renewed agitation would have been unsuccessful. As a writer in the October number of the *Westminster Review* for 1860 says, the Rochdale experiment which commenced in 1844 was on foot when Queenwood failed, but it was not constructed on a similar basis. The objects and the means by which they were to be obtained were different, though they were as nearly as possible identical with the original store movement. If the first store movement and the second are considered together, and if it be borne in mind that the promoters of the first movement were those who tried the Queenwood experiment, and that the originators of the second store movement were many of them the friends and followers of Robert Owen, the inspiration and origin of the vast work now on foot will be understood. When it is added to this, that, when they were about to commence their new venture, the founders of the Rochdale Store sent a deputation to Queenwood for advice and instruction, the parentage of the present movement will be apparent. This is stated here not for the purpose of transferring the credit of having originated the present store movement from any one set of men to any other, but to show that the

great idea which has proved itself so successful, and which is now taking such rapid possession of the public mind, is the result of many years' agitation, of much local and varied experiment; that in its failures and in its triumph it furnishes a proof of what unwearied and peaceable endeavour may do in promoting the welfare of the working people, and the success by which such efforts may be ultimately crowned, when pursued with an honest determination to overcome the obstacles which at first impede them. The first men who entered on the work took their discomfitures and losses cheerfully, without losing heart or hope. They were succeeded by others, who, though varying their experiments, were still defeated; but there were again others who, with altered plans, tried once more, and who, conquering the great initial difficulty of poverty, have become possessors of capital sufficient to commence and carry on any enterprise in connection with production or distribution. The present men in the co-operative movement owe much to those who preceded them, but at the same time it has been left for them to prove that the highest purposes may be attained through the humblest agencies, and that progress may be secured without violence or wrong, when the people seek the improvement of their condition by intelligent and peaceable means.

Robert Owen had at all times, and under all circumstances, a horror of violence. He knew enough to understand that though statesmen are at all times ready to make professions of peace, they are just as ready, when they dream that some advantage is to be gained, to make encroachments that lead to war; and perhaps of all possible wars that he most dreaded was

one between Great Britain and the United States. At about the time when the affairs of Queenwood were brought to a close, something approaching to a serious misunderstanding had arisen in regard to the North-West Boundary Question in America. His eldest son, Robert Dale Owen, was at that time an active member of Congress, and he at once took it upon himself to visit America, and to see what with the aid of his son could be done to settle the matter in an amicable spirit. The newspapers, as is their wont, had begun to put exasperating one-sided views before their readers, and the ordinary fermentation of accusation and anger was actively proceeding. Robert Owen at this time was in his seventy-fourth year, but he nevertheless determined to do all in his power to get at the merits of the case, in order that he might assist in creating in both countries a disposition for peaceable settlement. On this errand he crossed the Atlantic four times, and as he always had access to the chief men among our British statesmen, and everybody who knew him believed him to be a man of strictly honest purpose, he was listened to with respect, and with as much confidence as politicians and statesmen could be expected to give to anyone outside their own craft. On his return from his second trip, he called upon me on a summer morning before five o'clock, and remained for several hours, during which he related, in a most animated strain, what he had done, and what his anticipations were. He walked about the room briskly while he ran on with his narrative, and seemed hopeful that his efforts might not be entirely without effect in helping to preserve peace between the two nations.

CHAPTER XVI.

Termination of Career.

AFTER this there is but little to record in connection with Owen's personal activity as a philanthropist and reformer, though he would often call his friends together to speak with them of what might be done in furthering the objects to attain which he had striven so long and so faithfully. He apparently gave up all thought of any new experiment, but he never failed to point out the grounds on which rested his hope that fresh activities would carry the work forward ; that new plans and efforts would ultimately lead to a permanent improvement in the condition of the people ; by which, as was at all times obvious, he did not simply mean that the poor should have a more equitable share in the national wealth, in order that they might, after their own fashion, imitate the luxuriousness which was corrupting the rich. His own life, from its commencement to its close, was simple, unostentatious, and temperate. Nothing shocked him more than the arrogant displays and half-brutal assumptions of wealth, becoming every day more intensified through the rapid accumulation of money in the hands of men who, blinded by a sense of their self-importance and power, took no pains to either hide or repair defects which rendered their sudden

prosperity incongruous and offensive. But he felt that until the masses of the people had been raised above the contaminations of squalor, ignorance and want, no struggle to secure to them the higher conditions of life that belong to decency and independence could be very effective; and during the years that followed the failure at Queenwood, he never lost an opportunity of helping forward whatever aimed at the social elevation of the people. His belief in spiritualism, of which I shall here say a few words, was chiefly influenced by his sympathy with the struggles and sufferings of his fellow-creatures, which never ceased to disquiet and perplex him. His imaginary revelations from the spirit world referred to this almost exclusively. To the last his entire thought was to enforce the great truth that the creating power of the universe had furnished men with abundance for the satisfaction of their legitimate wants, with the means of developing their highest intellectual faculties and moral susceptibilities, and that it was their duty to take counsel together and heartily co-operate for the attainment of all that was implied in an acknowledgment of this truth.

