

THE PICKERING MASTERS

Selected Works of Robert Owen

The Life of Robert Owen

Edited by
Gregory Claeys



ROUTLEDGE


THE PICKERING MASTERS
SELECTED WORKS OF
ROBERT OWEN

Volume 4. *The Life of Robert Owen*
Consolidated Index

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ROBERT OWEN

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GREGORY CLAEYS

VOLUME
4

THE LIFE OF
ROBERT OWEN

*Index to the
Selected Works of Robert Owen*

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CONTENTS

Introductory Note	1
The Life of Robert Owen, written by Himself, vol. 1 (1857)	3
Appendix: Owen's Account of some later Events	300
Consolidated Index to Volumes 1-4	339

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Because a second volume of narrative was planned, *The Life of Robert Owen*, vol. 1 (1857) halts in the early 1820s, with much of Owen's active life still before him. Dictated when he was eighty-six, it is sometimes unreliable about names (inaccurate typesetting and transcription did not help) and details, and erratic in its chronology. Often it does not give us a satisfactory portrait of Owen's intellectual and psychological development. Too frequently, it offers an exaggerated account of Owen's popularity, while silently passing over criticisms of his plans and methods. But the *Life* remains an excellent source for understanding both the man and his times, and, being justly regarded as one of the most famous autobiographies of the Industrial Revolution, it is cited in virtually every major account of the period. It shows Owen, in particular, in the vibrance of youth, conquering with apparent ease the new industrial world, and becoming in the process one of the great philanthropists of his day. It details, sometimes dramatically, the early years in which the 'new views' were advanced, and catalogues the growing resistance to his proposals for social and industrial reform. This, by 1817, drove him to adopt that militant anti-clericalism which, with his communistical and co-operative views on property, and his liberal ideas on marriage and women's rights, were thereafter ever linked to his name. The *Life* thus chronicles Owen's success as a businessman, and his conversion to prophet and social critic. His forty years as a socialist, co-operator, community-builder and infidel are yet to come, and are sometimes only faintly heralded in its pages. But of the depth of his beliefs, and the single-minded sense of purpose with which he pursued his ideals from the 1790s onwards, we have evidence aplenty.

The text itself has never been annotated previously, and unfortunately, a surprising amount of the social history of the mercantile and manufacturing circles in which Owen moved in this period remains to be written. Little biographical information is available, in particular, about even some of the major industrialists Owen knew. In this edition, I have tried to provide some information on every person mentioned by Owen, where possible, as well as to add to existing accounts of his family and business connections. Spelling mistakes of proper names in the original have been retained in the text of this edition, and corrected in the notes.

The *Life* can be supplemented by reference to various other accounts of Owen's life supervised by him, notably in the *New Moral World*, vol. 1. Early

drafts of several of its sections were published in several places, especially *The New Existence of Man Upon the Earth* (1854–5), pts 1, 4, 5. For this edition, an appendix has been added drawn from *Robert Owen's Millennial Gazette* (1856) which details some of the events in Owen's life in the 1820s and 1830s. For the period after 1820, readers should also consult in particular Frank Podmore's *Robert Owen. A Biography* (2 vols, Hutchinson, 1906). The *Life* was reprinted in 1920, 1967, and 1971. In 1858, a supplementary volume of Owen's writings covering the same period (vol. 1A) was issued.

THE LIFE

OF

ROBERT OWEN.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

WITH SELECTIONS FROM HIS WRITINGS AND
CORRESPONDENCE.

VOLUME I.

LONDON :

PUBLISHED BY EFFINGHAM WILSON,

ROYAL EXCHANGE

1857.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

	<i>Page</i>
Dialogue between Robert Owen and one of his old friends respecting writing his life	7
Second Introductory Dialogue	15
Spiritual Communication	39
An Address to the World	40
Preface	47
 THE LIFE OF ROBERT OWEN	 51

INTRODUCTION

DIALOGUE BETWEEN ROBERT OWEN AND ONE OF HIS OLD FRIENDS RESPECTING WRITING HIS LIFE

Old Friend – You know that your oldest friends have been long urgent with you to write your life, knowing that were you to die, no one, from your independence of action from your childhood, could execute a task of such interest to the human race; – I say to the human race, – because your life has been during many years devoted to devise measures for the improvement and happiness of all, making no distinction of colour, country, class, or creed. Your life is now so advanced that its continuances must be uncertain, and your friends desire above all things to have a faithful history of your proceedings from your earliest years of recollection. They are now the more earnest in continuing this request to you, because they believe that a full history of your life would tend more than any other measure you could adopt to facilitate the great change in human affairs which you have so long advocated. Will you now accede to our request?

Robert Owen – I am always desirous to meet the wishes of my old friends and faithful disciples. I have so long delayed my consent to your earnest solicitations, because I have been continually actively engaged in living my life – in pursuing a mission which has been impressed on my mind from my earliest years, and which, hopeless of accomplishment as every one of my friends endeavoured to make me believe it, never ceased to inspire me with the never-wavering conviction of ultimate success. And so this conviction remains, – but always increasing as my age increases. I am now engaged in the most important part of my progress in this work, and can now scarcely withdraw my attention from the present and the future of this mission, to recur to the past which is ended, while more is required from me and can yet be accomplished by my remaining active exertions.

O. F. – But surely it is time you should cease these active exertions and now sit down quietly to recollect and write your life. What can now be so important to you, to the interest of your family, and for the benefit of society?

R. O. – If I thought it would be more for the benefit of society generally that

I should *write* my life, than that I should progress in my mission to its final accomplishment, I would not hesitate to comply with your wishes. But my impression is otherwise, – knowing that there is much important work yet to be done before the population of the world can be prepared to change a false system of society for the true, although that false system is hourly producing incalculable misery to the millions, which the change would terminate. While therefore anything remains to be done which I can do to forward this great and good work, I am unwilling that my attention should be in any way withdrawn from it.

O. F. – But what can you now do at your age in conflict with a world taught to be prejudiced from the birth of every one, and so strongly in favour of their present false system, productive as it is of all manner of evil to the people and governments of all nations?

R. O. – I can continue to write, and to circulate among leading minds in various countries what I write explanatory of the falsehood and evil of the one system, (the present,) and of the truth and goodness of the other, (the future,) which is destined to supersede the present in the due order of the development of man and progress of terrestrial creation. With this view, also, I have called a Congress to be held in St Martin's Hall, Long Acre, London, on the 14th of May next, of the advanced minds of the world, who take an interest and who are active in promoting the unlimited happiness of all our race.^a

O. F. – But how can you expect to make any impression upon society at this time, when all nations and all parties in all nations are at sixes and sevens and know not what to do to sustain their present local views and interests?

R. O. – It is because I know they are all as it were at sea without rudder or compass, and are driven about by every wind that blows, that I am most anxious to give to each a sound rudder and correct compass, not only to prevent their shipwreck and to calm their fears, but to enable them to steer direct into a safe harbour. It is therefore that I think the writing and publishing of my life of far less importance than now to place the whole truth respecting the system of ignorance, falsehood, and misery, and the system of wisdom, truth, and happiness, before the leading minds of the world in so clear a manner, that the difference between the two systems may be glaringly seen by them, as well as the impossibility of uniting the spirit, principle, and practice of the one, with the other. And also to enable them to perceive that the present system, as it is in nature, may now be made to become the immediate parent of the true and good system, and to foster it as parents take charge of their offspring and endeavour to leave a valuable inheritance to them.

O. F. – You will write to the leading minds of the world in vain. They are

^a See *Robert Owen's Address to the Meeting in St. Martin's Hall (1855)*. The meeting was attended by, among others, the home colonisation promoter James Silk Buckingham and Robert Pemberton, who planned to found model colonies in New Zealand.

not prepared for any such sweeping change as you suppose. They have not yet commenced to think about two systems so opposed to each other, and much less that the one shall willingly introduce and sustain the other in its progress towards maturity. This very morning the *Times* newspaper, deeming itself the mouthpiece, not only of Europe but of the civilised world, has a leading article to dissuade its readers from ever thinking it possible that a system of equality among mankind is practicable,^a – and equality is one of the main features of your proposed new system.

R. O. – The *Times* knows nothing, or pretends to know nothing, of the system which I advocate. It has a bribe of more than a hundred thousand pounds a year from the public to support this wretched thing which is called a *natural* system of society,^b – when its foundation and entire superstructure are opposed to truth and nature. What does the *Times* know of the practical equality among the human race which I advocate? It is blinded by the learned ignorance of the present system, through which alone it has yet attempted to look at man and society. I have never advocated the possibility of creating a physical and mental equality among the human race, knowing well that it is from our physical and mental varieties that the very essence of knowledge, wisdom, and happiness, or rational enjoyment is to arise. The equality which belongs to the new, true, and rational system of human existence, is an equality of conditions, or of surroundings, which shall give to each, according to natural organisation, an equal superior physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and practical treatment, training, education, position, employment according to age, and share in local and general government, when governing rationally shall be understood and applied to practice. It is doubtful whether any editors of newspapers, now the great instructors of the human race, or the professional instructors in the schools, colleges, and universities of the world, have any clear ideas or correct notions of what is or is not practicable respecting human nature, of which these so learnedly ignorant men of the present system of society appear to have but the minimum of real knowledge. Their acquaintance with human nature has been derived through successive generations solely from the undeveloped imagination and inexperience of our early ancestors, and it has required the accumulation of fact upon fact, increasing through each generation, to enable the discovery to be made at this period, that our ancestors were in error and totally ignorant of what manner of beings they were. In now looking over the earth among all peoples and nations, it is too evident that to-day this ignorance of ourselves has been wondrously preserved, and that by the mass of the human race, and with very partial, if with any, exceptions, the populations of the world are now as ignorant of

^a See *The Times*, no. 22,556 (20 December 1856), p. 8.

^b This presumably refers to *The Times*' income, as it had received no direct governmental subsidy for many years.

themselves as were our first parents, if not more so, in consequence of the errors added to the errors of every succeeding generation on this now perceived-by-the-few-to be the most important of all knowledge.

O. F. – Why this is the strangest of all your strange teachings! You make nothing of human knowledge and the accumulated wisdom and experience of the world through all past generations!

R. O. – Yes, I do make much valuable use of the past experience of the *facts* of the world and of human knowledge, as far as it has progressed in discovering facts in the various sciences. It is from this knowledge that I have derived the great and all-important truth –

‘That the character, physical and mental, of all men and women, is formed – not, as hitherto imagined in opposition to all facts through all ages, by themselves – but, by the Great Creating Power of the Universe and by Society, FOR them; and that for the character thus formed it is the essence of insanity to make the individual in any way responsible.’

From this knowledge I have also discovered the greatest of all truths for man to know –

‘That any character, from the worst to the best, may, with the certainty of a law of nature, be given by society to all of the human race, – and that through this knowledge every one may be made to become at maturity, good, wise, and happy.’

O. F. – Why, if you are correct with your conclusions it is indeed the most valuable of all human knowledge yet acquired, a knowledge far more to be desired than the discovery of the philosopher’s stone. But what are the inferences which you draw from these two facts – if facts they be, – ‘that the character of man is formed *for* him, and that society may now adopt practical measures to make all future generations, without any exception, good, wise, and happy?’

R. O. – *Firstly*. – That this is the knowledge that the most advanced minds of the world in all ages have sought for, – but until this period without success.

Secondly. – That this knowledge will confound the ignorance of those deemed the most learned in all past generations.

Thirdly. – That this knowledge will introduce the Millennium, to commence in this generation.

Fourthly. – That it will introduce the Millennium over the world, by peaceably and quietly superseding the existing ignorant, false, wicked, and insane system of society, by the wise, true, good, and rational system of society, for the government of the human race as one family.

Fifthly. – This new system of society will develop the true religion, government, laws, classification, and institutions of society for the population of the world.

Sixthly. – That it will cordially unite all of our race as brothers, – create a practical equality of position, education, and occupation, according to age

and capacity, – and establish for ever true liberty, just equality, and real fraternity.

Seventhly. – That it will by uniting man to man and nation to nation establish peace for ever among the human race.

Eighthly. – That this knowledge discloses to our race the origin of evil, and that evil produced solely from man's ignorance of himself.

Ninthly. – That by enabling man to know himself, the origin of evil to our race will be destroyed for ever.

Tenthly. – It proves the false foundation whence all human laws have proceeded – their ignorance, inutility, and constant failure, in consequence of being always opposed to the good, wise, and unchanging laws of God and Nature.

Eleventhly. – It demonstrates the cause of the past insanity of the human race, and its cure.

Twelfthly. – It will all the existing rulers of society to adopt decisive measures to commence to make the human race through futurity sane, wise, good, united, and continually to increase in knowledge, excellence, and happiness.

O. F. – If you are right in these inferences and conclusions, then indeed is the knowledge that the character of man is not formed *by* himself, but *for* him, the most important of all human knowledge, when united with the knowledge of the practical measures by which to create the new surroundings which can produce, with the certainty of a law of nature, the results which you have stated.

R. O. – Through this knowledge I know that the governments of what is called the civilised part of the world, have the most ample power and means at their disposal, by uniting cordially with the people of their respective governments, now to commence the practice of the science by which to insure the progress and happiness of the population of the world while living on the earth, and after death through a life immortal.^a

O. F. – Surely these governments, if they were convinced of the truth of what you state, would use all the influence they possess to secure the progress and happiness of the present and future population of the world, including their own offspring.

R. O. – Yes, – and by so doing to attain a higher degree of happiness for themselves, than the possession of all earthly power and wealth could give them.

O. F. – But how are they to be made conscious of possessing this unheard-of power and influence? – for without this knowledge they will continue to act as they have done and are now doing.

^a Owen asserted the existence of a future state in this manner only after his conversion to spiritualism in 1853.

R. O. – I know they will, and my present writings and practical proceedings are with a view to convince them of this great fact – a truth of the highest importance to themselves and the people of the world, and yet more to our children of succeeding generations.

O. F. – How do you mean to turn the current of the public opinion of governments and peoples? – for in such a change as you propose, both must unite to effect it.

R. O. – For this purpose I have called a Congress of the advanced minds of the world, to be held in London on the 14th of May next, that I may explain these matters to them, discuss them, and have their assistance to discuss the best peaceable means to effect the change, and to give the sanction of their names to princes and people, and thus prepare them to take an active part to accomplish the permanent progressive happiness here and hereafter of the human race.

O. F. – But your friends say your life, if written and published by yourself, would attract more interest than your new, and to the world, strange system which you advocate.

R. O. – I know it, and have long known it. The population of the world have been tired out by so many false and delusive systems of reforms upon the present erroneous formation of the structure of the human mind and of society, that it now turns with disgust from them all, concluding that all attempts to improve society must prove equally fallacious, and they ask only to be amused, for which they are willing to pay a great price according to their individual means. But that which is really required is sound instruction on a true foundation.

O. F. – Then you will continue your *Millennial Gazette*^a and disappoint your friends who have so long waited for your promise to be fulfilled?

R. O. – I will compromise this matter with them, by endeavouring for a time both to continue the *Millennial Gazette* and to proceed with the writing of my life.

O. F. – If this will satisfy you, I suppose your friends must be satisfied.

R. O. – I deem the making plain to the public of the immense difference for good to the human race between the old, false, and evil system, and the new, true, and good system of society for forming the character of and governing the future generations of men, to be an object of the very highest interest to humanity, and in which the happiness of all are deeply involved.

O. F. – But how can you expect the public to take the same interest in this subject as you do, to see it in the same light, and to give to it the same pre-eminent importance?

R. O. – By the same means that all other new and important truths are

^a See Robert Owen's *Millennial Gazette* (1856–8).

forced upon the public against its will and strongest prejudices. All new truths, however beneficial to our race, are distasteful and hateful to the pre-occupied mind and self-satisfied convictions of the public. This is a law of nature, and need to surprise no one having a knowledge of our nature, and must be met by the proper surroundings.

O. F. – And you think you can create those surroundings?

R. O. – I will make the attempt, even with my limited means. With larger means I could be certain to secure full success.

O. F. – What! at your advanced age – with imperfect sight and hearing, and now a feeble frame to support any great physical exertion? It is true your spirit is willing, and your mind yet more clear and strong than could be anticipated of one who has had so active a life from early childhood to his eighty-sixth year. But of these you may be deprived any hour before your intended meeting on the 14th of May next, and then what is to become of this Congress, from which you anticipate such great results?

R. O. – The objections you make are natural. But I act as a man far advanced in age, when the desires of earthly life have died their natural death within him, and as one who has had confidential acquaintance with all classes, and great practical experience, not only in directing great commercial and manufacturing operations successfully for many years, but in governing for forty years a numerous population in all its details, and who for thirty years of that period new educated all the young, and to a great extent new formed the character of the old, creating a better and happier working population than could at that time be found in any nation or among any people.^a And although a few well-disposed proprietors of similar large establishments have attempted subsequently to follow the example thus set,^b they have failed to produce the same extent of beneficial results, or to give for so long a period such a character to the children, or so much happiness to a community of 2,500 souls. And because no other population has ever yet been educated and directed on the same principle and in the same spirit, continued without deviation for so many years, – and no other principle and spirit can produce similar results. It is true, however, my life now hangs by a slender thread, which may break at any moment, and in the body I must in that case be absent at the Congress. Should this occur, I will endeavour to provide one younger, more active, and more competent, to perform the new and arduous duties which will be required of the person who shall be called upon to preside over or to advise the progress of a Congress so new in the history of the human race, and far more important to the present and future population of the world than all previous Congresses – all having hitherto been of a local character.

^a A reference to Owen's management of factories in Manchester and at New Lanark, from the early 1790s until 1828.

^b Notably Titus Salt (1803–76), who built the industrial village of Saltoun between 1851–72.

O. F. – You stretch your latitude and longitude of thought and action to such extent, that I am not competent without much more consideration than time will now permit, to give a rational opinion upon your strange anticipations. But I do not see how you are to induce a sufficient number of the most advanced minds of the world to attend your proposed Congress.

R. O. – That must be yet my business to find such minds, possessing sufficient moral courage to disregard the opinion of an ill-educated public, whose ideas and associations of ideas, except on matters of fact demonstrable to the senses, or on principles of science demonstrable from facts or self-evident deductions from self-evident truths, are of little or no value.

O. F. – Yes, – but where will you find men and women for your congress, with sufficient mental powers and moral courage to brave the irrational public opinions now pervading all nations?

R. O. – I know the love of truth in some men and women creates a moral power within them which elevates their minds to the greatest extent of self sacrifice. And what can more deserve that sacrifice than measures to change a false, wicked, and irrational system, which has created and inflicted endless evils on the human race through all past ages to the present, for the true, good, and rational system for society over the earth – a system which will gradually train all to become good, wise, and happy, – to progress rapidly towards excellence in all things, – will terminate all apparent incongruities and inconsistencies, and will make the earth and its inhabitants one harmonious whole, governed, as intended by its Creator, in the spirit of charity, by knowledge, love, and wisdom, securing permanent peace among men, and insuring mercy, as far as practicable, from man to all the animal creation.

O. F. – You have a most sanguine spirit, and are yet as strong and confident as ever, although through your life you have been opposed by the prejudices of all classes, and by the public opinion of the world.

R. O. – I have ever had undiminished confidence in the power of truth to overcome all error and opposition, when openly, fully, and faithfully declared, in the genuine spirit of charity and love for our race, and persevered in sufficiently long to give time to overcome the natural conservative principle of error in humanity.

O. F. – May you be right! But I fear your task is next to an impossibility.

R. O. – Fear not, my old friend, – I am accustomed long since to overcome imagined impossibilities. There is nothing that is true, good, and permanently beneficial for the human race, which cannot be attained by perseverance, when pursued in the true spirit of charity and love.

O. F. – But who for the years required can persevere in this spirit of charity and love in a cause, however true, good, and beneficial to our race, when continually opposed by the ignorance and prejudices of a race so opposed, through want of knowledge and through mis-instruction, to its own well-being, well-doing, and happiness?

R. O. – The task, taught as all have been by a system having a gross falsehood for its foundation, and that falsehood pervading every part of it, counteracted only by the inroads which science has slowly made upon it – is most arduous; and I must confess that at times the gross ignorance and prejudices of some have put my patience to severe trials, and I am not sure that I have always exhibited to my opponents the full measure of charity and kindness to which their unfortunate surroundings when calmly considered justly entitled them from one advocating illimitable love and charity for our race.

O. F. – Considering the deep-rooted errors inflicted by a false system on all of our race, yourself included, perhaps your friends, if your opponents will not, will make allowance for your shortcomings in this respect.

R. O. – I am quite conscious of having been on many occasions too severe in my expressions in writing and speaking, to be justified by the ever considerate true spirit of charity and love, and I will endeavour in future to make practice always consistent with this spirit.

O. F. – All your friends will rejoice if you succeed, – for we must acknowledge it is the most powerful of all arguments you can use, for it is always true that practice is better than precept.

R. O. – Having sufficiently discussed these matters, I must now attend to my promise, and prepare to proceed with the history of my life.

O. F. – You know how anxious your friends have long been on this subject, and how much they have feared you would postpone it until your strength would fail you for the task.

Sevenoaks Park, Sevenoaks,
December 1856

SECOND INTRODUCTORY DIALOGUE

Robert Owen. – What are the motives for any one to write his life? Egotism; money profit; to amuse, or to instruct the public.

Inquisitor. – Well – you, Robert Owen, are now about to write your own life. Which of these is the motive which now impels you to commence this task?

R. O. – I have always had a great distaste and reluctance to write my own life, because of the egotism, nauseous to all readers, which it necessarily involves, and I have therefore put it off from time to time, expecting to terminate my earthly career, and then the task would devolve upon others, and

I should be saved the disagreeable feeling of doing that which has always been repugnant to my mind and sense of propriety.

Inquisitor. – Then why do you commence it now?

R. O. – Because I have so often promised my friends and professed disciples that as soon as I should cease to live my active life in promoting the great object of my earthly existence, I would sit down quietly and endeavour to meet their wishes.

Inquisitor. – Did those promises satisfy your friends?

R. O. – No. They said – You have acted so much alone and independently in many of the most interesting events of your life, that no one except yourself could truthfully narrate them; and you have been influenced in your proceedings by motives so different from those of other men, that none but yourself could divine them. Then they added, – You have always expended so much in all your distasteful and repulsive publications to the public, and in circulating those publications in order that they might be known and to a certain extent forced upon the notice of those who would otherwise remain ignorant of the spirit, principles, and practices of the new system for forming the character and governing the human race that you should now write something that would interest and amuse the public, according to its present character, and which will therefore sell and bring you some profit, to pay you for former losses and expenditures in your publications and their circulation.

Inquisitor. – And what could you say in reply to such disinterested and friendly advice?

R. O. – That it was true. I have acted very much alone and independently of all parties – often in opposition to the well-intentioned representations of my relatives and friends, who could never fully comprehend my views, although they always did full justice to my motives; but they believed my efforts, however well intended and true in the abstract, could never be made in this age to influence the public to action, or to induce it to give the subject, so opposed to all past and present notions and prejudices, sufficient attention to be understood.

Inquisitor. – And were they not right in giving you such sound advice?

R. O. – They were right according to their impressions, which were at the time also the general impressions of the public. But it was well I disregarded the advice so given, or I should never have accomplished the many important practical measures from which the public are now deriving benefit, and from which, when they better comprehend them, they will derive much more.

Inquisitor. – But you have not answered the profit and loss consideration of your publications. Your friends were surely right in saying that your life would interest and amuse the public, and would bring you a profit, instead of the continued loss which you have sustained.

R. O. – Wealth, beyond the decent necessities and healthy comforts of life, has had no charms for me, except for its use in aiding me to promote the

change of system which I have undertaken to effect, if not in my lifetime, soon after I shall have passed into another state of existence. No money consideration could divert me from this object, because it appears to me far to transcend all other earthly subjects, uniting all reforms in one plain practical measure, — while all other proposed reforms would be useless, defective, or impracticable. Besides these considerations, much surplus wealth, as now used, is often highly injurious to its possessors, and generally the more wealth, the more annoyances and evils. Surplus wealth creates an unnatural, unjust, false, and most injurious state of society. I have always had through life as much wealth at a time as it was useful for me to possess, and so it continues.

Inquisitor. — But would not an increase to your wealth enable you to carry your new views of society into practice?

R. O. — No. No amount of wealth could introduce this change into practice if it is not based upon truth, and if it is not to be permanently beneficial for the human race; while no amount of wealth or human power can prevent its introduction and universal adoption, if it is based on unchanging truth in principle, and if its practice shall be permanently advantageous to all of our race, as I contend it is in principle and will be in practice.

Inquisitor. — If egotism and profit by money cannot influence you, surely to amuse and instruct the public are sufficient to induce you to listen to the advice and wishes of your friends and disciples, of whom you have many more than the public give you credit for.

R. O. — I know I have, — but the old false system puts them in a position to make it unsafe to their means of existence to avow openly their accordance with my views. Very many have injured their worldly prospects by so doing, without aiding the good cause. I have urged upon many to be silent, when by their open professions they would only injure themselves and families, and would not promote the cause for which they were going to sacrifice their means of support for themselves and families.

Inquisitor. — But your life would amuse the public, which amusement in the present unsatisfactory state of society over the world is greatly required, and is so much in demand that the public are willing to pay a high price for it. And your object, you say, is to increase the happiness of all parties.

R. O. — It is so. But others, who desire money, and many who require it, can better amuse the public. The hours yet spared to me should be employed to promote substantially the permanent happiness of our race, to the extent that my knowledge and experience will admit.

Inquisitor. — But from what is already known of your life by the public, it is probable much useful instruction might be derived from it, and many imagine it would make more converts to your new views than any work you have written.

R. O. — So I have often been told by my friends, and as there appears some truth in these representations, I will (irksome as the task has always been to

me, and now at my advanced age and with my increasing infirmities more onerous than ever,) prepare myself for the performance of the most disagreeable duty I have ever undertaken, and that from the conviction that no one can be in a position to write his own life truly and beneficially for the public. The public are yet too ignorant to comprehend a life truthfully written. A system based on falsehood cannot stand the test of truth, or comprehend that which when understood will be discovered to be beyond price.

Inquisitor. – Will you then in writing your life give the public falsehood for truth?

R. O. – No. I will give the full extent of truth that a system based and constructed on falsehood will admit.

Inquisitor. – How do you mean to proceed with it to give the truth and avoid the falsehood?

R. O. – Knowing that the germs of my physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and practical qualities were all formed for me before I was born, and from birth directed well or ill, wisely or unwisely, by society, I shall consider myself as one whose mind and entire character has been formed for him, and for which he has no merit or demerit, and I shall consider Robert Owen as a third person, whose life I am writing and reviewing.

Inquisitor. – Then the result of new basing society on this fact, or knowledge as you call it, is to withdraw all merit and demerit from the individual, and to make him irresponsible for his feelings, thoughts, mind, and conduct?

R. O. – It is, because this is in accordance with all facts known since the creation of man, and because it is in accordance with all facts existing at this day. And also, because it is the great truth which can alone open the path of wisdom to man, – enable him to know himself, – how his character is formed for him, – and how it may with the certainty of a law of nature be well formed for every one before and from birth, – and how the population of the world may thus be made to become in the shortest period practicable united as one family, and good, wise, and happy.

Inquisitor. – Why this would indeed be to introduce the millennial state of existence upon earth! Surely there must be some mistake in your first principle, or in your deductions from it, or you could not have been now more than half a century in convincing rational beings of that which would secure the permanent happiness of their race!

R. O. – You forget that any ideas, however erroneous and absurd they may be, can be forced into any minds, even as being divine truths never to be doubted, and that all the ideas hitherto taught to the human race have been based upon a falsehood, which pervades the mind and conduct of all.

Inquisitor. – You do not intend in this sweeping assertion to include the knowledge derived from the sciences or facts; that would be to confound truth and falsehood.

R. O. – The sciences are always in accordance with themselves and with all

other facts; but in many cases men of science, so called, although they know some facts of one or more sciences, have this knowledge so mixed up in minds previously trained and educated on a false base, that their scientific knowledge is often a confused mass of truth and falsehood, of which they make little valuable use, compared with the powers which the sciences can give for the general benefit of mankind. It is the knowledge of the true formation of character that can alone give the right direction to the application of the sciences for the use of the population of the world, and this knowledge will show that the sciences are in opposition to all human religions, governments, laws, and institutions, based on the supposition that man forms himself, or his own qualities, and all know that on this supposition the religions, governments, laws, and institutions of the past have been based, and that these have hitherto formed the character of the human race.

Inquisitor. – Then you do not think scientific men are to be depended upon as instructors of the human race?

R. O. – No, I do not. They can teach some valuable facts in the material sciences which they have mastered, but out of those sciences they are frequently mere children in mental knowledge or the knowledge of themselves. They presume much on the little they have been taught to acquire in material science, and are not unfrequently strongly prejudiced in favour of some of the injurious dogmas of the old systems of society.

Inquisitor. – If you have this inferior opinion of men of science, who, as such, are men of facts, and come the nearest to your views in many respects, – to what class in the whole range of society do you look for the advanced minds of the world to attend your Congress on the 14th of May next?

R. O. – Not to any class. The existing classifications of society are gross errors. They of necessity cultivate some of our inferior faculties inordinately, at the expense of the superior. They oppose class to class, and even the members of the same class to one another, creating jealousy and often hatred between them, because their apparent interests are at war with each other. And this now most unwise division of the human race into classes makes the children of humanity into small portions of men and women, shorn of their fair proportions, and with the better parts left out.

Inquisitor. – Why do you go in direct opposition to the established doctrines of the *doctrinaires* of the politico-economical school, who teach that the division of labour is the perfection of society and the best means to increase wealth and knowledge.

R. O. – I know that this is one of their pet doctrines. But it is, like all their other dogmas, which they call a science, a mere superficial view of man and society, neither of which have their minds yet been opened to comprehend. Since the discovery of the enormous, incalculable power to supersede manual labour, to enable the human race to create wealth by the aid of the sciences, it has been a gross mistake of the political economists to make humanity into

slaves to science, instead of making, as nature intends, sciences to be the slaves and servants of humanity. And this sacrificing of human beings, – with such exquisite physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and practical organs, faculties, and powers, so wondrously combined in each individual – to pins, needles, thread, tape, etc, etc, etc, and to all such inanimate materials, exhibits at once the most gross ignorance of the nature and true value of humanity, and of the principles and practices required to form a prosperous, rational, and happy state of society, or the true existence of man upon the earth. These wise men of the present day seem in no manner to comprehend the difference between manufacturing human beings to become full-formed men and women, with *all* their organs, faculties, powers, and qualities, cultivated to their natural perfection, and well-forming pins, needles, or thread.^a

Inquisitor. – Why, to what are you going to lead us, if you thus impugn this wisdom of our foremost practical men, as they are called?

R. O. – Only to common sense, and to a knowledge of common things, which, in the first generation rationally taught and equitably placed, children of ten years of age will acquire and comprehend far better than the most matured political economists or so-called practical men of the present day have yet attained to.

Inquisitor. – What do you mean by the common sense and common things that will hereafter be so easily acquired?

R. O. – I mean by common sense, that it consists in observing common universal past and present facts, and in making the most natural use of them for the permanent benefit of our race.

Inquisitor. – This needs explanation.

R. O. – I mean that it is a fact so common as to have been universal through all past time, that every natural organ, propensity, faculty, quality, and power of man, is made and forced upon each one at birth without his knowledge or consent; and that this may be seen to be the case by observing the past and present conditions or surroundings in which each one has been and is placed; and hence Medes and Persians, Chinese, Japanese, Greeks, Romans, Trojans, etc, – and hence the English, French, German, Russian, Turk, etc, etc, of today. It is simple common sense, then, to perceive and conclude that all of humankind are formed to be what they become by having their natural powers and qualities, which were formed for them by the Creating Power of the Universe, acted upon by the surroundings in which they are placed from birth by matured society. And that, *as are the natural qualities of each one at birth, and as are the surroundings in which he is placed, – so will the individual be.*

Inquisitor. – Well, – so far it must be admitted this is but plain common

^a Pin-making had been Adam Smith's chief example of the great advantages of the division of labour. See *Wealth of Nations*, Bk 1, ch. 1.

sense, deduced from the most common facts, and so common that it must be known to every reader of history and observer of common facts now universal among all the varied nations, tribes, and peoples of the world. But what of that? Everyone who reflects must know this, and what do you make of it?

R. O. – That the readers of history and observers of existing facts have been hitherto so surrounded from birth as to be prevented from acquiring common sense.

Inquisitor. – How dare you to accuse the learned men of this advanced age of the world of want of common sense? They will require you to prove an assertion so opposed to present universal belief.

R. O. – It is very easy to prove it. The simple facts stated exhibit at once the cause of all the varieties in human character, and make it glaringly evident that it is impossible for individuals to form their own physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, or practical character. This conclusion is the most obvious to common sense, as soon as any one has been so formed and placed as to acquire the first rudiments of common sense.

Inquisitor. – Well, – it does seem so, and your statement shall be granted, and admitted to be a truth as old as man. But what can you make of this common-sense view of humanity, – ‘that men’s natural qualities are made by the Creating Power of the Universe at birth, and that they are cultivated by the surroundings, endless as these appear to be, in which from birth they are placed by society?’ Every one who reflects must know this. It is but common sense drawn from facts which are universal and known to all accurate observers. What use can you make of them, which men of science and of learning have not already made of them?

R. O. – It appears to me that the most important practical results may be derived from this common-sense view of the true universal formation of character of the human race.

Inquisitor. – This is a mystery to me, and appears to be so to all others through all past ages. Pray explain what probably, by a common-sense explanation which can be understood by the public, may really prove of practical utility to our race.

R. O. – I will. To those who have studied the use of the natural organs, faculties, propensities, powers, and qualities of humanity, it is most evident that each one is intended or formed and combined, when properly trained from birth, and each duly exercised to the point of temperance for every faculty and propensity, to give health and pleasure to the individual, and to diffuse happiness to all around him.

Inquisitor. – Yes. But how are these results to be obtained for any portion of the human race?

R. O. – They are not to be obtained for any separate portion of the human race. But they can be easily attained and secured for *all* through futurity.

Inquisitor. – This would be indeed knowledge worth knowing, and would be

the science of all earthly sciences. Make this intelligible and practicable to governments and people, and for their own happiness and that of their children they will overcome their present prejudices in favour of things as they are, and will adopt those views which will realise such splendid universal permanent results. I am truly impatient now to have this discovery of discoveries made plain to me and to the population of the world.

R. O. – Have patience, and your desires shall be satisfied. Have you observed how very desirous the priesthoods of the world have always been to have the education of children under their control and direction, and how much they have been opposed to all other parties having any influence in this matter?

Inquisitor. – Yes, – I have seen quite sufficient of this spirit in this country among the Christians of every sect, and among Jews and Mormons also.

R. O. – And have you reflected upon the cause of this strenuous exertion to obtain possession of the young mind?

Inquisitor. – I suppose it is because each sect and division of society has been taught by their respective surroundings, as you would say, that their sect or division alone possessed a knowledge of what they call divine truth upon certain mystified subjects, and that all other sects are in error upon these to them all-important matters, and they therefore wish if possible to make the population of the world to be of their opinion. This is the only view I can take of this universal principle to make proselytes to the opinions of each sect.

R. O. – You are right in your conclusion so far as you have stated; for the priesthood of the world well know that they can easily force their creeds into the young mind, however absurd other sects and divisions may deem those creeds; and that when once the young mind can be pre-occupied with any creed, it is often difficult and generally impracticable to make a Jew a Christian, a Christian a Jew, or a Mahommedan a disciple of Confucius or of Bramah, or the reverse.

Inquisitor. – But this is no new knowledge. It has been known through all past ages, and the priesthood in all countries have had the moulding of the young mind to suit their respective ideas, and thus have they kept the world, and been themselves kept, in gross ignorance how to train the human race, to make it good, wise, and happy. While the means by which they profess to endeavour to produce these results are the very surest means to make the population ignorant, wicked, and miserable, and to keep all nations and peoples disunited and most irrational in mind and practice – in fact, to make man the most inconsistent of all tribes of animals, ever striving to act in direct opposition to his own nature – a nature which, if understood and rationally trained, educated, employed, placed, and governed, would be discovered to be superior to all other natures known upon earth. And, instead of the ignorance and misery which now pervade the earth, all would be enlightened and happy to an extent beyond present human imagination.

Inquisitor.^a – But how are all to be thus trained, educated, employed, placed, and governed?

R. O. – By the science of surroundings being made familiar to all, and being applied to practice.

Inquisitor. – The science of surroundings? Why this is a science I never heard of before! It must be some outlandish idea of your ultra notions of all things. Who ever heard of the science of surroundings?

R. O. – You, like all the world, make a most lamentable mistake upon this subject. The science of surroundings may be termed the science of practical common-sense.

Inquisitor. – But who can understand what you mean by surroundings? It is an enigma to all your readers, and each one asks the other what you mean by it.

R. O. – I am well aware of this difficulty, and while the term brings thousands of ideas to my mind, such as the innumerable circumstances which surround the various classes, creeds, and colours over the globe, forming the opposing characters of the world, making so many of them irrational, inconsistent in mind and practice, insane, idiots, or mad, – I have also in my mind other combinations of circumstances, conditions, or ‘surroundings,’ which when properly executed for practice will compel all to become good, wise, and happy, – rational or consistent in mind and practice, and all to become united as one family or one man.

Inquisitor. – To have such surroundings would be a miracle and more than mortal can imagine. It will be in vain to teach powerful sovereigns, – wise statesman, – wealthy capitalists, – priests, – lawyers, – medical, military, and commercial men, – especially free traders, – and all who think they have vested interests in the present order, or rather disorder of things. The task, with these prejudices against you, is hopeless. It is an utter impossibility.

R. O. – The term impossibility has little influence upon my proceedings. So many impossibilities have been made possible and practical, that the term means only that the thing spoken of is impracticable in the estimation of the person so applying it. I have already overcome many things said previously to be impossible, and I hope to overcome some others, and among them to make the public understand what surroundings mean, and how to create new ones and apply them universally in practice to secure the permanent progress and happiness of our race.

Inquisitor. – Why how can you, an old man, so advanced in years, living so quietly near Sevenoaks^b as to be almost unknown to be in the neighbourhood, expect now to make any additional impression on the public?

^a The ‘Inquisitor’ speaks twice here in the original.

^b Owen lived with a sympathetic family at Park Farm, Sevenoaks, for much of the 1850s.

R. O. – More than half a century ago, I by experiment ascertained the strong impression made upon infants and children by objects which they could see, and in consequence of teaching them first through the eye, and giving them common-sense explanations in reply to their natural questions when they were examining anything new.^a Witnessing the extraordinary progress in knowledge which very young children made by this mode of teaching, I discovered it to be the natural process by which to give knowledge to children, – and men of the present day are yet but infants and children in the knowledge of the most useful and practical facts. I will show the advanced minds of the world, when they meet me at the Congress on the 14th of May next, by the eye, what is now the most useful knowledge for practice which they can acquire. I will exhibit and explain to them the new surroundings by which with ease and pleasure the human race may be made to become good, united, healthy, wise, wealthy, and happy, – acting as one man, multiplying the qualities of all into each, or giving to each the advantages to be derived from all.

Inquisitor. – Is it presumption on your part, or have you really discovered some mode of acquiring knowledge previously unknown?

R. O. – Convinced as I am that what we are we are made to become by the Great Creating Power of the Universe and by society, and that therefore no one has a particle of merit, I can feel no cause for presumption of any kind in myself, or for any one rationally to possess it. The difference between myself and the present population of the world, so far as I know myself, has arisen from a simple cause and process. I had, as I believe all children have, a love of truth at a very early age, and a strong desire to attain it upon religious subjects while very young. I was before seven years of age fond of reading all books which came in my way, and of thinking of their contents. My parents were of the Church of England, but they were often visited by two Methodist ladies, who took much trouble to try to make me of their opinion, and gave me Methodist tracts and books to read. I had also the libraries of the Rector, Doctor, and Lawyer of the parish and town freely opened to me, and in these I found their respective religious works, and among them many of a controversial character, and I was at first puzzled by the different sects so violently abusing each other, and each so strenuous endeavouring to make all the others appear to be in error. I was early inclined to be sincerely very religious, and thus attracted the attention of the old and magnates of the town, with whom, from some cause then entirely unknown to me, I was a great little favourite, and my mind was aroused to more attention and activity of thought, to discover the cause of this strong and bitter opposition between parties all professing to be deeply interested about religion. These controversial writings

^a On Owen's educational ideas, see especially his *A New View of Society* (1857 edn), in *Owen, Life*, vol. 1, pp. 253–332 (*infra*, vol. 1, pp. 25–100).

and the eagerness of each party to make me a convert to their opinions by abusing the other, gradually weakened my faith in each, and I longed more than ever to discover what was true. Reading these religious works ceased to give me much pleasure, being so unsatisfactory to my mind. I read Young's *Night Thoughts*,^a Harvey's *Meditations among the Tombs*,^b *The Pilgrim's Progress*,^c *Paradise Lost and Regained*,^d and all the standard novels of that period, as true facts. I also read *Universal History*,^e the *Circumnavigators*,^f (a clergyman, a direct descendant of Admiral Drake,^g taking great notice of me at this period,) all Shakespeare's Plays, and many others. These filled my mind with so many ideas which appeared to me to be so conflicting among themselves, that I felt greatly at a loss how to ascertain those which were true from those which were false. Often and often I reflected upon this difficult problem, to discover if possible some criterion by which I could know how to separate true ideas from those which were false. At length it occurred to me 'that truth must be always consistent with itself and in accordance with all facts.' I now had a lever of great power to work with, – but I yet wanted a standard, a sound resting point on which to place this lever. The history of the world and of the circumnavigators exhibited to me in strong colours the endless variety of character which they disclosed. I asked myself 'whence this variety of character, and how produced?' The original material possessed the same general qualities, although varied in their combinations – how, then, these various religions, languages, governments, laws, habits, manners, ideas of right and wrong, opposing feelings, and conflict of conduct, and other endless varieties of character? The first reply which came to me was, that these are all produced by the differences of circumstances or conditions in which individual nations and tribes are placed from birth. I said these external conditions may and do produce the variety of religions, languages, laws, institutions, habits, manners, and to a certain extent direct the feelings and conduct of all. But there is something more to be taken into the account of this varied formation of the human character over the earth. And it soon occurred to me, by following the same course of observing facts, that there was also an endless variety in the combinations of the original material from which all the individuals derived their distinctive character, and that each one of our race was a compound character, formed of his original material, acted upon by the external circumstances in which he was placed from birth.

^a Edward Young, *The Complaint: or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (1747).

^b James Hervey, *Meditations Among the Tombs in a Letter to a Lady* (1746).

^c John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678).

^d John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1667); *Paradise Regained* (1671).

^e *An Universal History, From the Earliest Account of Time* (21 vols, 1747).

^f E.g., James Cook, *An Account of a Voyage round the World* (1771).

^g Rev. Samuel Drake (1738–99), of Treeton, Yorks. who took a B.A. at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, in 1760, was vicar at Llanllwchaïam from 1773–99.

Inquisitor. – It was then, I suppose, that you made that noted discovery so often maintained in your writings, ‘That as is the organisation, and as are the conditions in which it is placed through life, so must the individual become in feeling, mind, and practice?’

R. O. – Yes. But there was more than this to consider before I could arrive at the great fundamental truth which should ultimately confound the learned, arouse the population of the world from its dream of error, change the entire system of society from its foundation through all its ramifications, and make man a new being, so that he shall appear to be born again with a new heart, a new mind, new spirit, new feelings, and new conduct.

Inquisitor. – What miracle is there to come to effect this change far greater than all previous changes?

R. O. – No miracle will be required, – only a little common sense, as soon as the human mind can be based on its true foundation.

Inquisitor. – And pray what do you call its true foundation, and how have you found it?

R. O. – By doing as you are now doing – asking myself a few questions easily to be answered.

Inquisitor. – What are these?

R. O. – *First.* Who or what created the material from which man’s character is formed? The obvious reply is – the Great Creating Power of the Universe. *Second.* Who places each individual within the surroundings which form his language, religion, habits, manners, – which direct his feelings and conduct, and give him his ideas and peculiar associations of ideas? Answer – Society.

Inquisitor. – And what then?

R. O. – That if facts demonstrate that the Universal Creating Power and society form the character of every individual, a new world of wonders is at once opened to our view, and the plain path to truth, knowledge, unity, and happiness, is made easy to pursue without the liability to mistake it.

Inquisitor. – How do you come to these extraordinary conclusions from the facts which you have stated?

R. O. – Thus. If what man is he is made to be by the Power which created him and by society, – then man cannot be a responsible being for the faculties, powers, and qualities, which he possesses.

Inquisitor. – And you give him full liberty to act wickedly and without restraint, according to his evil propensities?

R. O. – Quite the reverse. As his character is formed for him to so great an extent, as stated, by society, – society may form a good character for every one, and may put all from birth under, to them, such imperceptible restraint, that they can never think or act wrongly or injuriously to any of their fellows, but must of necessity so act as continually to promote the highest permanent happiness of all around them, near or more distant. The natural propensities of humanity are all good when exercised to the point of temperance; and when

society can be taught to acquire the rudiments of common sense, it will perceive clearly how to place, train, and educate all, so that they will have no desire but to exercise them for their greatest health and pleasure up to the point of temperance, and never to exceed that point. There are no natural evil propensities in humanity.

Inquisitor. – But we are told that man is prone to evil as the sparks fly upwards.^a

R. O. – And so he is, and so he will be, under the false, artificial, wicked, and unnatural system in which men are trained and educated to think and to call good evil and evil good, and to be fools and the most inconsistent animals now upon the earth.

Inquisitor. – What! do you call all our great men fools and inconsistent animals?