Much has been said and written in ridicule of Robert Owen's belief in spiritualism during the last few years of his life. He had, during his long public career, so much to say as to the necessity of being guided by the proved facts of life, that it was a triumph to those who had opposed him and a disappointment to a large majority of his friends, when he made known his first communications with the spirits, and did so by adopting the methods and the language of the ordinary believers in spiritualism. It is not sur-

prising that many people made themselves merry at his expense, for having allowed himself to be drawn into what is still considered one of the most absurd and least defensible superstitions of the modern world.

It is not necessary to discuss the truth or falsehood of spirit revelations generally. From the time of the oracles of old to the spirit rappers of to-day, there has always existed in the human mind a disposition to pry into the secrets of the other world. The methods devised have, as a rule, not been very successful; but, however much they may have failed, or however ludicrously they may have blundered into discredit, there have always been new plans; new experts have come to the front, and new revelations been made known which never failed to find new believers. To say nothing of the multitudes of ordinary mortals who have fallen into such spiritual snares, many men of the highest and brightest intellect have accepted as true absurdities of the wildest kind.

In speaking of Robert Owen and his belief in spirit-rapping, one or two circumstances should be borne in mind. He had turned his eightieth year—his sense of hearing had become so much dulled that he had to depend a good deal on others for explanations of what he but imperfectly heard, and as the simplicity and truthfulness of his mind were well known, it is easy to understand with what ease he might be imposed on by any person who from whatever motive might desire to deceive him. He never suspected in anybody a disposition to impose on him, and this confidence on his part, as is the case with many men, was increased, if those who desired to take

advantage of him expressed a perfect agreement with his opinions and principles. He had been before the world for fully half a century. He had laboriously, and, wherever possible, by practical experiment, sought to convince men of the truth of his views, and in this life-long labour he had borne many a reverse, and suffered many a disappointment. We must not, then, be too severe in our criticism, if at an advanced age, towards the close of such a life, he was induced to listen to what were declared to be messages from friends in whom he trusted and who had passed away; especially when they comforted him with promises that at no distant time his hopes would be fulfilled. In his ordinary conversation he was a man of remarkable frankness, and as his memory was good, he would often refer to old times and relate anecdotes of many of the people with whom he had had intercourse. In this way any person in frequent communication with him, might easily acquire a knowledge of many circumstances connected with his past life, as well as of the characters and dispositions of those with whom he had associated. In addition to this, he possessed strong family affections, and when persuaded that it was possible to hold communication with old friends, and with those who had been still dearer to him, it is not hard to believe that the yearnings of his heart might overcome the doubts suggested by his understanding. The voices of the living had ceased to speak of hope in connection with his schemes for the regeneration of mankind, and he therefore turned to the voices of the dead, and kept his hope alive and his heart light by the promises he received. An American woman named Hayden, in conjunction,

probably, with some of his friends who were already believers in spiritualism, assisted in leading him to this new faith. It is likely, also, that his eldest son, Robert Dale Owen, being a strong believer, had something to do with the inclining of his mind in this direction. The departed with whom he held council, and whom, it must be confessed, he frequently consulted on trivial matters, were, when in the flesh, sensible and able people, and the advice they gave him generally sounded very much like what might be reasonably uttered by any intelligent person. He remarked how uniformly they discountenanced all divisions of class, country, and colour. The object of the spirits he declared, "was to permanently benefit all human kind equally, without reference to divisions of any kind." They said, "do not dispute with those who do not and cannot yet believe in these (to them) new and strange manifestations, for we adopt means to convince all, without your doing more than stating the facts within your own knowledge and experience."

In one of his publications, the "Future of the Human Race," he gives an account of his conversations with the Duke of Kent, which, had they taken place between two ordinary individuals, would not be worth the least attention. Some of them are very trivial, but as spiritual *séances* seldom went beyond useless communications, the only apparent reason for their repetition is that importance was attached to them as relating to the public affairs with which Owen was at that time engaged. That Owen was a very sincere and honest believer in spiritualism, during a few of the latter years of his life, there can be no doubt. He carried with him to the spirits, a heart overladen with sorrow

for human suffering, and a painful anxiety as to how it might be mitigated; and of one thing we may be certain, that whatever the ground of his belief, the great sustaining hope of his new faith was that the impenetrable veil might be lifted, and that he might see in near prospect a world made happier by a wiser use of the blessings bestowed by God.