R. O. – I only state what a false, wicked, and unnatural system must make them. This system being false in its foundation, has accumulated falsehood upon falsehood through every succeeding generation, to give it sufficient temporary support, until now falsehood has become so universal and glaring, that each division of society over the world thinks all other divisions to be no better than dupes or fools, and most irrational in mind and conduct.

Inquisitor. – What? do you mean to say that there are no great and good men now living, formed under the present system?

R. O. – I do. And more, – I know that the present system of society, based as it is on a glaring universal falsehood, is, and while it shall be maintained must continue to be, incompetent to train, educate, and place a human being to become a good and great man.

Inquisitor. – This is the most strange of all your strange teachings. And can you assert with sincere belief that you think there is not now and never will be in future a good and great man while the present system shall form the character and govern men?

R. O. – I know it to be impossible for the present system to form a truly good and great man. The only man living who has any pretensions to be considered great and good is Baron Alexander Von Humboldt, who by his long and extensive travels over the world has discovered the natural goodness of humanity in all countries, and perceived how cruelly it has been used by the ignorant surroundings in which it is involved in every district over the earth, and how much all, from the highest to the lowest in every nation, are injured by the ignorance and falsehood of the present system.^b He has less of the man of the present, and more of the man of the future, than any one known at this period. He has done by his publications great good to the cause of progress, and has

^a See Job 5:7.

^b Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859): German naturalist and explorer. For Humboldt's conception of the uniformity of human nature, see for example *Views of Nature* (1850), pp. 383–5.

shown to a great extent the sublimity of humanity when divested by extensive travels and discriminating observations of the prejudices of country, creed, and colour.

Inquisitor. – But he has never abused the present system in its principle and through all its ramifications as you have done, and therefore I suppose he is the great and good man you have described him to be?

R. O. – The Baron has never been placed in a position in which he could effect as much good to the world by openly attacking the present system, as he could by placing so many important facts quietly before the public mind of the world, as he has done through a long and most useful life. These facts evidently expose the ignorance and error of the present system to reflecting persons in all countries. He has in his quiet manner and with great tact said as much against the present system as it was possible for any one living on the continent of Europe, in the midst of the despotism of priests and governments, to venture to do; and being to a considerable extent a confidential friendly adviser of governments, he has no doubt often diminished the errors and evils of despotic power.

Inquisitor. – If, as you say, this system is now so thoroughly worn out that it is impossible in this its expiring old age to train and educate any one to become great and good, – pray what are we to think of you who have lived and acted so long in it.

R. O. – You must think of me as not belonging to the present system of society, but as one looking with the greatest delight to its entire annihilation, so that ultimately not one stone of it shall be left upon another.

Inquisitor. – Then you would join Kossuth,^a Mazzini,^b etc; or the Red Socialists,^c and destroy all existing governments and priesthoods?

R. O. – I would not join any of these well-intentioned men with very limited views into futurity, and with less knowledge of human nature, and none of constituting a rational state of human existence upon earth. As they would first destroy before they built up or knew how to build up, it is evident they could only, if their desires were now gratified, lead nationalities headlong into confusion and universal disorder, to the sacrifice of life and property, making present confusion worse confounded.

^a Lajos Kossuth (1802–94): Hungarian liberal and revolutionary leader in 1848. Very popular in Britain during his exile there in the early 1850s. On his relations with Owen, see Gregory Claeys, 'Mazzini, Kossuth and British Radicalism 1848–54', *Journal of British Studies*, 28 (1989), pp. 225–61.

^b Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–72): Italian revolutionary with wide liberal following in Britain after his exile there when the 1848 revolutions collapsed. Owen disagreed with his nationalist and Christian republicanism.

^c 'Red Socialists' were revolutionary socialists active from the late 1830s onwards, including the Germans Wilhelm Weitling (whom Owen met) and Karl Marx (who heard him lecture), and George Julian Harney in Britain. On their relations with Owen, see Gregory Claeys, *Citizens and Saints. Politics and Anti-Politics in Early British Socialism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 261–84.

Inquisitor. – You are a strange man. If you would not join the parties you have named, perhaps you would unite with the Free Trade and Peace party.^a

R. O. – Not with the Free Trade party, – because it can only foster and encourage, under the name of peace, the most to be dreaded of all wars – a covert war of the few, strongest in cunning, against the many, less cunning and more humane; and the other portion of the peace party base peace upon a false foundation, which will always fail, prevent its success, and stand in the way of everlasting universal peace among the human race. Theirs is an artificial move by which to attempt to establish peace – and anything artificial can never succeed to be effective and permanent.

Inquisitor. – But surely the Free Traders are doing good service by opening a free and friendly communication between even the most distant nations?

R. O. – So far as they open a free communication between nations without open war, so good; but who ever heard of friendship in trade? As now carried on it is the cut-throat of friendship, or who can best succeed in deceiving others by buying the cheapest and selling the dearest. It cultivates all the lowest faculties of humanity, and discourages all the superior. It may truly be said to be a miserly selfish system.

Inquisitor. – Why this from you, who in early life were in trade, and who in middle life were for so many years a successful manufacturer upon a large scale! And now you denounce the whole system of buying cheap and selling dear as though you never were engaged in it!

R. O. – While in business I had for nearly half a century too much evidence from all around of its hollowness and corruption, of its deteriorating moral influences, and of the petty tyranny of masters, and slavery of their workmen, especially among the large manufacturers.

Inquisitor. – And yet you continued so long one of these tyrant large manufacturers! How can you explain this contradiction between your theory and practice?

R. O. – Your false, vile, ignorant, and most wicked system compelled me to learn the trade of buying cheap and selling dear, and I was compelled to pursue it to support life – for under this system to support life you must be tyrant or slave. If you do not eat the food of others, they will of necessity under this system eat yours, – and there is not a spark of real knowledge, justice, or humanity in the whole process of society as carried on at this day. It is one universal contest and conflict about nothing that requires either conflict or contest. It is all about individual wealth and power, which with the most successful are maintained with considerable hazard and gross injustice; while under another system of society – the true one, based on truth and constructed

^a The 'Free Trade and Peace Party' were the liberal internationalists John Bright and Richard Cobden, and the Anti-Corn Law League and its followers.

by common sense – every one without contest or competition of any kind will easily be made to superabound in wealth, and to possess as much power for good as the human heart can desire.

Inquisitor. – You continue more and more strange every step as we advance in this enquiry after truth. I can make nothing of you. I have never met with so cross-grained an individual in opposition to things as they are, and to all the modes of reform proposed by other parties. Can you explain how this strange opposing character, to every thing that is, was formed for you, and how you have been made to feel, think, and act, so differently from all other men?

R. O. – As it may be of great lasting benefit to others, I will most readily make this subject plain. I hope, to the public at large. Having, as previously described, discovered that God, or the Great Creating Power of the Universe, formed without our consent or knowledge the germs of all our natural organs, faculties, propensities, powers, and qualities, before birth, – and that from birth society cultivated them wisely or unwisely, for good or for evil, for happiness or for misery, – and that thus God and society forced upon each individual the character which he attains through life: – having also discovered that the germs of all the organs, faculties, propensities, powers, and qualities, were good, and were evidently intended, when man could be made to know himself and society, and in consequence to know how to train, educate, and place these native powers rationally, to make every one good, wise, united to his fellows, heartily possessing the free use of all things necessary for happiness, which would be enjoyed through life without any one being made afraid: – having likewise discovered that as society by its wise or ignorant training, educating, employing, governing, and placing of individuals, forces upon them an inferior or superior character through life, – society, and not the individual, is the former from birth of the character of every one, and that the responsibilities of it should therefore be alone upon society: – having also discovered that it will be now easy of practice for society, with the enormous power and means which nature at this period of progress in scientific knowledge has placed at its disposal, to form, with the certainty of a law of nature, a good, useful, and happy character for every one who shall be from birth through life rationally placed and surrounded by society: – having succeeded thus far in material knowledge, it became necessary for progress that the true criterion of truth should be also discovered. Through age after age all parties anxiously enquired ‘what is truth? Who will show us truth on which we can rely with certain safety?’ To make the discovery of truth certain, so as to leave no doubt upon the mind, was from my early youth my most ardent desire – a wish paramount to all others. The internal power or spirit which has guided and governed me through life disclosed in early youth to me this precious gem of value beyond all price. It was thus made known to me that ‘Truth is always consistent with itself and in accordance with all established facts, and with all facts that can be

known through the future. And that that which is inconsistent with itself or opposed to one well ascertained established fact is *not true*.'

Inquisitor. – And did these discoveries assist to form your strange character to make you oppose all the institutions of all nations and peoples, both ancient and modern?

R. O. – The foundation for this strange character, as you call it, was the discovery that God (or nature) and society, form the character of everyone, and that society, as soon as it can be made to know itself and its own power over the elements of our earth, may form a good, valuable, and superior character for every one. Then the discovery of the criterion of truth induced me to re-read what I had previously read, and to build up a new mind on the basis of the knowledge that the character of man is formed for him – that it is in fact forced upon him, by the Power which creates him and by society, – and in constructing ideas to form this new mind, not to retain any which were inconsistent with that great fundamental truth explanatory of the true formation of character. And thus – accumulating day by day new ideas, all consistent with themselves, with the great first principle or fact of the formation of character, and with *all* known facts – a new mind was created or born again for the first time in human history, a mind in which all its ideas and associations of ideas are consistent with each other and with all known facts, and therefore, according to the criterion of truth, a rational, true, and consistent mind – and I know no other process by which a rational and sound mind could be formed in a sound body.

Inquisitor. – And do you really suppose that you have thus rejected all incongruous and false ideas and combinations of ideas, and have retained those only which are consistent with themselves and with all ascertained facts?

R. O. – Such has been my intention ever since the true criterion of truth was impressed upon my mind as a great and most important fact. And if the human race should be early instructed in the knowledge of this only true criterion of truth, and how to apply it upon all occasions in building up the mind of all, a new mind would be created for the young by the old, so superior to all hitherto formed by the past random accumulation of ideas in the formation of the character of every class in every country over the world, that they would be by comparison a new and superior race of men and women, always consistent in mind and practice, and beautiful physically and mentally.

Inquisitor. – Surely you do not expect that the time will arrive when the human race can and will be so placed, trained, and educated, that the ideas in the mind of each shall be always consistent with themselves and in accordance with all facts?

R. O. – Indeed I do. Because, after a short practice, such instruction to all will become a simple process in forming the character of each, as soon as the natural mode of forming character shall be adopted to supersede the ignorant, unnatural, and, to teachers and taught, most annoying and unsatisfactory mode of instruction or of forming character.

Inquisitor. – What do you call the natural mode of instruction to form superior characters?

R. O. – That new mode which I introduced more than half a century ago at New Lanark in Scotland, and by which I gave a character entirely new to all the children of the population of that village.

Inquisitor. – And what was that new mode?

R. O. – Instruction from the earliest period by sensible signs and familiar conversations between the instructor and instructed, commencing with the most familiar objects around the infant and child to be taught. The instruction to be given not only without fear of punishment, but with never-failing charity for any defects in the instructed, and always in the spirit and tone of love and of real affection, which love and affection will be created in every true instructor by every infant and child so taught and whose character shall be so formed.

Inquisitor. – Do you mean to say that you have ever seen children so instructed?

R. O. – Yes. The children of the inhabitants of New Lanark in Scotland were so instructed for more than a quarter of a century.

Inquisitor. – And without punishment and by love alone?

R. O. – Yes. And the entire population of the village, consisting then of 2500 inhabitants, were governed on the same principles for that period.

Inquisitor. – Then I suppose there were all manner of crimes daily, and confusion worse confounded?

R. O. – You are greatly mistaken.

Inquisitor. – What were the inhabitants of the village previous to this new mode of instructing their children and of governing the more matured of all ages?

R. O. – With few exceptions they were a collection from various places of a very inferior class of workpeople, very dirty in their habits and houses, very intemperate and demoralised, but making much show of some sort of religion, of which there were several, and much opposed to each other, each one being sure that his own sect was right and that all the others were inferior and very erroneous.

Inquisitor. – And how were these reclaimed? They must have been severely punished at first to effect any change for the better?

R. O. – In this you, like all other clever and knowing men of the world, as you are called, are in great error. All crimes, so named, are errors of instructors or of governments. Instructors and governments have been, so far, ignorant of human nature, how to place it, to form its character, or to govern it. The weapons of those thus ignorant to repress crimes, which directly or indirectly by their ignorance they have first created, are punishments, endless in their variety and severity, and never effective to remove their cause. Hence the continuance of multiplied crimes at this day. While the weapons of intelligence are those only of real knowledge, charity, and love, and these, when

wisely applied, will never fail to eradicate the cause of crime, and to make men and women rational in mind and conduct, and without exception, ultimately, from birth, good, wise, and happy.

Inquisitor. – What! Govern the population of the world without punishment! and solely by knowledge of human nature, charity, and love?

R. O. – These are the only true weapons for forming the true character and governing the populations of all the nations of the earth. And they are competent, wisely applied, to put and keep them all in permanent prosperity, harmony, and happiness.

Inquisitor. – Enough of this. But let us come to facts.

First. – Were the inhabitants of New Lanark governed and the children instructed by real knowledge, charity, and love?

R. O. – They were instructed and governed in the spirit of genuine charity and love, with as much knowledge of human nature as I then possessed.

Inquisitor. – *Secondly.* – How, if you can express it shortly, did you apply that knowledge in practice?

R. O. – By gradually removing some of the many injurious surroundings in which they were placed, and replacing them with better.

Inquisitor. – *Thirdly:* – And what was the result of such practice?

R. O. – To materially improve the character of the population in the most satisfactory manner as this process progressed. On the experience so acquired, I confidently state, that this practice, if applied to the entire business of life, would never fail in a single instance to produce similar results. And it is greatly to be regretted that the governments and advanced minds of the world have not acquired this common sense mode of applying common sense knowledge to common things.

Inquisitor. – What do you call common things?

R. O. – I mean those things required for every day use and purposes, and having them placed in such manner as to obtain the best results from them.

Inquisitor. – You must have hidden your proceedings at New Lanark under a bushel, – for no one ever mentions them, nor do any parties appear to know that such an experiment as you describe was ever made. If you are correct in what you state to be the influence of surroundings, there need be no more discussion about the best mode of dealing with criminals, or respecting punishments of any kind.

R. O. – Certainly not. It shows glaring ignorance in the priesthood, governments, and more advanced minds of the world, to occupy so much time and expend so much capital most uselessly and injuriously in devising methods to punish crimes, and in vain attempts to diminish them, when the plainest dictates of common sense, applied to common things, would not fail to discover that far less than the thousandth part of the time, trouble, and expense incurred to this period by society over the world to punish crime, would ages ago have prevented the existence of any crime whatever,

and that in this day it would be unknown over the earth except as a matter of history.

Inquisitor. – How could this be? Either you, or the priests, governors, and advanced minds of the world, must be most irrational, if not insane. You surely cannot be right on this, to the world, all-important subject; and as you are but one against the other parties who have lived through ages to this day, the very great probability is that the error must be with you.

R. O. – I am willing that the parties named and myself should be tried by the only criterion of truth known to man – ‘Consistency with itself, and undeviating accordance with all facts.’

Inquisitor. – That seems a fair proposal. How would you proceed with this singular trial?

R. O. – Naturally and rationally, by the examination of common palpable facts, and by deducing self-evident truths from those facts.

Inquisitor. – I am at a loss to know the facts to which you refer. Pray explain yourself more fully.

R. O. – I have stated that the Great Creating Power of the Universe, whose essence and mode of action are unknown to man, is the Universal God of Creation. That this All-mighty and Eternal Creating Power, whatever future knowledge may discover it to be, creates the germs of all humanity before the birth of each individual, and also the difference in the proportions of the natural qualities of humanity in each germ, to constitute its distinct individuality; and thus are the germs of all the natural qualities of humanity at birth given to each one without his consent or knowledge. Have I so far made myself to be sufficiently understood by the ordinary mind of the world?

Inquisitor. – So far I think you have, and that none who desire to understand you can misapprehend the plain statement which you have now made. Proceed if you please.

R. O. – Facts have proved through all time, that all of the human race are born with the same general qualities of humanity, but each with varied proportions of them; and for which it would be most irrational to make the individual responsible, either to the Power which created and contrived those mysterious germs of divine qualities, divinely combined, – or to man.

Inquisitor. – It certainly appears to be irrational to make the created responsible for the qualities given to it by the Power which created it; and equally so to make him responsible to man, who is yet so ignorant of these divine qualities and their divine combinations, as you call them. But why are they divine?

R. O. – Because they are made mysteriously by the Great Creating Power of the Universe, or the God of all Creation.

Inquisitor. – What next in your facts?

R. O. – That these qualities, which constitute humanity throughout the human race, have been and are capable of receiving an innumerable variety of directions in the formation of the matured character of each one.

Inquisitor. – As how? This requires more distinct explanation to enable the general mind to comprehend your full meaning.

R. O. – The facts of past history and of present time prove that any language, religion, law, government, classification, institutions, ideas, associations of ideas, habits, manners, and conduct, may be imperceptibly taught to and unconsciously forced upon every one.

Inquisitor. – How?

R. O. – Simply by the varied surroundings in which society has the power to place every one from birth.

Inquisitor. – If so, then any language, religion, laws, government, classification, institutions, ideas, associations of ideas, habits, manners, and conduct; may be, by society, forced upon any one or all over the world. How can this be, to be consistent with the common language and conduct of men to men, who praise, blame, reward, and punish one another, as though each formed his own natural qualities at birth, and determined at birth in what class and kind of surroundings his whole character should be matured, and as if he formed his own character before and from birth?

R. O. – I leave it to the wise men of this day to make the unchanging facts which I have stated respecting humanity, and this conduct of all priests, governments, and people at this day, to be consistent and to stand the test of the criterion of truth.

Inquisitor. – It is at once obvious to all who reflect, that no part of society as now existing is consistent with itself or with the facts of nature, and therefore, I suppose, you say the whole system of society is erroneous.

R. O. – It is so glaringly false in principle and injurious to all in practice, that if there were any really practical men with common sense in any nation in any one of the four quarters of the world, they would unite and immediately commence to change the entire system.

Inquisitor. – Do you mean to say that there are no really practical men with common sense to be found among the population of the world.

R. O. – I have never met with or heard of one, and I have ardently sought to discover men with these qualifications, that I might communicate with them before I go hence, and might give them the additional benefit of such practical knowledge and common sense as I have acquired by experience in a long active life directed to the attainment of these objects.

Inquisitor. – Surely they must be difficult, if not impossible to acquire, seeing, as you say, that none have yet attained them?

R. O. – It is impossible to attain them without giving up and totally abandoning the present system of society, which has continued from its commencement. Hence there is no common sense to be found in any practical measures to form the human character, to produce wealth, or to construct society, so that they shall be consistent with themselves and in accordance with those universal facts and laws of nature which have never been known to change.

Inquisitor. – This is a new and strange doctrine, and if true, I wonder how you can venture to state it. Why you will arouse against you the egotism of all the so-called advanced minds of the world, practical and theoretical, and these are the men whom you have called to form a Congress in May next, to assist you to introduce a new system in direct opposition to the only one they know.

R. O. – It is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, that can save society from the effects of its fatal and gross ignorant fundamental error and its ramifications through every part of the system. I commenced early in life with unfurling the banner of ‘truth without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man.’ The world must judge whether any consideration has ever induced me to desert my colours.

Inquisitor. – You are an enigma to everyone, and no one knows what to make of you, and therefore some say you are a visionary, some that you are impractical, some that you are insane, some that you are mad, and the Jesuits say that you are too bad a man to be allowed to appear among the worst characters in the late Madame Tussaud’s gallery of the worst outcasts of society.^a And yet you have called a Congress to commence on your 87th birthday, of the advanced minds of the world, to consider the best peaceable mode of changing the entire system of society over the world. Will not this proceeding of yours tend more to impress the public with the suspicion that you *are* insane or mad?

R. O. – Very likely. But my experience leads me to know that by such kind of madmen, who had sufficient moral courage to disregard public opinion and all the prejudices of their age, the greatest discoveries have been made, and the greatest benefits have been secured for humanity.

Inquisitor. – You are certainly the most obstinate and presumptuous, or the most self-sustained man living.

R. O. – Of this the public will judge when they read and study my life.

Inquisitor. – Then you will now commence and continue without ceasing to write your life?

R. O. – I intend to do so, for I have promised my friends that I would now begin this task, and as my life may enable priests, governments, and people to discover how simple and straight a path in practice it will be to unite the human race as one family, and from birth to compel all to become good, wise, and happy, and to abound, at all times, in unadulterated superior wealth. I shall commence with less reluctance than I have hitherto had for this task, but I cannot help feeling that it will be very defectively performed.

Inquisitor. – We know you will make it as perfect as your age will admit, and

^a The Jesuits are a Catholic religious order founded in the sixteenth century, and also known as the Society of Jesus. Owen claimed to have heard from his tailor, who dressed the wax figures of Madame Tussaud (1761–1850) (whose museum opened in 1835), that her Jesuit confessor had prevented his bust from being exhibited there, though Owen sat for it and the model was in fact made (see *The New Existence of Man Upon the Earth*, pt 4, 1854, pp. 12–19). This cannot be verified. No record exists that Owen’s bust was ever exhibited there.

with this your friends must be satisfied. Yet we cannot imagine what you intend to effect by the Congress which you have called.

R. O. – Do you not perceive that old society is worn out, and that at this day people and governments over the world are at bay, and neither the one nor the other know what step next to take, each fearfully watching the movements of the other, and both conscious of their incapacity to act beneficially or with any prospect of permanent success?

Inquisitor. – Yes. We practical men of the world, as we deem ourselves to be, are conscious of this new and strange position, and yet both parties now seem desirous to do the best in their power, and fear the direful effects of open warfare if once again commenced between the people and governments. But what can you do during this awful suspense between such conflicting parties and principles.

R. O. – Show each their error, and place new knowledge in accordance with all facts before them, to make it plain to each that by civil war both would grievously suffer, and that by other means the interests and happiness of both may be reconciled and made permanent through all succeeding ages.

Inquisitor. – If your intended Congress can effect these results it will be indeed of lasting benefit to all, and will well deserve the attention of the most advanced minds in this and all other countries. But how can you expect to change one system for another without first destroying the old to make a site on which to construct the new?

R. O. – Society did not destroy the old gravel roads before it commenced and completed the railways which were to supersede them. And when the railways were made ready to receive travellers, even then the gravel roads were allowed to remain for the use of timid persons, until the old roads were neglected and became evidently useless to the public. In like manner, without destroying or injuring the old system of society, the new, with its new divine surroundings, will in every division of it be commenced on new sites, and be made ready to receive willing passengers from the old road or mode of travelling, until the new shall gradually increase to become sufficient to accommodate in a very superior manner the population of the world. And thus most beneficially will conflict between the governments and people be prevented, – and allow me to add that the measure now proposed is the only one that can stay and for ever prevent this most-to-be-dreaded contest between the principles of truth and those of falsehood, between right and wrong, between freedom and slavery.

Inquisitor. – Well, there can be no harm in making such attempt, and, however Quixotic it may be, or may appear to be, some good, and perhaps some great good to the population of the world may arise. Therefore good success to your wild scheme.

R. O. – Wild as you and the population of the world may deem the entire change of system to be which I propose, the history of the endeavours of my life

to effect this elevation of our race may assist to sow the seed broadcast to produce the change among all nations, and to aid others to accomplish this great and good work thus commenced. And when completed it will not be an object of thought or consideration who were the aiders to this grand result, for their name is legion – and they have existed through all past generations.

Inquisitor. – But what makes you so confident of ultimate success to effect so total a change in the spirit, mind, practice, and condition of the human race through futurity?

R. O. – The daily aid which I receive from superior Spirits who promise effective assistance until success shall be secured.^a

Inquisitor. – But may not all this be a delusion on your mind?

R. O. – Others, unacquainted with these inspiring proceedings, may think so. But the evidence of facts which I have witnessed, and which thousands of others are daily witnessing, is too strong for inexperienced negations to stay their onward course until *all* shall be compelled to believe in their truth and high importance in regenerating the human race.

Inquisitor. – I perceive there can be no use in contending with you on these matters. You are too thoroughly obstinate to be influenced in *your* mind and practice by what any one believing in the truth or stability of this old system can say to you.

R. O. – You have come to a most correct conclusion. I can have no faith in anything emanating from a system which I know to be based on falsehood, and that that falsehood pervades all its ramifications.

Inquisitor. – Your persevering faith in the truth and ultimate success of the new system which you advocate, and of your strange abettors and encouragers to pursue these measures, so far beyond the conceptions of the present age, are worthy of a better cause, and you know that great numbers of your old and most staunch disciples are strongly opposed to your faith in these so-called spiritual manifestations?

R. O. – I well know that they are. But that is no evidence that they are right and that I am in error. I have this day received a communication from superior Spirits by an experienced medium in the United States. It is headed ‘AN ADDRESS TO THE WORLD,’ and it contains principles and practical instructions which are greatly in advance of the most advanced liberals, so called, of the present day, and as it will instruct the most progressed, and even my most experienced disciples, I will publish it in my life for the advantage of the public.

December, 1856.

^a For his ‘communications’, see for example *The Rational Quarterly Review* (1853).

SPIRITUAL COMMUNICATION

THE following address I have just received from parties in the United States, whose lives are devoted to the great cause of humanity, irrespective of colour, creed, country, or class. It is the most advanced in principle and for practice, and contains more valuable common sense and right reasoning than I have yet seen from any party, visible or invisible; and it is in many respects the document which of all others the most deserves the profound consideration of the advanced minds of the world.

I am however compelled to differ in opinion from that part of the address which ignores all expectation of aid from governments in the change of a false and evil system for the true and good system for forming the character and governing the human race.

I differ, because I know the change will be for the highest and best permanent interest of all governments and of every member of each government.

I differ, because where there is error in man, the cause is not in the individual, but in the ignorant, false, and evil system of society, by which the individuals erring have been surrounded before and from birth.

I differ, because where there is error, the parties should not be blamed, but in the unceasing spirit of charity and love instructed, – and this instruction, if persevered in and true, will never fail to convince, when taught with judgment, or in accordance with a knowledge of human nature under the various surroundings in which it is placed.

I differ, because it is unwise to cause distrust or anger in those who require to be taught that which is true, to relieve them from error and from that which is injurious to them, as all error is sure to be, – and all governments are at this day in this predicament.

It is for these reasons that I am reluctantly compelled to differ so far from the address – an address which in all other respects I deem beyond price in silver and gold.

And for the great truths which it contains my best thanks are due to the superior Spirits who dictated it, and to the medium through whom it was received, and by whom it was sent to me.

December, 1856.

ROBERT OWEN

AN ADDRESS TO THE WORLD

'Mountains interposed make enemies of nations.
Lands intersected by a narrow frith abhor each other.'^a

How sad to the contemplative mind is the present condition of the inhabitants of this earth! Almost every person, town, clique, clan, nation, is seeking its individual interest separate from the good and interest of all. 'Mine and thine' are written in legible characters upon all things. There is no common weal, no deep and abiding interest in man as man, irrespective of nation, complexion, sex; hence, vast sums are requisite to sustain a few millions of people. That which man needs now to know is how best to combine his interest with the interest of others, and how to render labour attractive and consequently agreeable.

It is felt to be wise to present, in a brief form, an outline of certain essential things, which, when understood and observed, will tend in a large degree to unite man to his fellow man. In entering into a subject of such intense interest, there are many minor points which cannot, in the nature of things, be presented. Should that work be undertaken, a volume, rather than a brief paper would be requisite.

Man has certain natural wants. Unless these wants are supplied, he is a restless, uneasy, dissatisfied being. He wants the following things. First, a soil on which he can stand, to which he has a clear, incontestable, permanent right. Secondly, he wants a comfortable and convenient shelter erected on that soil. Thirdly, he wants certain essential sustenances, and comfortable garments. Fourthly, he wants what may be justly termed, in its broadest sense, *home*. Fifthly, he wants around him, within convenient distance, agreeable and attractive society or neighbourhood. Sixthly, he wants certain surroundings which shall in their tendency promote his bodily health, mental growth, and affectional unfolding. Seventhly, he wants to be entirely free from any fearful forebodings, in respect to any future life to which he may be destined. Give him these, in a high, pure, broad sense, he is in the enjoyment of what is absolutely essential to his purest and divinest conditions. Give him any six of these, cut off the seventh, and to that extent he is unsatisfied, longing, struggling, to obtain that which he has not. Now the mind of the intelligent reader should look at these points as a whole, that it may be seen, that they not only embrace the essentials, but that all and each are needful. Looking now

^a See William Cowper, *The Task* (1785), Bk 2, l. 16.

out upon the world, as it is, with ease it will be discovered that almost everybody is deprived of one, and some of nearly all of these, and it is because of a lack of these essentials, that man preys upon and devours his fellow man – 'tis a reaching for something which he has not secured. Could these natural wants be supplied to man, individual wars, tumults among nations and colonies would not be. All efforts to promote universal peace and good will among mankind will, in the very nature of things, fail, until man's natural wants are supplied.

There begins to be a desire among a few philanthropic persons to annihilate war, to induce the nations of the earth to beat their swords into ploughshares, their spears into pruning-hooks,^a to produce that state of things, when nation shall no longer lift up sword against nation, nor longer learn the art of war. No writer yet has ever estimated the evils which come of war. But whence spring wars and fightings? War is declared between two nations; that declaration is simply an outbreak. The two nations were just as much at war before declaration as after. *Internally* the strife had commenced and the war declared. Wherever an effect is, behind it there lies a cause. Look into a neighbourhood – the cannon may not be there, the sword may not be seen, the fort may not be built, and yet *war* is there; or, enter into a closer relation, the domestic; the parties may not blow out each other's brains, cut off one another's heads; or in any way, with brute force, mangle each other, and yet war is there – 'tis a contest between parties – it is a strife to gain something which one or the other has not. Let that domestic circle have a *home*, in a pure sense war could not enter its doors, – let all needful sustenances, garments be at hand as they were wanted, let all the surroundings be consonant with bodily health, mental growth, affectional expanding, and there is nothing to war about. Cut off either of the parties from one of these essentials, no matter which and, war is in that domestic circle. Little things sometimes are useful as illustrations of greater things. Supply a neighbourhood with all these essentials, and war could no more enter there than it could invade the portals of heaven itself. In fact that neighbourhood is heaven. But let some of the neighbours enjoy certain things which are essential to the well-being of all, contention, strife, war appear, and these neighbours in some way will attempt to devour one another. The same law obtains in respect to colonies, provinces, states, nations. The American nation, as such, at this present moment, is as much in a state of civil war, as it ever can be. The mere breaking out of a flame on the roof of an edifice is not essential to call it a fire; it may burn internally, consume all the essentials of a dwelling and not be seen on the roof. One may have an internal cancer that is eating out the vitals, 'tis not essential to constitute it a cancer, that it should be seen.

^a See for example Isaiah 2:4.

Whence comes war in the American nation? Answer. An entire disregard of the principles upon which it professes to be founded – namely, that man has certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness.^a Grant man these to their fullest and broadest extent, and he could ask no more. Take his life, deprive him of liberty in any of its forms, cut him off from pursuing his happiness in his own way, and he lacks something; and this lack forms within a restlessness, a longing for, a desire to obtain; and when borne for a certain length of time, until the yoke becomes too heavy, one of the following results appear. First, the oppressed are crushed to the earth, groans, tears, anguish which no tongue can describe, are experienced, or, secondly, the oppressed determine at all hazards to throw off the yoke, and then war, rapine, blood are rife; nation is arrayed against nation; ordinary labours are laid aside; everything is made to bend to that single point, – emancipation. Commonly the weaker is crushed, or, some slight arbitration may be; the cause is not removed, and sooner or later, of necessity, there will be another outbreak. 'Tis perfectly futile then to undertake to smooth over things of this character. The parties look for peace, but there is none; they look for union, but there is none; they look for harmony, but there is none. In the nature of things there never can be until man's essential wants are supplied. What then, the philanthropist may ask, is to be done? Shall not efforts be made to promote peace? Unquestionably. But whosoever undertakes that work needs to ask the parties, what do you want? and when those wants are gratified, the peacemaker may go to bed and sleep until the crack of doom – there is no more for him to do. Until these points shall be made clear to the mind, there cannot be a reasonable expectation of permanent peace in the domestic circle, the neighbourhood, province, state confederations or nations at large. It may be as well then now, as at any future time, to look at the subject of war and peace in this plain, common sense light. It will be seen that if war is settled by mere arbitration, that the settlement cannot be permanent. Why? Because there is not an internal peace, there is not a divine equanimity; something is longed for which the parties have not. It were useless longer then to dwell on the *surface* of things, it were wiser to come to an intelligent understanding of man's essential wants, and in the ratio that these are supplied, will internal peace be secured; eruptions will not appear on the surface.

It may be said that a work of this radical character must proceed very slowly. True. All thorough reformations will be opposed by the existing state of things. In short, paradoxical though it may seem, an effort of this kind to produce peace, will be tantamount to a declaration of war. Philosophically one said, 'I

^a The 'certain inalienable rights' delineated in the American Declaration of Independence, signed on 4 July 1776. Owen regarded the language of rights as overly individualist, however, and rarely stressed such ideas.

came not to send peace on earth, but I came to kindle a fire;^a and that fire is kindled which shall burn the rubbish, separate the dross from the silver, the pure from the impure, the loving from the selfish, the true from the false, the good from the evil, but, what of that? In view of the end to be reached, namely, permanent and universal peace, these incidentals are little more than the cobweb – comparatively of no consequence – developers they are, helping one to see the true state of things, opening blind eyes, occasionally perhaps breaking a heart, severing tender cords, but as long as the elements of disunion are within there is no union – man sleeps, and beneath him the fire is burning that some time, perhaps in an unexpected moment, the devouring flame appears. Who would risk going to bed at night, knowing that there are flames in the cellar below, which at some time would envelope the whole edifice, and yet this is precisely where the world is at this moment. The weaker nation may not venture to declare war, the stronger will do so, as certainly as one man will try to take advantage of another. In one case it is individualism, in another nationalism. Nations struggle for a season, become weary, lives are destroyed, property confiscated, millions of hearts broken, the combatants retire for a little time, enter into some sort of negotiation, peace is declared; externally, all seems quiet, but internally the fires are burning, and why? Because man's essential wants are not supplied. Turn the subject over as the statesman may, investigate it as the philanthropist will, it all comes back to that single point, something, somewhere, by somebody is wanted; and growing out of that, there is struggle or effort to obtain it. If another has it, a struggle to grasp it and so wars are. The true friends of peace are they who contemplate causes, who form broad, comprehensive plans to remove these causes. In efforts however of this character, to some extent, certain old institutions must be jostled; the foundations on which nations are based must be inspected, broad and practical plans must be presented; 'tis not enough that one see the evil, but there should be an ability to remove it and so substitute therefore that which shall strike at causes, and shall introduce a new state of things, wherein shall dwell harmony, peace, union, and love.

Remedies, unless they are broad enough to cover the whole ground, are, to say the least, delusive, raise expectations, which not being realised, leave persons often in far worse conditions, than prior to the proposed remedy. The skilful physician, the intelligent surgeon studies first, with care, the condition of his patient, obtains clear views, as far as may be practicable, of causes, and wisely endeavours to remove these. They know full well that if bad matter be left in the system, it will spread, corrupt, and poison, and perhaps eventually endanger the life of the patient. Now evils are not simply to be palliated, but are to be removed entirely from the body politic, else corruption, disease and

^a See for example Isaiah 30:33.

death, politically speaking, will sooner or later appear. In looking out then upon a subject of this character, it may not be altogether unwise to propose the following interrogations. First, is it likely that the oppressors themselves unaided by others will see the wrong they are doing and break off at once therefrom, and commence in a right direction? Secondly, is it likely that the oppressed and down-trodden classes will themselves be able, by any united and systematic effort to intelligently and systematically throw off the yoke under which they are suffering? Or, finally, is it requisite that there should be a third class, who are in comparatively easy conditions, and who can balance between the oppressors and oppressed, and point out clearly the thing or things to be done? Such is the delusive nature of oppression, that the oppressed often hug their chains, and any effort to remove them will be resisted. Interested in continuing things as they now are, the oppressor, of course, would not welcome any effort, which, sooner or later, would, in his judgment, affect his personal interest, so that often the person or persons who attempt a labour of this kind may expect to be misjudged by the oppressed on the one hand, misunderstood by the oppressor on the other, so that he works, as it were, between two fires. Now that one may perseveringly engage in a labour of this sort, several qualities are requisite. First, an unfaltering trust in the triumph of Eternal Right; secondly, a deep and abiding interest in the welfare and general progress of human kind; thirdly, an internal prompting which says 'Woe is me unless I engage in this effort.' These three considerations will lead to that condition of mind usually called prayer. The petitioner, in substance *feels* or says 'Show me, oh, show me the work I can do, give me wisdom and strength and I will perform it.' In such a case all the emotional faculties are called into exercise – it becomes a work of the heart, and there one stands in an impregnable position – such an one can neither be called off by flatteries, nor intimidated by dangers, but steadily moves on, faithfully, lovingly and intelligently doing the work of each opening hour, each dawning morn or each quiet night, perpetually having a great purpose and so there comes to the labourer a strength of character, an energy of action, a firmness of purpose, corresponding to the work. One of the first things then, which is essential to man's redemption, is to call out, wholly consecrate a class of persons of the character described above – true, such are rarely found. Sometimes a *planet* needs to be explored to find a single person, having that nobleness of life, devotion of heart, purity of thought, divinity of aspiration, that he or she will lay down a life, and yet the pages of the past record the appearance of persons of this unusual character – they are the lights of the world – they shine perhaps dimly in their time, but as man grows up to them, sees their greatness, comprehends the grandeur of their labours, reads the history of their efforts, the world garnishes their tombs and sepulchres, rears its lofty monuments, does homage to them as the benefactors of their day, weeps that they were not better known in their time. That which the world now most needs, and there is little hope of

its redemption until that can be done, is, as it were, to generate a new world's Redeemer – one who elementarily shall be able to command the love of a Jesus,^a the boldness of a Paul,^b the fidelity of a Daniel,^c learning of an Aristotle,^d morals of a Socrates,^e education of a Plato,^f intellect of a Webster,^g eloquence of a Brougham,^h and the religion of a Madame Guyon.ⁱ All these elements seem to be essential, that one may be suited to the emergencies of the present hour. Such as one would martial his forces, gather around him his armies, call to his aid the distinguished persons of *his* time, nay, would command the interest and call out the influence of distinguished persons of *former* times. Concentrating this power upon a single body, such an one would go forth armed with the panoply of love, truth, wisdom, become a grand organizer, place persons where they belonged, show them how to combine their efforts, how to actualise their ideas, discover the laws of attraction and affinity, so that labours would be natural and agreeable. Looking at a subject of this sort, one asks, how can a work of this magnitude be executed? The answer is, the friends of man must unite. Persons in comparatively easy circumstances, persons who can change their position, location, who can devote their energies to a work of this sort, should plant themselves on a spot dedicated to freedom, to the interest of humanity, to all that is high and holy within, cultivate their finer faculties to the highest possible extent. Search should be made in different nations for persons having within themselves the right elements; these should come together, found a colony; these should construct a model society, should create a state of things, wherein it would be practicable, for such an one to be generated, born, reared, expanded, cultivated. Separated, to some extent, from unfavourable influences, seeing the world as it is, knowing its wants, something might through that single instrumentality be accomplished, that would not only aid man in the present, but would advance his interest in the future. The world's reformers then must, sooner, or later, see the need of starting a work of this character. Unquestionably the American nation is the place above all others to commence a work of this sort. Domain can easily be had, economically purchased in central positions. Whoever then shall see that this is the work to be done will focalise their efforts in that particular direction. At first, efforts, of necessity, will be of a rude and simple character, yet having the right elements, commanding the heart, head and

^a Jesus (d. c. AD 30): Jewish prophet who founded the Christian religion.

^b Paul (d. c. AD 54): first Christian theologian and missionary.

^c Daniel: Biblical prophet renowned for his wisdom.

^d Aristotle (384–322 BC): Greek philosopher.

^e Socrates (c. 470–399 BC): Greek philosopher.

^f Plato (c. 428–348 BC): Greek philosopher.

^g Daniel Webster (1782–1852): American politician.

^h Henry Brougham (1778–1868): Whig lawyer, MP and friend of Owen's for nearly fifty years; Baron of Brougham and Vaux after becoming Lord Chancellor in 1831.

ⁱ Emilie-Honorine Guyon (1821–78): French actress.

hands, the little tree may be planted, watered with tears, call forth an intense interest, bring out the diviner and emotional faculties, lift up the soul to God, cultivate the affections, and the enterprise shall be, as it were, a dear child struggling into birth; and when the hour shall come then plans of a broad, philanthropic, and business character shall be unfolded, then easy and natural steps can be taken. Already a single person has journeyed somewhat extensively in the New World, teaching these doctrines, unfolding these principles, declaring practical plans, calling out eminent persons. The Old World and the New need to combine their efforts. At a favourable moment some few choice persons will leave the New World, land on the shores of the Old, with a view of interesting persons of different nations in this branch of labour. Sir, the Spirit World looks to you; it knows your untiring fidelity; it rejoices that such an one has lived to ripe old age; it sees you busily arranging your papers; preparing your departure to a higher and diviner state. It forwards this paper to you at this moment, leaving it to your judgment to incorporate it among your published documents, or, to read it to such parties, as in your judgment, will comprehend and appreciate teachings of this philanthropic character. The Spirit World takes this opportunity through a leading communicating mind to express its confidence in your judgment, its reliance on your fidelity, its consciousness of your desire to aid man as man.

It moreover takes this opportunity to state, that persons of an intelligent and moral cast are influencing your mind, leading you onward in the steps you are now taking. Should this document, Sir, meet your approval, should it in your judgment, be wise for some choice persons to visit the Old World with a view of interchanging thoughts, feelings, actions, unquestionably you will find the highest delight in facilitating an effort of that character. At all events an epistle from your pen will be welcomed by the person to whom this paper was directly transmitted.

Melrose, Mass., U.S., A.
October, 16th, 1856

JOHN M. SPEAR^a

^a John Murray Spear (b. 1804): a Massachusetts Universalist minister and medium. There are a number of letters from Spear in *Robert Owen's Millennial Gazette* (1856). On him, see Frank Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism* (2 vols, Methuen, 1902), vol. 1, pp. 214–16, 274–6.

PREFACE

THE greatest discovery that man has made for the universal happiness of his race through all future time is the knowledge of the facts for practice, – ‘That the made receives all its qualities from its maker, and that the created receives all its qualities and powers from its Creator.’

It is the greatest discovery, because man to this day, in opposition to the myriads of facts existing around him through all past generations to the present, has been taught to think that the made and created make their own qualities and powers. Such, in fact, has been the teaching of the superstitions, governments, laws, and institutions of men, through all past generations; such is their teaching at this day; and this teaching deranges the rational faculties of all so taught, and perverts their judgment to so great an extent, as in most cases to make it worse than useless on all subjects of the highest importance to the individual and to our race.

It is the greatest discovery, – because it thus discloses the origin of evil among men, and the means by which to remove the evil for ever.

It is the greatest discovery, – because it discloses the cause why men have never yet been made to become good, wise, united, and happy; and why so large a mass of the population of the world has always been kept in a state of gross ignorance and degradation, and has been afflicted with so much mental misery and physical suffering.

It is the greatest discovery, – because it opens the broad, plain, and easy path, for the authorities of the world to adopt decisive practical measures to make all to become good, wise, united, healthy, abounding in wealth, and always physically and mentally happy.

It is the greatest discovery, – because the knowledge of our nature which it discloses will induce all to endeavour to promote the happiness of all, by the great unceasing pleasure which each will derive from the practice.

It is the greatest discovery, – because it will terminate all anger, ill-will, contests, and wars, among men and nations, and will make the art of war to be no longer taught, and to cease for ever.

It is the greatest discovery, – because it discloses the means by which the human race, through futurity, may with ease and pleasure be made to become full-formed superior men and women, with all their physical and mental faculties, powers, and propensities, cultivated to be each exercised to the point of temperance.

It is the greatest discovery, – because it discloses the incalculable importance of superior surroundings in which to place humanity – surroundings all superior, to the exclusion of those which are inferior.

It is the greatest discovery, – because it opens a new book of life to man, and will enable him to perceive more clearly what manner of being he is; that he is formed by a double creation – the one, previous to birth, a mysterious and divine organization of wonderful powers, yet more wondrously combined, physically and mentally; the other a secondary or new creation, super-added, to bring the first to its earthly maturity, and chiefly through the agency of matured humanity, to which is given the greatest interest that this secondary creation should be in accordance with the first, and without which, man will be mis-formed, and will not attain the happiness for which he is evidently intended by the perfection of his first or divine creation.

It is the greatest discovery, – because it will enable man to know himself, and by knowing himself to know humanity generally; and through this knowledge to be made to acquire universal love and charity for his race, high excellence in knowledge of the surroundings which are in accordance with his divine nature, and how to apply them most advantageously to practice, and thus to discover the necessity to abandon all cities, towns, and isolated residences, as now constructed and in use over the world, all forming compounds of inferior and most injurious surroundings.

It is the greatest discovery, in short, because it will elevate man from an irrational, inconsistent, fighting, and contending animal, to a new existence, in which he will become a peaceful, consistent, rational, intellectual, and happy being, occupied in promoting the happiness of all that has life, to the extent practicable, and will thus attain the highest permanent enjoyment of which humanity is capable.

The following pages contain the history, step by step, of the progress of the mission to prepare the population of the world for this great and glorious change, which, when accomplished, will yet more demonstrate the knowledge, wisdom, and goodness of the Eternal Creating Power of the Universe, and that the best has been and ever will be done for all created existences, that the eternal elements of the universe will admit, through the processes by which all created things attain maturity.