Any argument on the truth or falsehood of spiritualism would here be out of place. It is doubtful whether such a question ever was or will be much influenced by argument. Yet it is, I think, impossible for those who knew Robert Owen, who were acquainted with the character of his mind, not to conjecture that he was imposed upon: that questions were suggested and answers made up in order to serve the purpose of those who were practising on the credulity of the public.

CHAPTER XVII.

Conclusion.

FOR the last ten or twelve years of his life, the proceedings of Robert Owen had ceased to be discussed in the newspapers and on platforms. It need not, however, be concluded from this that he was altogether inactive. He republished a considerable portion of his earlier writings, among other things his plans for dealing with the wretched condition of Ireland. He restated his views on national education, maintaining that, "the great want of the world was a good training from birth, and a sound practical education for all, based on true principles." He drew up proposals for a treaty of federation between Great Britain and the United States of North America, the gist of which was that Great Britain and America should declare their interests to be the same; should agree to a federative union which to all other countries should be admitted, and recognise it as a duty to terminate war and live in the abundance of peaceful industry and friendly exchange. Though this cannot be regarded otherwise than as a dream, it might not be amiss if the statesman of the world could have visions somewhat similar.

The French Revolution of 1848, and the disturbances that followed on the Continent led to much

discussion as well as to some very important public action in England. Christian Socialism, with the Rev. F. D. Maurice at its head, was a far more important movement than it at first appeared to be. The foremost actors, being for the most part men of exceptional ability, soon came to exercise a strong influence on public opinion, and though the old Socialists did not rally to them as a body, very large numbers individually sought to forward their objects. These were years of breaking up, rather than of formation and advance; but for what they contained of practical work in the direction of progress, the country is largely indebted to Mr. Maurice and his friends. What they had to say reached the ears of the most intelligent and thoughtful of the old Socialists and Chartists, and as their appeals were made on the ground of a lofty and liberal Christian unity, and in a profound conviction of the necessity of peaceful effort, there can be no question that their influence was not only well-timed, but most wholesome and valuable in its results. Robert Owen was too old and too much occupied with his own plans to take any active part with Mr. Maurice and his followers, even had it been desirable that he should have done so; but they had always his good wishes, and, whenever an opportunity offered, his good word.

The formation of the Social Science Association was also hailed by Owen with enthusiasm, as he believed that it would in time produce excellent results; and though its labours have been represented as not at all commensurate with its pretensions, there can be little doubt that its discussions and publications have had a most beneficial effect in helping the various reforms

since entered on. The first meeting of the Social Science Association was held at Birmingham, in 1857. Robert Owen attended, and read a paper entitled "The Human Race Governed without Punishment." At this time he was in his eighty-sixth year. In the following year it met at Liverpool, and though he had during the interval been losing strength, he nevertheless determined to be present. On this journey Mr. James Rigby accompanied him, for, though he was cheerful and courageous, it was evident that the end was approaching. It has been said that his determination to be present at this Congress was the result of mere restlessness, or it might be vanity. Those who knew him best believed him to be influenced by a different motive. It has also been asserted that what he had to say had become tiresome by repetition. So is it told of Saint John that his constant cry was "Little children, love one another," and that when asked why he repeated this so frequently, he answered that it included everything. For fifty years Owen's mind dwelt constantly on the importance of a sound moral and intellectual training for the young, as the most effectual means by which to secure the exercise of justice, humanity and mutual consideration among men; as the only safe foundation for national prosperity. It is perhaps natural, therefore, that his persistence in urging this view upon the attention of others, should be irksome to those who differed from him, or who did not care to be repeatedly confronted with all that bore evidence to a neglect of duty.

Upon arriving in Liverpool, Owen had to take to his bed; but was carried from there in a sedan chair to the platform of the Congress, so that he might in

person deliver his last message. Lord Brougham led him to the front, and supported him when he commenced to read his paper. In a moment or so he broke down. His friends gathered about him, again placed him in the sedan chair, and sorrowfully carried him back to the bed from which he had just before been taken, and where he lay for an hour or more quite unconscious.

Having rallied somewhat after a fortnight's rest, he decided to travel to his native town and to die there. When he arrived at Newtown, he and Mr. Rigby sought for accommodation in the house in which he had been born. This not being obtainable, he took up his quarters next door, or next door but one; and after a while felt, as he thought, so much improved by his native air, that he returned to Liverpool. Upon reaching there, however, he felt convinced that his earthly labours were over, and set out once more for Newtown, that his life might end where it had begun. His eldest son, Robert Dale Owen, who was at that time *chargé d'affaires* at Naples, in the presidency of Franklin Pierce, hurried over to England; arriving in time to be present at his father's death. The following is the letter in which he announced the event.

"November 17th, 1858.