In other words, and to simplify the subject, the mission of my life appears to be, to prepare the population of the world to understand the vast importance of the second creation of humanity, from the birth of each individual, through the agency of man, by creating entirely new surroundings in which to place all through life, and by which a new human nature would appear to arise from the new surroundings.

In taking a calm retrospect of my life from the earliest remembered period of it to the present hour, there appears to me to have been a succession of extraordinary or out-of-the-usual-way events, forming connected links of a

chain, to compel me to proceed onward to complete a mission, of which I have been an impelled agent, without merit or demerit of any kind on my part.

That mission has been to point out to humanity the way to remove from it the cause of sin and misery, and how in place thereof to attain for all of our race in perpetuity a new existence of universal goodness, wisdom, and happiness, and to withdraw from man all unkindness to man and even to animal life over the earth, so far as may be consistent with his own happy progress while upon it.

This great and self-evident truth – ‘that the Creating Power gives all the qualities to the forms created,’ is the knowledge required in man to harmonise the earth and its varied products, and especially to harmonise man to nature by consistent obedience to all her laws; and thus to unite mankind through future ages as one man, with one language, feeling, interest, and object, as is the evident ultimate destiny of our race. By withdrawing all responsibility from the created, and of course all praise, blame, reward, and punishment, and by acquiring a knowledge of the science of the influence of surroundings upon humanity, and how to combine them in order and with wisdom, man may now be made a terrestrial angel of goodness and wisdom, and to inhabit a terrestrial paradise.

The means to effect this change already amply exist, and to their increase there can be no assignable limits.

These means have increased enormously during the last century, and they are advancing in a continually increasing ratio, without cause to fear that they ever again cease to progress.

The means for universal human happiness are inexhaustible, and therefore all fear of overtaking them, or that they will wear out, may be abandoned.

Consequently, by setting aside all ideas of making the created responsible for the qualities given to it by the power or powers creating it, and by teaching humanity and science of the influence of surroundings in principle and practice, the earth will gradually be made a fit abode for superior men and women, under a New Dispensation, which will make the earth a paradise and its inhabitants angels.

How easily now could this change be made, by a truly holy alliance of the leading governments and church authorities!

Or by the people, if they knew how to unite to be governed by the laws of God and nature, instead of submitting to the everchanging, wicked, and absurd artificial laws of men, made to endeavour to oppose those divine laws.

Sevenoaks Park, Sevenoaks
September, 1857

ROBERT OWEN

LIFE
OF
ROBERT OWEN

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY EARLY LIFE

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

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

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

I suppose that on their marriage they settled in Newtown, – my father taking up his own calling as a saddler and ironmonger. He was also post-master as long as he lived. He had the general management of the parish affairs, being better acquainted, as it appears, with its finances and business, than any other party in the township. I never thought of enquiring of him for any particulars respecting his father or mother, both being dead before I was born; and owing to the then very bad state of the roads there was comparatively little communication for young persons between Newtown and Welshpool. All that I can recollect respecting my father's family is, hearing my father say, in a conversation with older members of the family, that he lost an estate of the value of five hundred pounds a year in a lawsuit, which he afterwards ascertained was lost

^a Robert Owen (1741–1804).

^b The Williamses in Newtown were grocers, bakers, coopers, tailors and mantua-makers.

^c Anne Owen née Williams (? d. 1803).

through his own lawyer being bribed. Newtown was at this period a very small market town, not containing more than one thousand inhabitants, – a neat, clean, beautifully situated country village, rather than a town, with the ordinary trades, but no manufactures except a very few flannel looms. I have not seen it since this clean village has been converted into a dirty but thriving manufacturing town of some consequence.

At this period there was a bridge of wood over the river Severn, which I remember with a deep impression, having nearly lost my life upon it, as I will relate hereafter.

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

This must have been shortly before he left his estate, I suppose from being in debt, for it soon passed into other hands. My next recollection is being in school in apartments in the mansion of this estate, and a Mr Thickness, or some such name,^c was the schoolmaster. I must have been sent young to school, – probably at between four and five years of age, – for I cannot remember first going there. But I recollect being very anxious to be first in school and first home, and the boys had always a race from the school to the town, and, being a fast runner, I was usually at home the first, and almost always the first at school in the morning. On one occasion my haste nearly cost my me life. I used to have for breakfast a basin of flummery, – a food prepared in Wales from flour, and eaten with milk, and which is usually given to children as the Scotch use oatmeal porridge. It is pleasant, and nutritious, and is generally liked by young persons. I requested that this breakfast might be always ready when I returned from school, so that I might eat it speedily, in

^a Robert Owen was himself baptised on 12 June 1771. Little is known about his brothers William or Richard. Anne Owen (1765–1844) married Thomas Davies; her son John Davies was born in 1810. She later married Joseph Weaver, who kept the Newtown post office for over forty years. John Thomas Owen was born in mid-1767 and died the following year, being buried on 30 August 1768. John Owen was born in 1769. Matthew Owen was born 7 November 1773.

^b Sir John Powell Pryce of Newtown (1723–76), the eccentric sixth baronet about whom Owen must have heard much. The son of Sir John Pryce (1698–1761), who married three times, and kept the bodies of his first two wives embalmed on either side of his bed, he succeeded to much diminished and heavily mortgaged estates with the title in 1761. Later blinded in a freak accident, he was reputed to continue to follow the hounds nonetheless. He died penniless in the King's Bench Prison, and was buried in Newtown six weeks later. When Owen died Newtown Hall was the residence of his last physician, Dr Slyman.

^c William Thickens.

order to be the first back again to school. One morning, when about five years old, I ran home as usual from school, found my basin of flummery ready, and as I supposed sufficiently cooled for eating, for no heat appeared to arise from it. It had skinned over as when quite cold; but on my hastily taking a spoonful of it, I found it was quite scalding hot, the body of it retaining all its heat. The consequence was an instant fainting, from the stomach being scalded. In that state I remained so long, that my parents thought life was extinct. However, after a considerable period I revived; but from that day my stomach became incapable of digesting food, except the most simple and in small quantity at a time. This made me attend to the effects of different qualities of food on my changed constitution, and gave me the habit of close observation and of continual reflection; and I have always thought that this accident had a great influence in forming my character.

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

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

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

^a Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

^b Peter Longueville, *The Hermit; or, The Unparalleled Sufferings and Surprising Adventures of Mr. Philip Quarill* (1727).

^c Samuel Richardson (1689–1761): author of *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa Harlowe* (1747), and other works.

^d Charles Rollin, *The Ancient History* (1738–40).

At this period, probably when I was between eight and nine years of age, three maiden ladies became intimate in our family, and they were Methodists. They took a great fancy to me, and gave me many of their books to read. As I was religiously inclined, they were very desirous to convert me to their peculiar faith. I read and studied the books they gave me with great attention; but as I read religious works of all parties, I became surprised, first at the opposition between the different sects of Christians, afterwards at the deadly hatred between the Jews, Christians, Mahomedans, Hindoos, Chinese, etc, etc, and between these and what they called Pagans and Infidels. The study of these contending faiths, and their deadly hatred to each other, began to create doubts in my mind respecting the truth of any one of these divisions. While studying and thinking with great earnestness upon these subjects, I wrote three sermons, and I was called the little parson. These sermons I kept until I met with Stern's^a works, in which I found among his sermons three so much like them in idea and turn of mind,^b that it occurred to me as I read them that I should be considered a plagiarist, and without thought, as I could not bear any such suspicion, I hastily threw them into the fire; which I often after regretted, as I should like to know now how I then thought and expressed myself on such subjects.

But certain it is that my reading religious works, combined with my other readings, compelled me to feel strongly at ten years of age that there must be something fundamentally wrong in all religions, as they had been taught up to that period.

During my childhood, and for many years afterwards, it never occurred to me that there was anything in my habits, thoughts, and actions, different from those of others of my age; but when looking back and comparing my life with many others, I have been induced to attribute any favorable difference to the effects produced at the early period when my life was endangered by the spoonful of scalding flummery. Because from that time I was compelled to notice the effects produced by different kinds of food on my constitution, which had been also deeply injured in its powers of digestion. I could not eat and drink as others of my age, and I was thus compelled to live in some respects the life of a hermit as regards temperance. I entered however into the amusements of those of my own standing, and followed the games played by boys at that period in that part of the country, – such as marbles, hand and foot ball, etc. I also attended the dancing school for some time, and in all these games and exercises I excelled not only those of my own age, but those two or three years older, and I was so active that I was the best runner and leaper, both as to height and distance, in the school. I attempted also to learn music, and to

^a Laurence Sterne (1713–68): British novelist, best known for his *Sentimental Journey* (1768).

^b See Laurence Sterne, *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (1760).

play upon the clarionet, and during my noviciate, as my father's house was in the middle of the principal street, I fear I must have annoyed all the neighbourhood, – for my 'God Save the King' and similar tunes were heard almost all over the town. But I do not recollect that any formal complaint was ever made. I was too much of a favorite with the whole town for my benefit, and was often pitted against my equals, and sometimes against my superiors in age, – sometimes for one thing and sometimes for another. I have often reflected since how unjust such proceedings are in principle, and how injurious in practice. One instance of this made a deep impression on my mind. Some party bet with another that I could write better than my next eldest brother, John, who was two years older; and upon a formal trial, at which judges were appointed, it was decided that my writing was the better, although as far as I could then form an opinion I thought my brother's was as good as my own. From that day I do not think my brother had as strong an affection for me as he had before this unwise competition.

I have said that such competitions are unjust, because, as no two organisations are the same, there can be no just comparison between the competing efforts of any two individuals, – while the successful one is thus taught vanity, and the unsuccessful, jealousy and hatred.

When between six and eight years of age, I was often a visitor at Parson Drake's, of the Rowe, who was the rector or vicar of an adjoining parish – I think it was the parish with the name of which I have often amused myself with my English, Scotch, and other friends, by asking them, when speaking of it, to pronounce it after my spelling it, or to spell it after my pronunciation. This puzzling name is spelled thus, Llanllwchaioin.^a Those accustomed to it can easily pronounce it; but not those who are unacquainted with Welsh names and the mode of spelling them.

This clergyman was a direct descendant of Admiral Drake, and was very eccentric as a minister. He took me to church with him on a Sunday after he had had a difference with the squire of the parish, and to my surprise and the astonishment of the congregation he gave a most severe personal lecture to the squire during his sermon, – so personal and severe, that before its conclusion the squire, who was present with his family, became extremely uneasy in his very conspicuous pew, and at length prepared to leave it, when Mr Drake stopped, and looking towards him, said, 'Don't be in a hurry, I shall have done soon and you had better sit quiet.' This scene made a deep impression upon me, and never left my memory. About this period also a young gentleman, a Mr James Donne,^b who was studying for the church, either at Oxford or at Cambridge, came upon a visit to Newtown during a vacation, and I became his

^a The modern spelling of the parish, to the northwest of Newtown, is Llanllwchaiarn.

^b James Donne (1764–1844) studied at St John's College, Cambridge (M.A., 1792), and was headmaster of Oswestry Grammar School, Salop, for thirty-six years.

every day companion. He was then about nineteen, and I was between eight and nine. The country around Newtown is I believe generally considered to be interesting and beautiful, and Mr Donne and myself, while he remained upon his visit, rambled about the woods and lanes and higher grounds to examine the scenery in all directions. These excursions with a man of his cultivated taste and superior conversation awakened in me a sense of pleasure which I ever afterwards experienced in observing nature in its every variety – a pleasure which as I advanced in years continued and increased. The friendship thus commenced, strengthened with our years, and continued to the death of Mr Donne, who became well known and highly respected as Dr Donne of Oswestry. We had much correspondence, and when I had aroused the thinking faculties of the civilised world by the great public meetings which I held in the City of London Tavern in 1817,^a I was surprised by receiving a letter from my much valued friend, Dr Donne, to inform me that he had taken a pleasant task upon himself, which was to trace my pedigree, and had discovered that I was a regular descendant from the Princes of North Wales. Good man! I have no doubt he thought it was information that would gratify me, and that therefore he had taken all that trouble. But being at that time occupied with great public questions and extensive private business, I neglected this private affair, and never made the least enquiry respecting it, and I am afraid, owing to these circumstances, that I never made any suitable acknowledgement for the kindness intended.

During the school holidays I was in the habit of visiting my relations, who were farmers living at no great distance from Newtown. Among these I remember three. Turners of Penarth,^b Goodwins of the Court,^c and Williams of Vaynor,^d but afterwards of Old Hall near Kerry, a village three or four miles from Newtown. The two first named were married to sisters of my mother, as I now conjecture; the third was brother to my mother, and I believe her only brother living at that period. My most frequent visits were to this family, in which was an only child, a son named Richard after his father, and one year younger than myself.^e We were always great friends, much attached to each other and delighted to be together.

My cousin had the finest natural qualities I have ever seen in any youth, and he had received a superior education for the time and for the locality in which

^a See *infra*, pp. 208–17, and *infra*, vol. 1, pp. 183–210.

^b Penarth Farm is two miles northeast of Newtown, on the Severn. The Turners were tanners, grocers, innkeepers, blacksmiths and mantua-makers.

^c The Court is three and three-quarter miles northeast of Newtown, near the Severn and Abermule.

^d Vaynor was one and a quarter miles southwest of the town centre of Newtown. The Williamses in Newtown were grocers, bakers, coopers, tailors and mantua-makers.

^e Richard Williams (b. 1772). Old Hall is six miles east of Newtown. There does not appear to be one in Kerry.

his father resided. He had been sent to a distant boarding school. Although a year younger, he was much my superior in almost everything – for in whatever he attempted he far excelled all of his age. And yet what he did was done in a quiet manner without apparent effort. He seemed to be unconscious of his own extraordinary powers. The Williamses, as I have said, were naturally a superior family of their class, and the mother of my cousin was one of the best of women I ever saw in her rank of life. Every one who knew her, loved her, and every one liked to enjoy the hospitality of the family, which was well known over the country to a considerable distance. Our grandfather lived with them until he was upwards of ninety, and one of my earliest recollections is the sight of this old man sitting by the fire in his son's house. My cousin and I read and thought much, and yet we were both generally very active. But one very hot day in hay-harvest time we felt ourselves, being over-clothed, quite overcome with heat while we sauntered from the house towards a large field where numerous hay-makers were actively at work. They appeared to us, who had been doing nothing and yet were overcome with heat, to be cool and comfortable. I said 'Richard! how is this? These active workpeople are not heated, but are pleasantly cool, and do not suffer as we do from the heat. There must be some secret in this. Let us try to find it out. Let us do exactly as they do, and work with them.' He willingly agreed. I was, I suppose, between nine and ten years of age, and he was between eight and nine. We observed that all the men were without their coats and waistcoats, and had their shirts open. We adopted the same practice, – procured the lightest rakes and forks – for both were used occasionally, – and Richard and I, unburthened of our heavy clothing, led the field for several hours, and were cooler and less fatigued than when we were idle and wasting our time. This became ever afterwards a good *experience* and *lesson* to both; for we found ourselves much more comfortable with active employment than when we were idle.

My cousin grew up the finest young man in the whole country round – a lion in strength, active and courageous far beyond all his fellows, excelling in everything which he undertook, but yet quiet and unpretending, and beloved by all who knew him. It always occurred to me that had he been favourably placed in superior society, he would have made a second and perhaps a superior 'Admirable Crichton.'^a Being an only child, and such a child, he was doated upon by his parents, and he was at all times, instead of being spoiled by such affection, a most obedient and attentive son to them. But a single error of his father, who was obstinate in abiding by what he deemed just, destroyed the high promise of this fine human being. He fell in love, and deeply in love, with a cousin of his mother's family, – in all ways his equal in station and property, and also an only child. The fathers of the two lovers could not agree regarding

^a Thomas Crichton, 'The Admirable' (1560–?1585): precocious Scottish youth.

the fortune to be given to each. Richard's father could give and was willing to give his son a sum at that time considered large to commence life with, and he wished the father of the young lady to advance an equal sum, as he thought he could well afford it. But the latter either could not then, or would not agree to the terms proposed; and on this my cousin's father, anxious for his son's pecuniary standing in society, refused his consent to the marriage, except on the terms he thought just. Thus was destroyed the permanent happiness of his son, who was too fond of his parents to act in opposition to their wishes, and too high spirited to complain. A coolness arose between the families. Richard suffered more than any one suspected. His feelings were strongly affected, but the obstinacy of his father was immovable, having once declared his determination. The son, who had previously been an example of temperance, began to change in this habit, – gradually became intemperate, and died prematurely, a victim to the disappointment of his affections; another warning to parents not unreasonably to interfere with the settled affections of their children. While the families were estranged, the young lady married, and shortly afterwards she became heir to a relative, who left her forty thousand pounds. These particulars were given to me too late for interference, or, as I had influence with my uncle and aunt, I might perhaps have given a very different result to these unfortunate proceedings. There was a strong early imbibed affection between my cousin and myself, and many years after, while I was directing Mr Drinkwater's^a establishment, I felt a great inclination to send for him to take part in it; for among his other qualifications he had an extraordinary genius for mechanical inventions, and he would have made a splendid engineer. I was withheld from following my inclination by the consideration that he was an only son, the stay of his parents, – that he was already in an independent position through the property of those parents, and that their separation might be painful to all the parties. When however I had been informed of the previous proceedings, I regretted that I had not induced my cousin to join me; as when I was 24 years of age, and he was 23, I could have given him the situation which I held at five hundred a year. But it was not to be, for the influence of circumstance prevented it.

But to return to my early life. I have narrated my narrow escape from being killed by the scalding of my stomach. Shortly before this event, I was doing something with the key-hole of a large door in a passage between my father's house and that of our next neighbour, and by some means I got one of my fingers fast in the key-hole, and in my attempt to get it out it was twisted so painfully that I fainted, and I know not how it came loose, for I was found in a swoon lying on the ground.

^a Peter Drinkwater (1742–1801), whose manager Owen became in 1792. See *infra*, pp. 78–95.

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

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

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

^a One James Moore was a Newtown mercer and grocer in 1790.

continued to gain knowledge of the business in which I was occupied, – continuing also to read and to take lessons in dancing.

During the period I remained giving this friendly assistance to Mr Moore, a ludicrous circumstance occurred, which left an impression which vividly remains. The parents of one of my schoolfellows, who was about my own age, kept a grocer's shop in the town. Their stock of molasses, an article then much in demand, was exhausted, and as Mr Moore kept a wholesale supply of it, my schoolfellow, whose name was John Stanley,^a came with a tub with two upright handles, to purchase as much as the tub would hold. The wholesale stock was kept in a cellar below the shop, and the entrance to this cellar was through a trap-door in the centre of the shop floor, and down the steps of a ladder. John had filled the tub quite full, and was bringing it up the ladder on his head, and on reaching the level of the floor, one of the handles of the tub came in contact with part of the floor, and the tub was upset, the molasses running over his head, which was uncovered, except with very thick hair. The molasses ran down over the whole of his clothes and person, making him one of the most laughable and at the same time pitiable figures that the imagination could paint. How he got rid of the nuisance when he arrived at home must be conjectured, – but the disaster was always remembered to his annoyance by our neighbours as long as I remained in Newtown.

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

The time had now drawn near for my departure from my parental roof, and for me to undertake a journey which in the then state of the roads was thought formidable for grown persons. From Shrewsbury I was to travel alone to London, inexperienced as I then was. At that time I knew and was known to every man, woman, and child in the town, and I called upon and took my

^a A John Stanley was a farmer and innkeeper at Newtown in 1790.

leave of every one; and I received many a keep-sake, and from the more wealthy, presents of money. I deemed myself, at ten years of age, amply provided to seek my fortune with forty shillings – the expenses of my coach hire being paid for me. I may remark here that for two years or perhaps more before I left home, my parents used to consult me when any matter of importance was to be decided, but I did not know why they asked my opinion, and was unconscious that I could give any useful advice.

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

From my own feelings, which I well remember when a child, I am convinced that very often punishment is not only useless, but very pernicious, and injurious to the punisher and punished.

Though alone in going to London, I was not to be alone when I arrived there. My eldest brother, William, had been brought up by my father to his own business, and when out of his apprenticeship, and after he had subsequently worked some years with my father, he decided to go to London, when he was between twenty and thirty, and he there obtained a situation with a Mr

Reynolds, a saddler, who then lived at No. 84, High Holburn.^a To him I was consigned, for by this time Mr Reynolds had died, and my brother had taken the business and had married the widow.

LEAVING HOME

My father took me to Welshpool, and thence I went to take coach for London at Shrewsbury, which was then the nearest place to Newtown to which there was any public conveyance to go to London. The coach left Shrewsbury at night, and an outside place had been taken for me, with the expectation that I might travel inside during the night. The proprietor, who knew my family, was going to put me inside, when some ill-tempered man, who had discovered that I had paid only for an outside place, refused to allow me to enter. It was dark, and I could not see the objector, nor discover how crowded the coach might be; – for coaches then carried six inside. I was glad afterwards that I did not know who this man was; and I never discovered him, and therefore I could not be angry with him, as I should have been, for refusing admission to a child. I then had not fully learned the principles of the formation of character, and the influence of circumstances over all that have life, or I should not have been angry or surprised at such conduct. I arrived safely in London, and was heartily welcomed by my brother, who was always partial to me, and his wife received me very kindly.

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

^a Owen's brother, William Owen, appears in London directories at this address until 1800.

^b R. H. and D. Heptinstall, haberdashers, of 6 Ludgate Hill (1780). Robert Heptinstall (d. 1796) later bought a cotton mill at Nottingham from Richard Arkwright.

^c William Tilsley.

^d James McGuffog (1747–1829): linen and woollen draper. In 1801, McGuffog entered a partnership with Robert Nickolls and James Althorp, who continued the firm after his retirement c. 1805.

MY RESIDENCE WITH MR MCGUFFOG

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

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

^a Mary McGuffog (1755–1840).

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

Mr McGuffog was much respected by these parties for his honesty and plain dealing, and was the country banker for the then Sir William Lowther, afterwards the late Earl of Lonsdale, and who, with Lady Augusta Lowther^h and family, were among the most constant frequenters of the establishment. After I left Stamford I learned from Mr McGuffog that Sir William had made him a present of one of his favorite hunters, and that Mr McGuffog, after retiring from business, often hunted with Sir William's hounds; and he remained a favorite with every one to his death.

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

^a The childless 9th Earl of Exeter (1725–93) was succeeded by his nephew, Henry Cecil (1754–1804), who divorced Emma Vernon in 1791 to marry a farmer's daughter. The romance was immortalised in Tennyson's 'The Lord of Burleigh'.

^b The 10th Earl of Westmorland had succeeded in 1774 and had married the daughter of a wealthy banker, Robert Child of Osterly. He became notorious for an indiscreet love affair while Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

^c Sir William Lowther (1757–1844), Earl of Lonsdale from 1807, afterwards became notorious for his treatment of the poet Wordsworth.

^d Brownlow, 5th Duke of Ancaster, succeeded in 1779, with the Dukedom becoming extinct on his death in 1809.

^e Sir Thomas Broughton, whose first wife died in childbirth in 1785, had a daughter two years Owen's senior. There were Broughtons in Staffordshire, Cheshire and Lincolnshire in this period.

^f Thomas Noel, 2nd Viscount Wentworth (1745–1815), owned an estate at Braddenham. Two sons of his illegitimate son, Thomas Noel, became co-operators in the 1830s.

^g Sir John Trollope (1766–1820), 6th Baronet, of Casewick, Lincolnshire. Thomas Anthony Trollope (1774–1835) was the husband of the writer Frances Trollope (1780–1863).

^h Lady Augusta Lowther (1761–1838): wife of Sir William Lowther.

One of the entrances to Burleigh Park was near the town; and in summer, and as long as the weather permitted, my chief pleasure was to go early into the park to walk, read, think, and study, in those noble avenues which were then numerous in it. Very often in the midst of summer I was thus in the park from between three and four in the morning until eight, and again in the evening from six or seven until nearly dark. I had transcribed many of Seneca's moral precepts^a into a book which I kept in my pocket; to ponder over them in the park was one of my pleasurable occupations; and in this park, which I made my study, I read many volumes of the most useful works I could obtain. At the early hour mentioned the only one I used to see taking his first walk for the day, was the Earl of Exeter,^b the uncle, I believe, of his successor, who married the miller's daughter, the subject of Tennyson's exquisite poem,^c and who was the father of the present Marquis.

This old Earl's habits were peculiar. He never allowed himself to sleep a second time in one night. At whatever hour he awoke, winter and summer, he rose, and in bad weather he went to his study, and walked when it was fine, and at four o'clock in the morning I have often seen him at his early exercise. He was also so punctual in his habits that he had the first dish of his dinner passing between the kitchen and dining room as the first stroke of the clock struck three, and he never waited for anyone who was absent or who had not arrived at his time. But he was much respected and liked by all about him. I often recur to the recollection of the many happy healthy hours I enjoyed in that park – healthy both to body and mind. Frequently in the morning I hailed the rising sun, and in the evening watched its setting and the rising of the moon.

In the second year of my apprenticeship our circle was increased in the house by the addition of a sister and a niece of Mrs McGuffog's – the first about nineteen, and the second about ten years old, and our pleasure was increased; for there was a mutual good feeling among all the members of the family, except that the old bachelor, David Sloane, was the least satisfied with himself and others, and seemed jealous of the general kindness shown to me by all the members of the family, and of the preference to be served by me shown by many of the regular customers when they could make a choice between us. He was penurious in his habits and somewhat more selfish than is suitable for creating friends. A ludicrous instance occurred to make these failings, which he could not avoid, somewhat conspicuous. He slept in a room adjoining the wholesale department, and occasionally, when it was full and over stocked,

^a See Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Select Epistles on Several Moral Subjects* (1739). Like other Stoics, Seneca taught that wisdom was the key to goodness, and that true virtue was possible only by rising above pain, pleasure, fear and desire.

^b Brownlow, 9th Earl of Exeter (1725–93), whose nephew's son was the 2nd Marquess (1795–1879).

^c Alfred Tennyson, *The Miller's Daughter* (1858).

some of the surplus was occasionally put into his room, and at the time of the event narrated, some fine and expensive articles happened to be placed on a table in his room. He was very careful of his clothes, and took pleasure in preserving their new appearance as long as practicable. He had just bought a new pair of breeches – for pantaloons had not then been introduced, – and in going to bed he put them on the table where these goods were placed. On going into bed he had put out his light in such a manner that the sparks or snuffing of the candle had fallen unperceived by him among these goods, and near to his own new purchase. He fell asleep, and some of the articles upon the table were burnt, and among them David's new purchase, except some of the buttons and some fragments. The smell of fire soon aroused Mr and Mrs McGuffog, who immediately raised the alarm, and all hastily arose in their night clothes. The smoke was discovered to issue from David's room, and on bursting open the door, David, who was asleep hastily awoke. The burning articles upon the table disclosed the cause of alarm, and water was immediately procured and the fire soon put out. When the danger was over, all the parties began to look at each other, – but David was the conspicuous figure. In his night shirt and coloured night-cap he stood by the table, looking most wofully, and taking up fragment after fragment of his burnt clothing, – regardless of the danger which he had created, and of the loss sustained by Mr McGuffog through the goods which were burnt or spoiled with the water, – he ejaculated, as he held up each piece or button, 'Oh my new breeches! – Oh my new breeches!' and this for some time was all that could be obtained from him when questioned as to the origin of the fire, until at length the scene became so farcical and ludicrous that no one could avoid laughing at him, and he was left, looking most miserable, to his own reflections until the morning. But, poor fellow, – 'Oh my new breeches!' was never afterwards forgotten, and it was a joke which at length none but those who desired to torment him would recall to his remembrance. Many years afterwards, when we were both advanced in life, I met him in Manchester, when, with great agitation taking me cordially by the hand, he said with extraordinary earnestness, – 'Will you forgive me the injuries I have formerly done you?' I said 'I do not know of any injury I ever experienced from you, and therefore I have nothing to forgive.' – 'Yes,' he said, 'you have, and it has often made me very unhappy, – and do say you forgive me.' 'Whatever it may be, I know nothing of it, – but if it can be of any satisfaction to you, I forgive you with all my heart, without wishing to know in what way you suppose the injury was done to me.' The poor fellow seemed quite relieved from a burden upon his mind, and left me with a gratified countenance, again shaking me cordially by the hand.

Mr McGuffog was of the church of Scotland, Mrs McGuffog of the church of England, and they agreed to go in the morning to the service of the one, and in the afternoon to that of the other, and they always took me with them. I listened to the contending sermons, for they were often, and indeed most

had been sometime writing this letter, and after I had sent it through the post office Mr and Mrs McGuffog asked me what I had been so interested about. I said 'I have been writing a letter to Mr Pitt.' 'To Mr Pitt!' they exclaimed with some astonishment – 'What could you have to say to Mr Pitt?' I said it was about the Sabbath being so shamefully employed as it was by many in Stamford, some of whom even kept their shops open on that day. They looked at each other and smiled; – but at that time I thought there was nothing extraordinary in it. In about eight or ten days afterwards, Mr McGuffog brought a London newspaper, and said to me, – 'Here is an answer to your letter to Mr Pitt.' I expected no answer, and was taken by surprise, and blushed very much. I asked what was the answer – he said it was 'a long proclamation from the government, recommending all parties to keep the Sabbath more strictly.'^a I was of course quite gratified, having no doubt my letter had produced that result; when, no doubt, such a letter as I could then have written would be opened and put into the waste paper basket, and would never be heard of by Mr Pitt. My letter going at that period must have been a mere coincidence; for the proclamation, as far as I can recollect, was a formal well considered document of the government, and probably had been determined upon before my letter was in the post office. It however pleased me at the time, and amazed Mr and Mrs McGuffog.

After my three years had expired, Mr McGuffog wished me to remain with him, and to continue as an assistant for a year longer. During this period I had acquired as much knowledge of the business in which I was engaged as the situation afforded, and although I had lived most happily in this family, and could have remained as long as I liked, my wishes were for the attainment of more knowledge and an enlarged field of action. I therefore reluctantly, on account of the kindness I had uniformly experienced from Mr and Mrs McGuffog and their relatives, expressed my desire to return to London. Very friendly offers were made to detain me; but my determination was fixed, and with strong recommendations from Mr McGuffog, I returned to my brother's house in London, now between fourteen and fifteen years of age. While I remained in Stamford, I never saw any one whom I had previously known; – but one day, as I was passing the George Inn, the principal hotel in the place, I saw a person at the entrance talking to a gentleman, and who was so like my father, that I concluded it must be he, and while the conversation continued I walked past them and returned several times, being more and more convinced it must be my father. At length the conversation terminated, and I then came very near to my supposed father, so as to catch his eye and draw his attention to me, but there was no sign of recognition on his part, and it was only from that

^a For the 1781 debates, see *The Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 22 (1814), pp. 262–89.

circumstance that I discovered my mistake, for the likeness still appeared to me perfect. My disappointment may be easily imagined.

Having been so long absent from my relations and friends, I was glad to spend some months with my brother William, for there was always a strong attachment between us; and I spent some time in seeing the sights of London, and becoming acquainted with its principal localities, walking in the parks, and particularly in Kensington Gardens on fine Sundays with my brother and his wife.

It was at this period I visited my parents and relatives in Wales. I spent some time with my family in Newtown, and with my relatives in the neighbourhood. I was uncommonly well received by all parties, and spent some time with my cousin and former companion Richard Williams, who was then living at his father's new purchase of Old Hall, near Kerry, Montgomeryshire. I also visited my sister in Radnorshire, who had married a Mr Davis.^a My stay in Wales was but for a short period, for I was anxious to be again in business, and my funds required my expenses to be limited. I therefore returned to my brother's house in London, and only once afterwards to the present time have visited Newtown. But I feel a great desire now to see it in its very altered state from what it was when I first left it, and I hope to see it during the next summer should my health permit.

After some time of this relaxation from business it was necessary for me to seek for a new situation, and through Mr McGuffog's recommendation I procured one with Messrs Flint and Palmer, an old established house on old London Bridge, Borough side, overlooking the Thames.^b It was a house established, and I believe the first, to sell at a small profit for ready money only. The house was already wealthy, making all their purchases with money, and continuing very successful. The house was originally established by Mr Flint, who made what was then deemed a large fortune for a retail trade, and he had an only daughter, who was married to Mr Palmer, a very respectable and gentlemanly person for his position, and an honest and practical man of business. When Mr Flint died, the establishment and the large capital were left to the widow and the son-in-law and daughter. Mr Palmer had two younger brothers now in the business, – the youngest of them about my age. There were a considerable number of both sexes, and some of advanced age, old assistants, at this time employed to attend to different departments in the business. My previous habits prepared me to take an efficient part in the retail division of the business of serving. I was lodged and boarded in the house, and had a salary of twenty-five pounds a year, and I thought myself rich and independent, for I

^a Anne Owen married Thomas Davies, and later the Newtown postmaster Joseph Weaver.

^b The haberdashers, of 324 Borough, London Bridge, Southwark, were evidently William Flint, who had been partner with one Sebire at this location in 1776, and Benjamin Palmer, whose partnership appears to have begun in 1781 or 1782. The firm survived until 1825.

had more than sufficient to supply all my personal wants. Soon, however, as the spring advanced, I found this was a different situation to the one I had enjoyed at Stamford. The customers were of an inferior class, – they were treated differently. Not much time was allowed for bargaining, a price being fixed for everything, and, compared with other houses, cheap. If any demur was made, or much hesitation, the article asked for was withdrawn, and, as the shop was generally full from morning till late in the evening, another customer was attended to.

The habits of this very independent establishment being generally known, the article asked for was presented, taken at once, and paid for, all with great dispatch, and a large business was thus daily transacted. The favour appeared to be more to the purchaser than to the seller of the articles. But to the assistants in this busy establishment the duties were very onerous. They were up and had breakfasted and were dressed to receive customers in the shop at eight o'clock; – and dressing then was no slight affair. Boy as I was then, I had to wait my turn for the hairdresser to powder and pomatum and curl my hair, for I had two large curls on each side, and a stiff pigtail, and until all this was very nicely and systematically done, no one could think of appearing before a customer. Between eight and nine the shop began to fill with purchasers, and their number increased until it was crowded to excess, although a large apartment, and this continued until late in the evening; usually until ten, or half-past ten, during all the spring months. Dinner and tea were hastily taken, – two or three, sometimes only one, escaping at a time to take what he or she could the most easily swallow, and returning to take the places of others who were serving. The only regular meals at this season were our breakfasts, except on Sundays, on which days a good dinner was always provided, and was much enjoyed. But when the purchasers left at ten or half past ten, before the shop could be quite clear a new part of the business was to be commenced. The articles dealt in as haberdashery were innumerable, and these when exposed to the customers were tossed and tumbled and unfolded in the utmost confusion and disorder, and there was no time or space to put anything right and in order during the day. This was a work to be performed with closed doors after the customers had been shut out at eleven o'clock; and it was often two o'clock in the morning before the goods in the shop had been put in order and replaced to be ready for the next day's similar proceedings. Frequently at two o'clock in the morning, after being actively engaged on foot all day from eight o'clock in the morning, I have scarcely been able with the aid of the bannisters to go up stairs to bed. And then I had but about five hours for sleep.

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

kindly treated. The youngest Palmer, a good and fine youth, took a great liking to me, and we became great friends, and spent our Sundays in some excursion always together, and as the less busy season advanced we began to enjoy our leisure hours in out of door exercise or in reading. His habits were good and his manners very pleasing. With this change I was becoming every day more and more reconciled to this new mode of life. I was beginning to enjoy it, having forgotten that I had requested my friend to look out for another situation, when, really to my regret, I learned from my brother that my former friend Mr Neptinstall,^a of No. 6, Ludgate Hill, had obtained the offer of a very good situation for me, from a Mr Satterfield,^b who carried on a wholesale and retail establishment in Manchester; – that it was a first-rate house, and that he offered me, beside board, lodging, and washing, in his house, *forty pounds a year*. This was too great a temptation, too large an offer, to be declined, and especially as my friend, deeming it for my interest, had given Mr Satterfield reason to expect that I would accept it. I then reluctantly had to give due notice to Mr Palmer, that I must leave him, and we parted with I believe mutual regret, for I felt very unwilling to separate myself from my young friend William Palmer, who closely associated himself with me in all our leisure hours.

In this situation I was obliged to acquire habits of quickness in business, and of great industry, long continued day after day without ceasing. I also acquired the knowledge of the character of another class of society, totally different from the Stamford customers of Mr McGuffog, and another mode of carrying on business. Mr McGuffog's was one of system and great order. No confusion at any time, even when the most busy; for the rule of his house was, never to bring on the counter a second article until the first was returned and neatly put in its proper place. Thus when the customers were gone there was little to do, for everything was in order.

It just occurs to me here, that I have not named one remarkable trait in Mr McGuffog's character, which was, that he would have a reasonable profit upon what he sold, and would never take advantage of the ignorance or inexperience of any one. An instance of this stubborn honesty occurred while I was with him, which instructed me in the waywardness of human nature, and at the time amused me. One of the rich Lincolnshire farmers, and many of them were wealthy at this period, died, and left his widow and family more wealth than they knew how advantageously to spend. The widow, shortly after she became so, was desirous of buying at Mr McGuffog's establishment a piece of the finest Irish linen for chemises that he had for sale. Now Mr McGuffog was

^a Heptinstall.

^b John Satterfield, who founded Satterfield and Co., a firm of silk mercers and linen drapers, in 1775. This was located at 5 St Ann's Square in 1794. He was appointed Royal linen draper for Manchester in 1791 after attending George III, Queen Charlotte and five princesses with his wares.

in the habit of buying the finest articles of every description that he could meet with, going frequently to London to make these purchases to supply his regular customers among the high nobility; and he had at this time the finest Irish linens that could be manufactured – then an expensive article. In conformity with this new widow's request, Mr McGuffog brought her one of the finest pieces that he had purchased, and the finest that could be then made by any manufacturer. The price was eight shillings the yard, allowing him his usual moderate profit. The lady looked and looked again at this fabric, and said, 'Have you no finer than this piece, which is not fine enough for my purpose?' Mr McGuffog was much surprised at this speech, for he knew it was fine enough to satisfy the wants of the first duchess in the land. But with his usual knowledge of character, he said – 'Upon recollection I may have in my upper warehouse a finer piece – I will go and see.' He went, and brought the fellow piece to the one he had previously shown at eight shillings, and he said, 'I have found one, but the price is ten shillings per yard, and is perhaps higher in price than you would wish to give.' The widow examined this new piece, and said no, it was not too high in price, and was the very fabric she wished for. Mr McGuffog smiled within himself when he discovered, as he suspected, that the fabric in this instance valued by its cost, and not for its intrinsic worth, as he knew was often the case. But, as I said, he never would take advantage of the ignorance or want of experience in rich or poor, and in making out the bill he charged this so called ten-shillings-a-yard piece, at the rate of eight shillings only, saying he would not charge her more, because at that price it afforded him a fair profit. The widow said nothing, but never again was a customer. So much for honest dealing in a tradesman.

To return to my narrative. On leaving Messrs Flint and Palmer's, I went to reside with Mr Satterfield in Manchester. His establishment was then the first in his line in the retail department, but not much to boast of as a wholesale warehouse. It was upon the whole pretty well managed. Mr Satterfield was an indifferent buyer of goods for his trade, but an excellent salesman. Mr McGuffog was an extremely good buyer, and when goods are well and judiciously purchased for a local trade, they almost sell themselves, and give little trouble to the seller; while if they are not bought with judgment, the trouble of sale is greatly increased. The good buyer also is almost sure to gain success to his business; – while indifferent buyers scarcely ever succeed in accumulating independence. Hence Mr McGuffog retired from business with what, in those days, was considered a good fortune for a retail tradesman, leaving his widow upwards of one thousand a year, besides other gifts; while Mr Satterfield, with a larger business, and with great toil and labour, and much anxiety, could only during his life clear his way, unable to purchase except on credit. His son,^a I

^a Joshua Satterfield (1790–1872).

understood, who succeeded to his business, was more fortunate. Here also, however, I was very comfortable, and gained new experience in another class in society. Mr Satterfield's customers were generally of the upper middle class – the well-to-do manufacturers' and merchants' wives and families – a class intermediate between Mr McGuffog's and Messrs. Flint and Palmer's, – and I thus become acquainted with the ideas and habits of this class.

Our living was good, our treatment kind, and the young persons assisting in the business were generally from respectable families and well behaved, and none were over taxed with occupation in their respective departments. I therefore soon became reconciled to the change which my friend had made for me, and with forty pounds a year, over my board, lodging, and washing, I deemed myself overflowing with wealth, having more than my temperate habits required, for I had never accustomed myself to strong liquors of any kind, and my eating was always moderate and of the most simple and easily digested quality. I thus continued until I was eighteen years of age. Among other articles which we sold were wires for the foundation or frame of ladies' bonnets. The manufacturer of these wire bonnet-frames was a mechanic with some small inventive powers and a very active mind. When he brought his weekly supply of wire frames, I had to receive them from him, and he began to tell me about great and extraordinary discoveries that were beginning to be introduced into Manchester for spinning cotton by new and curious machinery. He said he was endeavouring to see and to get a knowledge of them, and that if he could succeed he could make a very good business of it. This kind of conversation was frequently renewed by the wire manufacturer, whose name was Jones.^a At length he told me he had succeeded in seeing these machines at work, and he was sure he could make them and work them. He had however no capital, and he could not begin without some. He said that with one hundred pounds he could commence and soon accumulate capital sufficient to proceed; and he ended by saying that if I would advance one hundred pounds, I should have one half of the great profits that were to result if I would join him in partnership. He made me believe that he had obtained a great secret, and that if assisted as he stated, he could soon make a good business. I wrote to my brother William in London, to ask him if he could conveniently advance me the sum required, and he immediately sent me the hundred pounds. I had now to give notice to Mr Satterfield according to our engagement, and that because I was going into a new business for myself. He was, I believe, disappointed, for I had by this time become a useful and steady assistant, and a favourite server with his principal customers. During the time between my giving notice and finally leaving Mr Satterfield's establishment, Jones and I had agreed with a builder

^a Probably John Jones, a machine-maker, of 58 Water Street.

that he should erect and let to us a large machine workshop, with rooms also for some cotton spinners, and the building was finished by the time I left Mr Satterfield. We had shortly about forty men at work to make machines, and we obtained wood, iron, and brass, for their construction, upon credit.

I soon found however that Jones was a mere working mechanic, without any idea how to manage workmen, or how to conduct business on the scale on which he had commenced.

I had not the slightest knowledge of this new machinery – had never seen it at work. I was totally ignorant of what was required; but as there were so many men engaged to work for us, I knew that their wages must be paid, and that if they were not well looked after, our business must soon cease and end in our ruin. Jones knew little about book-keeping, finance matters, or the superintendence of men. I therefore undertook to keep the accounts – pay and receive all; and I was the first and last in the manufactory. I looked very wisely at the men in their different departments, although I really knew nothing. But by intensely observing everything, I maintained order and regularity throughout the establishment, which proceeded under such circumstances far better than I had anticipated. We made what are technically called ‘mules’ for spinning cotton, sold them, and appeared to be carrying on a good business; while, having discovered the want of business capacity in my partner, I proceeded with fear and trembling.

We had not been in business many months, when a capitalist with moderate means, thinking the prospects of the establishment very good, applied to Jones to be allowed to join him with increased means,^a on the supposition that Jones was the efficient man of business, and that if I could be induced to leave it, he (the applicant, whose name I have forgotten,) could easily do what I did. They hesitated to break their intentions to me, under the impression that I should be very unwilling to leave a business holding out so fair a prospect of future success. They at once offered me terms, which, if I had declined to accept, they would, I afterwards found, have increased, in order to secure to themselves this, as they considered, thriving business, and which with continued good looking after and good management might have become so. But I was too happy to separate from Jones, to hesitate to accept their proposal. They offered to give me for my share of the business six mule machines such as we were making for sale, a reel, and a making up machine, with which to pack the yarn when finished in skeins into bundles for sale. I had now, when about nineteen years of age, to begin the world on my own account, having the promise of the machinery named to commence with.

When I left Mr Satterfield’s business I had to find new lodgings – another

^a Jones’s subsequent partnership appears to have been short-lived.

untried step in my existence. In St Ann's Square, in which Mr Satterfield's shop was situated, lived an elderly widow, who took lodgers and boarders. Here were two respectable travellers already established when I applied, and I found I could have a bed room to myself, – a sitting room, fronting the square, in company with these gentleman travelling for some respectable manufacturing houses, – and board, such as they had, for half a guinea a week. I accepted it, found the house clean, the attendance good, – tea or coffee, etc, for breakfast, – a hot joint, well cooked, and a pudding or pie daily for dinner, – tea in the afternoon, – and good bread and cheese and butter, and a glass of ale, at supper, – and I do not recollect ever living, as mere living, better, or more to my satisfaction. But how this old widow continued thus to supply us and to get her own living out of us, I could never understand. Perhaps the house was her own; and provisions were then (1789–90,) cheap, and manufacturing luxury had not commenced. The widow always appeared cheerful and satisfied. We had all our meals alone; and here I remained as long as I continued in partnership with Mr Jones. Now, I suppose, for the same accommodation in St Ann's Square, I should have to pay from 30s. to 40s. per week.

During my partnership with Mr Jones I received a letter from my early master, Mr McGuffog, who was becoming old and wealthy. He wished me to join him in his business, and held out one strong temptation to me. He offered to supply all the capital, and to give me half of the profits immediately, and the whole business, so well established, after a very few years. Thanking him cordially for his very liberal offer and kind intentions, I was of course obliged to decline it. Often have I reflected since, how different would have been the history of my life had I accepted this business, which ninety-nine out of a hundred young men at my age and in my circumstances would have rejoiced to obtain, and perhaps not one out of a thousand would have refused.