"It is all over. My dear father passed away this morning, at a quarter before seven, as quietly and gently as if he had been falling asleep. There was not the least struggle, not the contraction of a limb or a muscle, not an expression of pain on his face. His breathing gradually became slower and slower, until at last it ceased so imperceptibly, that even as I held

his hand I could scarcely tell the moment when he no longer breathed. His last words, distinctly pronounced about twenty minutes before his death, were, '*Relief has come.*' About half-an-hour before he said, '*Very easy and comfortable.*'"

He lies in the old Churchyard at Newtown, by a picturesque bend of the Severn, in the grave in which his parents are buried.

In tracing the main incidents of Robert Owen's life, I have omitted many things such as belong to the work of the ordinary biographer. My reasons for doing this were referred to in the opening chapter, where I spoke of that which gave to such a career its chief interest. I may also, at times, have appeared to assume the tone of the advocate, rather than that of a simple narrator. This I venture to think excusable. His principles were novel in the method in which they were advanced, and in the application he sought to give them. Almost necessarily, as I have already said, he offended prejudices, and disturbed personal and class interests, and those who, from whatever cause, disapproved of his principles or failed to understand his motives, made him the object of an attack in connection with which they misrepresented his views and discredited his efforts. I, in consequence, have felt it encumbent on me to enter upon fuller details than I otherwise might have considered necessary, in vindication of his ideas and policy.

It frequently happens that though a man sees clearly what he means, and understands distinctly what he intends to do, he may express himself so as to be misunderstood by those who listen to him when

he speaks, and who read what he writes. I do not insist that Robert Owen always explained himself in the clearest possible manner, though I am satisfied he took much trouble to do so. However this may be, his views as he explained them, and as his opponents interpreted them, were not in agreement. As I have stated, much that he had to say was opposed to prejudices which existed in the public mind, and many of his proposals alarmed men who thought their interests endangered. He therefore incurred strong opposition, and much misconception and misrepresentation. It was not a habit with him to indulge in controversies of denial, contradiction, retort, or counter accusation. His almost invariable practice was to state and restate his propositions, and leave the result to time; but though this might have been sufficient, had the channels of communication with the public been equally open to both sides, and the disposition to fairly investigate the questions in dispute been all that it should have been, as matters stood, only the adverse side received attention from the general public; not only because the press shut out what Owen had to say in his own behalf, but because trouble is seldom taken to hunt after rebutting evidence where a desire to believe the charges made predominates.

Owen's personal friends had ample opportunity of understanding his ideas correctly, and as I had to discuss in public with those who were most violently opposed to him, I often sought him for the purpose of obtaining such explanation as might assist me in the work I was called upon to perform. I think I may say that from conversations occurring frequently

and extending over a period of ten years, I came to accurately comprehend his ideas. The peculiarities of thought attributed to him were not his, but were, as a rule, invented for him. His views were not eccentric, but they were new and very strange; and his failures, where he failed, were the result of insufficient means, rather than of defective plans.

The agitation of Owen was unsuccessful in its immediate results; but though the immediate consummation of our hopes be denied, it is for us to work on as wisely and faithfully as we can, trusting the fulfilment will come, perhaps in a better way and at a time more suitable than any we could appoint. For everything done by Robert Owen and his friends in founding co-operative villages and workshops, there is ample recompense in the present success of the co-operative idea. I think it constitutes a special claim on our gratitude that Owen brought into practical activity for the public good, the energies of the humblest and the poorest, to augment the vast popular power by which the present co-operative movement is sustained. It is only since Owen's influence has been felt that it can be truly said the masses of the people have been brought collectively into action for the promotion of objects which have been attended by results that are likely to be permanent, because, while they secure general advantages, they confer general discipline and strength. The co-operative movement is rapidly becoming a national movement, and a national movement, sustained by the development and activity of an increasing popular knowledge, can never attain the

limit of its usefulness so long as any good work remains to be done.

No man's labour for good is in vain,
Tho' he win not the crown but the cross ;
Every wish for man's good is a gain,
Every doubt of man's gain is a loss.
Not the price that we bargain to pay,
But the price that she sets on herself,
Is the value of truth. Who can weigh
What the weight of her worth is in pelf?
To the soul, by whose life-long endeavour,
Age hath won from the losses of youth,
The mere loss of an untruth is ever
Good as great as the gain of a truth.

In this faith Owen worked without intermission: it is one of the great lessons such a life as his affords, and it is to be hoped that those who follow in his steps as practical workers will also profit by the example he set in the spirit of his teaching.

In every effort he made for the benefit of society his aims were honest ; his patriotism unimpeachable ; his generosity unbounded ; his sacrifices great and unhesitatingly incurred. He laboured for the people ; he died working for them ; and his last thought was for their welfare.

THE END.

S. Cowan & Co., Printers, Perth.