Had I accepted this offer I should probably have married Mr McGuffog's niece, who many years afterwards, I learned from herself, young as we were, had become much attached to me; and as we should have been heirs to the property of both Mr and Mrs McGuffog after their death, I should most likely have lived and died a rich Stamford linen draper. This however was not to be, – for a different field of action was preparing for me. When I separated from Jones and the machine making business, I took a large newly erected building, or factory, as such places were then beginning to be called. It was situated in Ancoats Lane. I rented it from a builder of the name of Woodruff,^a with whom I afterwards went to board and lodge. From Jones and his new partners I received *three* out of six mule machines which were promised, with the reel and making up machine; and with this stock I commenced business for myself in a small part of one of the large rooms in this large building.

^a Christopher Woodroffe: a Manchester builder and land surveyor located at Ancoats Lane in 1794 and 6 Red-Cross Street in 1797.

The machines were set to work, and I engaged three men to work them – that is, to spin cotton yarn or thread upon them from a previous preparation called rovings. When the yarn was spun, it was in the cop form, from which it was to be made upon the reel into hanks, each one hundred and forty yards in length. This operation I performed, and then made these hanks into bundles of five pounds weight each, and in this state, wrapped neatly up in paper, I sold them to a Mr Mitchell, an agent from some mercantile manufacturing houses in Glasgow, who sold the yarn to muslin weavers, or manufactured it themselves. The manufacture of British muslins was but in its infancy. The first British muslins were made when I was an apprentice with Mr McGuffog, by a Mr Oldknow^a at Stockport in Cheshire, about seven miles from Manchester, who must have commenced this branch about the year 1780, 81, or 82; and it is curious to trace the history of this manufacture.

When I first went to Mr McGuffog, there were no other muslins for sale, except those made in the East Indies, and known as East India muslins; but while I was with him Mr Oldknow began to manufacture a fabric which he called, by way of distinction, British Mull Muslin. It was a new article in the market, less than a yard wide, for which he charged to Mr McGuffog 9s. or 9s. 6d., and which Mr McG. resold to his customers at half a guinea per yard. It was eagerly sought for, and rapidly bought up by the nobility at that price, – and Mr McGuffog could not obtain from Mr Oldknow a supply equal to his demand. He was obliged to beg and pray of Mr Oldknow to add a piece or two more to his weekly order for them, but frequently without success. Such is the all-powerful influence of fashion and its absurdities under the present disorder of the human intellects, that the parties who were then so eager to buy this new fabric at 10s. 6d. the yard, would not now look at it; and a much better quality may be at this time purchased by the poor at *two pence* the yard.

I have said that my three spinners were spinning the cotton yarn on my three mules from *rovings*. I had no machinery to make rovings, and was obliged to purchase them, – they were the half made materials to be spun into thread. I had become acquainted with two young industrious Scotchmen, of the names of McConnell and Kennedy,^b who had also commenced about the same time

^a Samuel Oldknow (1756–1828): Stockport cotton-spinner, who began to manufacture muslins in 1781, and became one of the most successful of the early spinners. Oldknow entered a partnership with Peter Ewart (1767–1842) in 1792 which was dissolved in 1793. See George Unwin, *Samuel Oldknow and the Arkwrights* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1924).

^b James McConnell (1762–1831), and John Kennedy (1769–1855), whose firm Sandfords, McConnell and Kennedy was founded in 1791 with some £700 capital as a machine-making and mule-spinning enterprise, and became one of the largest in Manchester. The original partnership was dissolved in 1795. It was worth over £21,000 by 1800. See C. H. Lee, *A Cotton Enterprise 1795–1840. A History of M'Connell & Kennedy Fine Cotton Spinners* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1972). McConnell married Margaret Houldsworth (1778–1845), second daughter of Henry Houldsworth.

as myself to make cotton machinery upon a small scale, and they had now proceeded so far as to make some of the machinery for preparing the cotton for the mule spinning machinery so far as to enable them to make the rovings, which they sold in that state to the spinners at a good profit. I was one of their first and most regular customers, giving them, as I recollect, 12s. per pound for rovings, which, when spun into thread, and made up into the five pound bundles, I sold to Mr Mitchell at 22s. per pound. this was in the year 1790.

Such was the commencement of Messrs McConnell and Kennedy's successful career as cotton spinners, – such the foundation of those palace-like buildings which were afterwards erected by this firm, – of the princely fortunes which they made by them, and of my own proceedings in Manchester and in New Lanark in Scotland. *They* could then only make the *rovings*, without finishing the thread; and I could only *finish* the thread, without being competent to make the *rovings*.

These are the kind of circumstances which, without our knowledge or control, from small beginnings produce very different results to any anticipated by us when we commence.

Jones and his new partner, as I foresaw, were getting rapidly into confusion and pecuniary difficulties. They informed me they could not make good their engagement with me, and I never received the three remaining mule machines. I believe they ultimately stopped payment, and that Jones returned to his wire bonnet-frame making.

Seeing that I was not likely to obtain more machinery from my former partner, I made up my mind to do as well as I could with that amount which I had obtained. With the three men spinning for me, reeling, and making up that which they spun, and by selling it weekly to Mr Mitchell, I made on the average about six pounds of profit each week, and deemed myself doing well for a young beginner, – for I had let the remainder of the large building which I occupied, to tenants who paid my whole rent, and I retained my portion of it by these means free of cost.

About this period cotton spinning was so profitable that it began to engage the attention of many parties with capitals. Mr Arkwright,^a the introducer, if not the inventor of the new cotton spinning machinery, had had a cotton spinning mill erected in Manchester, under a manager of the name of

^a Sir Richard Arkwright (1732–92): inventor of textile-spinning machinery from the mid-1760s. Arkwright began as a barber's apprentice, and was later a partner with Strutt of Derby. In 1779 riots destroyed his mill at Chorley. About 1784 he visited David Dale and helped to plan the New Lanark mills. Knighted in 1786. Arkwright was regarded as the principal originator of the factory system as a whole, with its domination by machinery, minute division of labour, and large-scale co-ordination of effort. See R. S. Fitton and A. P. Wadsworth, *The Strutts and the Arkwrights 1758–1830* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1958) and R. S. Fitton, *The Arkwrights, Spinners of Fortune* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1989).

Simpson,^a and a Mr Drinkwater,^b a rich Manchester manufacturer and foreign merchant, had built a mill for finer spinning, and was beginning to fill it with machinery under the superintendance of a Mr George Lee,^c a very superior scientific person in those days. Mr, afterwards Sir George Philips,^d was desirous of building a large mill in Salford, and he, unknown to Mr Drinkwater, formed a partnership with Mr George Lee, afterwards known for many years as a leading firm in Manchester as Philips and Lee. Mr Lee had given Mr Drinkwater notice that he must leave him, having formed this new partnership. Mr Drinkwater being totally ignorant of everything connected with cotton spinning, although a good fustian manufacturer and a first-rate foreign merchant, and by this time become very wealthy, was greatly non-plused by Mr Lee thus abandoning the establishment, which, except with the expectation of Mr Lee's permanent services, he would not have commenced.

Under this to him very untoward circumstance he had to advertise for a manager to undertake the superintendance of this mill, now in progress; and his advertisement appeared on a Saturday in the Manchester papers,^e but I had not seen or heard of it until I went to my factory on the Monday morning following when, as I entered the room where my spinning machines were, one of the spinners said – 'Mr Lee has left Mr Drinkwater, and he has advertised for a manager.' I merely said – 'what will he do?' and passed on to my own occupation. But, (and how such an idea could enter my head I know not,) without saying a word, I put on my hat and proceeded straight to Mr Drinkwater's counting house, and boy, and inexperienced as I was, I asked him for the situation for which he had advertised. The circumstances which now occurred made a lasting impression upon me, because they led to important future consequences. He said immediately – 'You are too young' – and at that time being fresh coloured I looked younger than I was. I said 'That was an objection made to me four or five years ago, but I did not expect it would be made to me now.' – 'How old are you?' 'Twenty in May this year' – was my reply. 'How often do you get drunk in the week?' (This was a common habit

^a Both John Simpson (d. 1867) and his uncle Samuel were partners with Arkwright's son Richard (their brother-in-law) after 1784. John and his brother Richard were the sons of Adam Simpson of Bonsall (d. 1782), who had extensive mining interests.

^b Peter Drinkwater (1742–1801): fustian manufacturer of Spring Garden (in 1786), local Justice of the Peace and leading Manchester merchant. His mill, opened in 1790, applied the first Boulton and Watt steam engine to cotton-spinning in Manchester. By 1794 his business office was at 29 York Street. Owen's interview with Drinkwater was in fact in April 1792, not 1791. See W. H. Chaloner, 'Robert Owen, Peter Drinkwater and the Early Factory System in Manchester, 1788–1800', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 37 (1954), p. 92.

^c George Augustus Lee (1761–1826): friend of Boulton and Watt, and William Strutt. As a steam-engine manufacturer in the firm of Philips and Lee, helped his workmen set up a sick fund.

^d George Philips (1766–1847): MP for Ilchester 1812–18, Steyning 1818–20, Wootton Bassett 1820–30, Warwickshire South 1830–4; Dissenter, cotton-spinner; supported Catholic emancipation; opposed Peel's efforts to regulate child labour in cotton factories.

^e Drinkwater's advertisement first appeared on 14 April 1792.

with almost all persons in Manchester and Lancashire at that period). 'I was never,' I said 'drunk in my life' – blushing scarlet at this unexpected question. My answer and the manner of it made, I suppose a favourable impression; for the next question was – 'What salary do you ask?' 'Three hundred a year' – was my reply. 'What?' Mr Drinkwater said, with some surprise, repeating the words – 'Three hundred a year! I have had this morning I know not how many seeking the situation, and I do not think that all their askings together would amount to what you require.' 'I cannot be governed by what others ask,' said I, 'and I cannot take less. I am now making that sum by my own business.' 'Can you prove that to me?' 'Yes, I will show you the business and my books,' 'Then I will go with you, and let me see them,' said Mr Drinkwater. We went to my factory. I explained the nature of my business, opened the book, and proved my statement to his satisfaction. He then said – 'What reference as to past character can you give?' – I referred him to Mr Satterfield, Messrs Flint and Palmer, and Mr McGuffog. 'Come to me on such a day, and you shall have my answer.' This was to give him time to make the enquiries.

I called upon him at the time appointed. He said 'I will give you the three hundred a year, as you ask, and I will take all your machinery at its cost price, and I shall require you to take the management of the mill and of the workpeople, about 500, immediately.' I accordingly made my arrangements. Mr Drinkwater knew nothing about the mill; but so far as the business had proceeded he had supplied the capital as it was wanted, and had received the money when the produce was sold and paid for. Mr Lee had left the day before I was sent for to take his place, and I entered it without the slightest instruction or explanation about anything. When I arrived at the mill, which was in another part of the town from Mr Drinkwater's place of business, I found myself at once in the midst of five hundred men, women, and children, who were busily occupied with machinery, much of which I had scarcely seen, and never in regular connection to manufacture from the cotton to the finished thread. I said to myself, with feelings I shall never forget, – 'How came I here? and how is it possible I can manage these people and this business?' To this period I had been a thoughtful, retiring character, extremely sensitive, and could seldom speak to a stranger without blushing, especially to one of the other sex, except in the ordinary routine of serving in the departments of business through which I had passed; and I was diffident of my own powers, knowing what a very imperfect and deficient education I had received. I was therefore greatly surprised at myself, that, without thought or reflection, on the impulse of the moment, I had solicited this situation. But I had no idea of the task which I had to perform, in many respects entirely new to me, or I should never have made the attempt to perform it. My only experience had been in serving in a retail shop, except during the few months I had been in partnership with Jones, which short time was spent in keeping wages' accounts, and in seeing that the men were at work, and in working on a capital

of one hundred pounds. Had I seen the establishment before I applied to manage it, I should never have thought of doing an act so truly presumptuous. Mr Lee had left the mill the day before I undertook it, – Mr Drinkwater did not come with me to introduce me to any of the people, – and thus, uninstructed, I had to take the management of the concern. I had to purchase the raw material, – to make the machines, for the mill was not nearly filled with machinery, – to manufacture the cotton into yarn, – to sell it, – and to keep the accounts, – pay the wages, – and, in fact, to take the whole responsibility of the first fine cotton spinning establishment by machinery that had ever been erected, commenced by one of the most scientific men of his day, and who was considered a man of very superior attainments, having been highly educated, and being a finished mathematician. Such was the concern I had to manage when not yet twenty years of age, and such the person I had to succeed.

When it was known in Manchester that Mr Drinkwater had engaged me, a mere boy without experience, to take the entire direction of his new mill, which was then considered almost one of the wonders of the mechanical and manufacturing world, the leading people, as I learned afterwards, thought he had lost his senses, and they predicted a failure and great disappointment. Well – there I was, to undertake this task, and no one to give me any assistance. I at once determined to do the best I could, and began to examine the outline and detail of what was in progress. I looked grave, – inspected everything very minutely, – examined the drawings and calculations of the machinery, as left by Mr Lee, and these were of great use to me. I was with the first in the morning, and I locked up the premises at night, taking the keys with me. I continued this silent inspection and superintendance day by day for six weeks, saying merely yes or no to the questions of what was to be done or otherwise, and during that period I did not give one direct order about anything. But at the end of that time I felt myself so much master of my position, as to be ready to give directions in every department. My previous habits had prepared me for great nicety and exactness of action, and for a degree of perfection in operations to which parties then employed in cotton spinning were little accustomed. I soon perceived the defects in the various processes, and in the correctness which was required in making certain parts of the machinery – all yet in a rude state, compared with the advances which have been made from that time to the present. This factory or cotton mill was built on purpose to manufacture the finest yarns or thread, and Mr Lee had attained what was then considered an extraordinary degree of fineness, having succeeded in producing what was technically known as *one hundred and twenty* hanks in the pound. But it was of very indifferent quality. By my acquired faculty under Mr McGuffog's discipline, of great exactness and nicety in handling and keeping fine and expensive articles, I soon improved the quality of our manufacture. There was a large stock of yarn upon hand unsold, manufactured under Mr Lee's management, of various degrees of fineness, from seventy to one hundred and twenty.

Mr Drinkwater lived in his country house in the summer, and in his town house in the winter. He was now living in the country, and came to his counting house and warehouse, adjoining his winter residence, twice a week. He never came to the mill, but almost always desired to see me at his counting house on the days he attended there, and that I should bring specimens of the manufacture week by week. He found the quality gradually to improve, and the customers for it to prefer the new-made to the old stock. He found also that the people employed were, according to reports made to him by others, well disciplined, and yet well satisfied with the rules, regulations, and mode of management which I had adopted; and he became week by week more satisfied with the boy he had taken in opposition to public opinion to manage his new factory. The advantages which I possessed to counteract my ignorance and inexperience arose from my early training with Mr McGuffog, amidst fine and superior fabrics, and a knowledge acquired of human nature by having early overcome the prejudices of religion.

I had by this period perceived the constant influence of circumstances over my own proceedings and those of others, and by comparison with myself and others I became conscious of the created differences in our original organizations. Relieved from religious prejudices and their obstructive influences to the attainment of common sense, my mind became simple in its new arrangement of ideas, and gradually came to the conclusion that man could not make his own organization, or any one of its qualities, and that these qualities were, according to their nature, more or less influenced by the circumstances which occurred in the life of each, over which the individual had no other control than these combined circumstances gave him, but over which society had an overwhelming influence; and I therefore viewed human nature in my fellow creatures through a medium different from others, and with far more charity. Knowing that they did not make themselves, or the circumstances or conditions in which they were involved, and that these conditions combined necessarily forced them to be that which they became, – I was obliged to consider my fellow men as beings made by circumstances before and after their birth, not under their own control, except as previously stated and to a limited extent, – and therefore to have illimitable charity for their feelings, thoughts, and actions. This knowledge of our common nature gave me the early habit of considering man the necessary result of his organization and the conditions by which nature and society surrounded him, and of looking upon and acting towards all in the spirit which this knowledge created. My mind, in consequence, gradually became calm and serene, and anger and ill-will died within me.

This knowledge of human nature gave me for a long period an unconscious advantage over others. My treatment of all with whom I came into communication was so natural, that it generally gained their confidence, and drew forth only their good qualities to me; and I was often much surprised to discover how

much more easily I accomplished my objects, than others whose educated acquirements were much superior to mine. Very generally I had the good will of all; and, — except when I afterwards opposed in public all the religions of the world, and the past and present system of society, and thus aroused the oldest prejudices of all against my new views of society, — I was generally a favourite with both sexes and all classes.

In consequence of this to me unconscious power over others — I had produced such effects over the workpeople in the factory in the first six months of my management, that I had the most complete influence over them, and their order and discipline exceeded that of any other in or near Manchester; and for regularity and sobriety they were an example which none could then imitate; for the workpeople earned at that period high wages, and were far more independent than they have ever been since.

The factory also I had re-arranged, and always had it kept in superior order, so that at all times it was in a state to be inspected by any parties.

But as this period cotton mills were closed against all strangers, and no one was admitted. They were kept with great jealousy against all intruders; the outer doors being always locked. Mr Drinkwater himself had not yet entered the mill since I took charge of it, and he came only three times during the four years I retained the management of it, and each time with some stranger who had influence with him. The first time he came with the celebrated astronomer Herschell,^a — the second time with Mr Sergeant Heywood,^b his son-in-law, — and the third time with Mr Peter Marsland,^c the father of the M.P. for — in Scotland. Mr Peter Marsland was then one of the new great cotton Lords.

To return to the narrative. Mr Drinkwater, who from some source knew, no doubt, the particulars of my management, and the progress and change I had made in the factory, at the end of the first six months sent for me to his country residence, having something which he wished to communicate to me.

I was yet but an ill-educated awkward youth, strongly sensitive to my defects of education, speaking ungrammatically, a kind of Welsh English, in consequence of the imperfect language spoken in Newtown, which was an imperfect mixture of both languages; and I had yet only had the society attainable by a retail assistant. I was also so sensitive as among strangers to feel and to act awkwardly, and I was never satisfied with my own speaking and acting, and was subject painfully to blushing, which, with all my strongest efforts, I could not prevent. In fact, I felt the possession of ideas superior to my power of expressing them, and this always embarrassed me with strangers, and especially when

^a Sir John Frederick Herschel (1792–1871).

^b Samuel Heywood (1753–1828): serjeant-at-law and Welsh judge.

^c Peter Marsland (1770–1829), of Henry Marsland and Sons, cotton-spinners, 4 New Market Lane, Manchester. The father began spinning c. 1783 near Stockport, and built a new mill in 1789. Both Henry and Thomas Marsland became MPs for Stockport.

in the company of those who had been systematically well educated, according to existing notions of education. I had not yet been in Mr Drinkwater's house in Manchester, and therefore when I was requested to go to him at his country house, I was at a loss to conjecture what was the object of this new proceeding, and I felt uncertain and somewhat uncomfortable as to the result. When, however, I had arrived, and was taken into Mr Drinkwater's room of business, he said, – 'Mr Owen, I have sent for you to propose a matter of business important to you and me. I have watched your proceedings, and know them well, since you came into my service, and I am well pleased with all you have done. I now wish you to make up your mind to remain permanently with me. I have agreed to give you three hundred pounds for this year; and if you will consent to remain with me, I will give you four hundred for the next year, – five hundred for the third year, – and I have two sons^a growing up, and the fourth year you shall join them in partnership with me, and you shall have a fourth of the profits, and you know now what they are likely to be. What do you say to this proposal?' I said 'I think it most liberal, and willingly agree to it.'

'Then,' he replied, 'the agreement shall be made out while you are here, and you shall take a copy of it home with you.' When this was done, and both agreements were signed, I returned home well pleased with my visit.

I was now placed in an independent position for one not yet twenty years of age. I was born in 1771, as previously stated, and this event occurred early in 1790. I had also given to me full power to take my own course in what I should deem beneficial to promote the interests of the establishment. I was desirous of having the fabric which was manufactured under my direction distinguished from that which had been made under Mr Lee's management, and my name was permitted to be printed on the outside of the packages or 'bundles,' as they were called when the yarn was made up into five pounds weight for sale. The new-made yarn sold readily at high prices; while the former stock at less prices sold slowly, and it was long before the whole of it was disposed of.

At this period the cotton used for spinning by the new machinery was obtained from our West India Islands, from South America, and from the French Island of Bourbon, and was usually known as Orleans cotton. No North American cotton was yet used for spinning. The cotton which came from North America could not be worked up with the machinery then in use. The finest cotton yarn and thread which was then spun was made in this factory, and from cotton brought from the French Islands; and the highest counts or finest thread yet produced by machinery was technically denominated '*one hundred and twenty*;' or that number of hanks, each of 840 yards, was required to make a pound. At this period, these yarns were sold according to a published list of prices for each number, from the lowest to the highest; and, according to

^a Thomas Drinkwater (1775–1861) and John Drinkwater (1776–1856), who became partners as cotton-spinners and merchants in Fountain Street.

the quality made by each house, when inferior so much per cent. was deducted in price from the published lists; or when very good in quality, so much per cent. was added to the price. But it was only Mr Drinkwater's fine new yarns that could obtain ten per cent. above the list price, and they sold readily for that sum; – while the quality made under Mr Lee's direction, while he was the manager, sold slowly at the list price. This was the tortoise overtaking the hare; – for Mr Lee was a man of high genius, and possessed great talent as a scientific machinist and engineer, – to which I had not the least pretension. But so it was, that I now stood high in the estimation of the Manchester public and of the first Scotch muslin manufacturers, as a maker of fine cotton yarns – the Scotch manufacturers being our chief customers.

It has been previously mentioned that I had to purchase the cotton which was required for the use of our factory. I had given much attention to this part of the business, and I was now considered by the cotton brokers, from whom the spinners at this time bought this material, to be among the best judges of its quality, if not *the* best in the market.

Among other brokers from whom I was in the practice of making purchases of cotton, was a Mr Robert Spear,^a who stood high in his line of business, as a man of integrity and knowledge. Either in this year or in the beginning of 1791, the first two packages of American Sea Island cotton were consigned to him by the Liverpool agent of the American planter, with a request that he would apply to a competent spinner to try its quality and to give an opinion of its value. Mr Spear applied to me, and said the parties to whom it belonged were unconscious to what use it could be put, or of its worth to manufacturers, and asked me to work it up and give my own price for it, as the quality might prove to be. It was loosely packed, each bag about one hundred and fifty pounds in weight, half full of seeds, and, compared with the finest Orleans cotton, very dingy in colour. This was the first cotton sent from the United States to be spun upon the new machinery through rollers, instead of from the distaff or hand card. I had the two bags cleaned and manufactured, and it made a better thread than the French Island cotton, but the colour was much less white, and it was therefore much less attractive to the eye. I sold it to a Scotch manufacturer of the name of James Craig,^b at a lower price on account of its colour, and he was the first manufacturer who used American cotton in the yarn which he made into muslins. It was some surprise to me to see Mr Craig

^a Robert Spear (1762–1817): the son of John Spear, a linen-draper, who in the early 1780s had also been in partnership with the younger Richard Arkwright, as well as with John Clegg, as Messrs Clegg's and Spear, cotton merchants and fustian manufacturers in Crow Alley.

^b A James Craig, merchant, was David Dale's neighbour in Charlotte Street, Glasgow; another James Craig later had many dealings with Owen as owner and manager of the Stanley Mills from 1802–11, in partnership with David Dale from 1803. Their correspondence is preserved in Blair Castle, Perthshire. See A. J. Cooke, 'Robert Owen and the Stanley Mills, 1802–1811', *Business History*, 27 (1979), pp. 107–11.

soon back from Scotland to enquire for some more of the dingy coloured yarn which he had purchased from me. I told him it had been sold during his absence, and he appeared much disappointed. 'Why be so disappointed,' I said, 'when we can soon supply you with the superior colour at the usual price?'

'I am indeed,' he replied, 'much disappointed, – for it proved of the best quality I have ever seen.' 'But the colour?' I said, 'Oh that was of no consequence, for it bleached as well, if not better than the white colour, and I came up purposing to buy your whole stock of it.' This gave me full knowledge of the superior quality of Sea Island North American cotton. This is the long staple quality of North American cotton, and it was some time afterwards before machinery was invented to spin the upland or short fibred cotton, now so extensively imported into this country, and so largely grown in the Southern States of North America.

The extension of the cotton trade from that period to the present is one of the wonders of modern times, and for forty years I took a prominent and active part in it, and during which time, in the arrangements and management of extensive factories, and in the improvement of the condition of the persons employed in them, I led the way, and was followed at first by a few only of the larger establishments, and afterwards slowly by others.

I early noticed the great attention given to the dead machinery, and the neglect and disregard of the living machinery. At the period of which I am now writing I was a novice in general society. I had known it only as customers in retail business, or as a junior dependent in the houses of my employers; for little more than a year had elapsed between my leaving Mr Satterfield's house and my undertaking to manage the first fine cotton spinning factory by machinery that had ever been erected. My life had been one of close attention to business, day by day, except the few days when I visited my parents and relatives in and about Newtown, between the time of my leaving Mr McGuffog and my going to Messrs Flint and Palmer's. I was thus from ten years of age a stranger, as it were, among strangers, and was known only as a youth of business, and consequently was left in a great measure to my own communings and inexperienced observations. Absorbed in my attention to business, I knew little of the habits, customs, and fashions of families having pretensions to some standing in society, and now I began strongly to feel this deficiency. For persons who had been well educated, according to existing notions of education, and of good standing in mercantile society, began to desire my acquaintance. But knowing my own imperfections in these respects, I always unwillingly accepted invitations, and I knew nothing of the female sex, except as customers in business. This also withheld me from making family acquaintances. On these matters I was sensitive to a painful excess, for I had at this time a high opinion of the attainments of the wealthy educated classes, and of all above them. My future history will show how wofully I mistook their acquirements by means of what is called a superior education.

In about a year after I had commenced the management of this establishment I had increased my knowledge of the qualities of cotton, which varied very much, and had improved the accuracy of the machinery used, and the correctness of all the processes through which the material had to pass to be formed into finished thread or yarn, and I had gained the means to increase the fineness of the finished thread from 120 to upwards of 300 hanks in the pound, and had thus enabled the Scotch manufacturers in Paisley and its neighbourhood to open a new and extensive manufacture in various kinds of fine muslin; and such was the superiority of the quality of the yarn which I made, that *fifty per cent. above* the list price was readily obtained for it, and sufficient could not be produced by all our machinery when at full work, until the disastrous commercial year of 1792 affected the prices of all manufactured articles, and ruined many houses then carrying on extensive business.

Some idea may be formed of the success of the manufacture in which I was engaged for Mr Drinkwater, from the fact that I gave five shillings a pound for the cotton, which, when finished into fine thread for the muslin weaver, extending to near 250 hanks in the pound, I sold for £9. 18s. 6d. per pound. This was sold at the commencement of 1792, to Alexander Speirs^a of Kilbarchan, who made it into muslins, the first piece of which he sent as a present, as the greatest curiosity of British manufacture, to old Queen Charlotte.^b I extended afterwards the fineness of the thread to upwards of 300 hanks in the pound, and if this had been sold at the same period, it would have brought upwards of thirty-six pounds sterling for one pound of the yarn; but this prosperity in the manufacture was checked by the war with France, and the same high prices were I believe never afterwards obtained for the same fineness or number of hanks.

My name was now up for being the first fine cotton spinner in the world, and this was my standing as long as I remained the manager of Mr Drinkwater's factory, which was situated and I believe yet remains at Bank Top in Manchester. The factory was then familiarly known as the 'Bank Top Mill.'

The nearest rival I had in the quality of the ordinary numbers or fineness was a Mr Archibald Buchanan,^c afterwards partner with Mr Kirkman Finlay^d of

^a Probably Alexander Speirs (? d. 1844), a Kilbarchan merchant and muslin and cambric manufacturer, also very active in the local kirk. Speirs was probably the son of Allan Speirs, who commenced manufacturing there in 1739 and was sending many refined products to the Dublin market by 1742. By 1782, with others, he employed 360 looms. On the origins of cotton-spinning in Scotland, see Henry Hamilton, *The Industrial Revolution in Scotland* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1932), pp. 118–49.

^b Charlotte Sophia (1744–1818): wife of George III.

^c Archibald Buchanan, Sr. (1769–1841): began Deanston factory in Perthshire in 1785 with his elder brother John Buchanan; later acquired the Catrine mill.

^d Kirkman Finlay (1772–1842): merchant, MP for Glasgow 1812–18; sometime chairman of the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce; large exporter of cotton abroad after 1813. The son of an importer of linen yarn and exporter of linen, Finlay entrusted the management of the three cotton mills he bought between 1798–1806 to his relative and junior partner Archibald Buchanan.

Glasgow, in mills in Ayrshire, and who (Mr Buchanan,) was the relative, predecessor, and instructor of the late celebrated Mr Smith^a of Deanstown in Scotland. The quality of yarn made by Mr Buchanan at this period brought a price of ten per cent. above the list, – while Mr Drinkwater's brought fifty per cent above it.

These facts are stated to be explanatory of subsequent proceedings, – for the best manufacturer in any branch of the cotton manufacture became, in those days, a person of public celebrity, and my name now stood prominent before the Manchester public.

At this period there were two institutions which attracted considerable notice in Manchester, and were popular and celebrated each in their way. One was the 'Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society,'^b then under the presidency of the late highly respected Dr Percival.^c The other was the 'Manchester College,' under Dr Baines,^d which after his death was removed to York under Mr Wellbeloved, and was chiefly for the training of Unitarian ministers.

At this period John Dalton,^e the Quaker, afterwards the celebrated Dr Dalton the philosopher, and a Mr Winstanley,^f both intimate friends of mine, were assistants in this college under Dr Baines; and in their room we often met in the evenings, and had much and frequent interesting discussions upon religion, morals, and other similar subjects, as well as upon the late discoveries in chemistry and other sciences, – and here Dalton first broached his then undefined atomic theory.^g We began to think ourselves philosophers. Occasionally we admitted a friend or two to join our circle, but this was considered

^a James Smith (1789–1850): manager of the Deanston factory (founded 1785), Perthshire, after 1807, whose cousin was Archibald Buchanan. An avid farmer, Smith invented a new drainage system and was renowned for his philanthropy.

^b The Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester was founded in 1781.

^c Dr Thomas Percival (1740–1804): physician, Unitarian, author and reformer. He was greatly concerned with the condition of the poor in Manchester, helping in 1796 to set up the Board of Health, to which Owen belonged (see *Proceedings of the Manchester Board of Health*, Manchester, n.d.). He is sometimes considered the first advocate of factory reform. (The 1802 Health and Morals of Apprentices Act owed much to his influence.) Percival often held weekly meetings at his house attended by friends and strangers alike. See generally Thomas Percival, *The Works, Literary, Moral and Medical* (4 vols, 1807), and especially 'Observations on the State of the Population in Manchester' (1773) (*ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 1–67), which stressed the high mortality rate of manufacturing towns.

^d Thomas Barnes (1747–1810): Unitarian minister in Manchester from 1780 until his death at the Cross Street Chapel, the largest, wealthiest and most influential in the city; co-founder with Percival and Henry of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society; active in the Manchester Board of Health, House of Recovery and similar institutions; educational reformer.

^e John Dalton (1766–1844): chemist and natural philosopher.

^f William Winstanley (1772–1857): the son of William and Alice Winstanley; studied under Barnes at Manchester College from 1793–5; Unitarian minister at Derby from 1798–1803; later testified in support of Peel's factory bill.

^g Dalton was among the pioneers of magnetism. His *Meteorological Observations and Essays* (1793) spelled out his early hypotheses, which were extended in *A New System of Chemical Philosophy* (1808–27).

a favour. At this period Coleridge^a was studying at one of the universities, and was then considered a genius and eloquent. He solicited permission to join our party, that he might meet me in discussion, as I was the one who opposed the religious prejudices of all sects, though always in a friendly and kind manner, having now imbibed the spirit of charity and kindness for my opponents, which was forced upon me by my knowledge of the true formation of character by nature and society. Mr Coleridge had a great fluency of words, and he could well put them together in high sounding sentences; but my few words, directly to the point, generally told well; and although the eloquence and learning were with him, the strength of the argument was generally admitted to be on my side. Many years afterwards, when he was better known and more celebrated, I presented him with a copy of my *'Essays on the Formation of Character,'*^b and the next time I met him after he had read them, he said – 'Mr Owen, I am really ashamed of myself. I have been making use of many words in writing and speaking what is called eloquence, while I find you have said much more to the purpose in plain simple language, easily to be understood, and in a short compass. I will endeavour to profit by it.'

These friendly meetings and discussions with my friends Dalton and Winstanley, (the latter of whom was brother-in-law to Dr —, ^c one of the most successful physicians in Manchester,) were continued until they attracted the attention of the principal, Dr Baines, who became afraid that I should convert his assistants from his orthodoxy; and our meetings were required to be less frequent in the college. They were however continued elsewhere, and I acquired the name from some of the parties who attended these meetings, of 'the reasoning machine' – because they said I made man a mere reasoning machine, made to be so by nature and society. This college was removed to York while I remained in Manchester, and is there called the 'Manchester College.'

However heterodox my opinions were, I was solicited to become a member of the 'Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester,' to which I consented. I was thus introduced to the leading professional characters, particularly in the medical profession, which at this period stood high in Manchester, and its leading members were the aristocracy of the town. The manufacturers at this period were generally plodding men of business, with little knowledge

^a Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834): poet and Pantisocrat; briefly a disciple of Godwin during the early 1790s, while at Jesus College, Cambridge. Coleridge, who argued much with Godwin about religion, doubtless found Owen's scepticism abhorrent. He wrote two brief pamphlets supporting Sir Robert Peel's factory bill (*Remarks on the Objections Which Have Been Urged Against the Principle of Sir Robert Peel's Bill, The Grounds of Sir Robert Peel's Bill Vindicated*, both 1818).

^b See Owen, *A New View of Society* (1813–14) (*infra*, vol. 1, pp. 25–100).

^c Winstanley's brother-in-law was Dr John Hull (1764–1843), a botanist and physician at the Lying-in Hospital, Manchester. His career is detailed in E. M. Brockbank, *A Centenary History of the Manchester Medical Society* (Manchester, Sherratt & Hughes, 1934), pp. 53–74.

and limited ideas, except in their own immediate circle of occupation. The foreign merchants, or rather the merchants in the foreign trade, were somewhat more advanced. Without knowing why, I was thus introduced to the *élite* of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, for I had not been long a member of the society before I was requested to become a member of its committee, a club which was composed of what were considered the select and most efficient members of the society, and which met always immediately after the regular sittings of the society. This club or committee was composed at this period of Dr Percival, the president, – Drs Ferriar,^a – Holme,^b – and Bardsley,^c – Surgeon Simpson,^d – and Mr Henry,^e the chemist; and feeling my deficiency of the usual education of such persons, I could not comprehend the reasons for my admission into the society and club. Upon one occasion, at the sitting of the society, the subject of cotton was introduced, on one of the nights when the President was in the chair. I had never spoken in the society, nor ever heard my own voice in public; nor had I the slightest desire ever to hear it. I was too diffident and sensitive to feel any such inclination; but upon this occasion, to my surprise and great confusion, Dr Percival said – ‘I see a young friend present, who I am sure can if he will give us some valuable information upon the subject. I mean Mr Owen, so well known for his knowledge in fine cotton spinning.’ I blushed, and stammered out some few incoherent sentences, and felt quite annoyed at my ignorance and awkwardness being thus exposed. Had it not been for this incident, it is probable I should never have attempted to speak in public. I was conscious I knew more of the kinds, qualities, and history of this material, than any of those who spoke this evening on the subject. This impression induced me to attempt to write a paper for the society upon this subject, and it was read and discussed at the following meeting of the society. At its conclusion the President, who was always desirous of bringing forward and encouraging young persons who became members of the society, thanked me for the paper, which he said was a very useful practical production, and did me much credit. I was quite unconscious of deserving this compliment, and attributed it to the kind disposition of

^a John Ferriar (1761–1815): physician attached to the Manchester Infirmary after 1789; sometime playwright and literary critic; anti-materialist philosopher; supported restriction of hours of child labour in factories; active on the Manchester Board of Health. His *Medical Histories and Reflections* (4 vols, 1810–13) detailed the connection between the spread of disease and the social condition of the poor (vol. 1, pp. 261–92).

^b Edward Holme (1770–1847): physician; Vice-President and later President of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society; leader of many Manchester literary and scientific associations.

^c Samuel Argent Bardsley (1764–1851): physician; later testified in support of Peel’s factory bill.

^d William Simpson of Knaresborough (b. 1759): surgeon, apothecary and medical reformer; second son of William Simpson of Felliscliffe and his wife Susanna. Simpson was the author of *Observations on Cold Bathing* (1791).

^e Thomas ‘Magnesia’ Henry (1734–1816): apothecary and magnesia manufacturer, of 41 King Street, Manchester. Active in the early teaching of science and medicine in the city, he was a leading member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society.

the President. It was after the discussion on this paper that I was solicited to join the club, all the members of which were expected to write a paper during each session of the meetings of the society.

Upon a subsequent and later meeting, when I had acquired somewhat more confidence in myself, Dr Ferriar read a paper, the subject of which was to endeavour to prove that any one, by his own will, might become a genius,^a and that it only required determination and industry for any one to attain this quality in any pursuit. The paper was a very learned one. The Dr was the senior Vice-President, and after he had read it there was a profound silence, and, contrary to all former practice, after the President had expressed his opinion as usual that it was an important paper deserving much attention, no one rose to speak. Each member was entitled to bring a friend or two with him to the meeting, and that night I had brought John Dalton and Mr Winstanley with me, saying that they would be interested in the debate. I felt therefore quite disappointed that no one appeared likely to commence a discussion. Waiting until I thought the President would close the meeting for want of speakers, although it was a full meeting, I rose, merely with a view to induce a debate, that my friends might not be disappointed, and said, 'Mr President, – this is a most learned and ingenious paper. But as it was read it occurred to me that I have always had a great desire to become a genius, and have always been very industrious in my application for the purpose, but I could never succeed. I therefore am obliged to conclude that there must be some error unexplained in our learned author's theory.' And I sat down. Dr Ferriar rose to reply. He blushed, or became so red with suppressed feeling as to attract the attention of the members, and merely stammered out some confused reply, when to relieve his embarrassment, some members began to speak, and a discussion followed. But from that night Dr Ferriar never forgot my short speech, for he was never afterwards so cordial and friendly as he had been previously. Lavoisier^b and Chaptal^c had at this time made chemistry a favorite subject among professional men, and I had given some attention to it. One night when their discoveries were the subject for discussion, I said that the universe appeared to me to be one great laboratory; that all things were chemical compounds, and that man was only a complicated chemical compound. From that night I was called the 'philosopher who intended to make men by chemistry.'

I continued a regularly attending member of this society and club as long as I remained in Manchester, and wrote my expected paper for each session; but on what subjects they were written I do not now recollect. The meetings became however very pleasant and useful to me; making me familiar with the

^a This was not among the printed papers of the Society.

^b Antoine Laurent Lavoisier (1743–94): French chemist.

^c Jean-Antoine Chaptal (1756–1832): French chemist.

ideas, habits, and prejudices of a new class in society. I say prejudices, – for the literary man has, like all others, his strong educated prejudices.

I continued happily progressing in my situation until the disastrous year of commerce, 1792, checked the rapid upward progress of the cotton trade. All engaged in it suffered more or less. Many were ruined in various businesses all over the kingdom. Mr Drinkwater had a large capital, and stood the shock of this revulsion in the commercial world without very much loss, while I was in the receipt of my full salary, and so far Mr Drinkwater was highly satisfied with all my proceedings.

He had a cotton factory at work at Northwich in Cheshire, which was employed in what was technically called water-spinning, – or warp-spinning on machinery similar to Arkwright's at Cromford, Manchester, and elsewhere. This Cheshire cotton mill was under the management of an elderly man, who had taken charge of it for some years. After Mr Drinkwater had seen what I had done in the factory for fine spinning in Manchester, he was desirous I should also overhaul, re-arrange, and take the general direction of this factory for warp-spinning, of much lower numbers than were produced in our Manchester factory. It was an ungracious task for one so young, to take the direction over the old manager of this Cheshire mill; but so it was. The former manager remained in charge of it, – but he was to act under my directions, and I rode over on horseback once a fortnight to superintend and direct, and which I continued to do as long as I remained with Mr Drinkwater. On the same day of the week I made this journey on horseback, and in going had to cross what was then a large common. In crossing it one fine hot day in the middle of summer, an incident occurred which made a strong impression on me at the time, and which I will explain on a future occasion, when it can be applied for an important purpose, and when it will be more useful than to narrate it here. I notice it now while it occurs to me, that I may not forget it in its proper place.

While these matters of business were progressing successfully and happily with me, events that had a decided influence upon my future life were occurring in Mr Drinkwater's family.

Miss Drinkwater^a was attaining womanhood, and I conclude, although I do not recollect having seen her, that, independently of the fortune which all expected her father could and would give her, she was an interesting person, for she was always well spoken of, and had been well and carefully educated. She was therefore considered a very desirable match and connection for the young men of the first commercial or professional families in their circle. A gentleman, whose name I forget, – a merchant in the foreign trade of Manchester, and very much the gentleman in manner, of good standing in society, and the next door town neighbour to Mr Drinkwater, paid his addresses to her.

^a Margaret Drinkwater (b. c. 1778), who became Margaret Heywood in 1797; or Eliza Drinkwater (b. 1781), later Eliza D'Aguiar.

He was not disliked by the young lady, although he was perhaps ten or twelve years older than she was; for his temper was good, and his manners attractive to the other sex. It began to be looked upon by the public as a matter settled. In this case, as in too many others, the course of true love did not run smooth. I must now recur to a name mentioned in an earlier part of this narrative, – the name of one who stood high in Cheshire and Lancashire as the first and most extensive manufacturer of British muslins, and from whom, as I narrated, Mr McGuffog used to buy, and to pray for more pieces to be added to the weekly order. This was the once celebrated and most enterprising Samuel Oldknow, who it was known had not long before made seventeen thousand pounds of profit in each of two successive years, and who was then generally supposed to be very wealthy, and was considered a great man in the world of manufactures and commerce. He had made these profits in the manufacture of muslin, while he purchased the yarn from the cotton-spinners. He thought the spinners were getting great profits, and he was not, like many others, content to do well or very well, as he was doing, – but being ambitious, he desired to become a great cotton-spinner, as well as the greatest muslin manufacturer. He built a large, handsome, and very imposing cotton mill, amidst grounds well laid out, and the mill was beautifully situated, for he possessed general good taste in these matters. In fact, he was preparing and had made great advances to become a first-rate and leading ‘cotton lord.’ He had however expended his capital so freely in building this mill, fitting it with machinery, and purchasing land around it, in addition to splendid buildings and arrangements in and near to Stockport for carrying on his extensive muslin manufacture and for its sale, that when the trying time of 1792 arrived, he was too wide in his plans to sustain their expenditure without making great sacrifices. To prevent this it was afterwards generally thought that he considered an union with Miss Drinkwater would, by the assistance of her father, enable him to proceed unchecked. He was a hearty, healthy, handsome man, but yet perhaps five years older than Miss Drinkwater’s present suitor. But I suppose he concluded that ‘faint heart never won fair lady’ – and therefore he at once applied to Mr Drinkwater to be permitted to pay his addresses to his daughter. Mr Drinkwater was flattered by this application, for at this time Mr Oldknow stood prominent in the cotton world, next to the Arkwrights and the Strutts^a of Derbyshire.

It was believed that he was not well received at first by the young lady. But the father, although fond of his sons and daughters, was ambitious and obstinate, and succeeded at length, by the great prospects held out to her of great

^a Particularly William Strutt (1756–1830): eldest son of the cotton-spinner Jedediah Strutt (1726–97), and inventor of a heating and ventilation system first installed at the Derbyshire Infirmary; friend of Bentham and Richard Lovell Edgeworth; and his brother Joseph Strutt (1765–1844), leading Derby cotton manufacturer; friend of Coleridge. Among his customers were Samuel Oldknow, James McGuffog, Birley and Hornby, and Robert Peel. The Strutts were a famous Unitarian, Whig, liberal Derby family.

wealth and station, in overcoming her reluctance. She had not the means to resist his authority, having no property in her own right, and she therefore yielded to her father's wishes. Mr Oldknow was consequently received and accepted by father and daughter as the future husband of the latter.

For sometime all matters seemed to proceed successfully with Mr Oldknow, and for a certain period he had great influence over Mr Drinkwater. During this period he became acquainted with Mr Drinkwater's engagement with me, and this stood now in the way of his (Mr Oldknow's) ambition. He expressed a great desire that the whole business of both houses should be kept entirely to themselves, and my partnership, which, according to my engagement, was to commence the next year, stood in the way of this exclusive dealing with Mr Drinkwater's property.

Mr Oldknow thought that this difficulty should be overcome at any cost, and it was determined to try what could be done with me. Mr Drinkwater, who for three years had once only been to his factory in Manchester, and then to introduce the celebrated Herschell the Astronomer, sent for me to Newal House, his country residence, where I had not been since the day the agreement of his own proposal was made. I had heard some hints of what had taken place, and of what was going forward, and knowing Mr Oldknow's ambition, I conjectured some new proposals were to be made. I went to Newal^a House, and took the agreement in my pocket. I was introduced to Mr Drinkwater alone in his study, and I have no doubt it was deemed a day of no little interest to all parties. He said – 'I have sent for you that I may explain unexpected changes which have taken place lately in my family. The celebrated Mr Oldknow is to become my son-in-law. You know he is the first British muslin manufacturer, and he is becoming a great cotton-spinner. He has expressed a strong wish that the entire business of both houses should be retained in the family, – but you are entitled by our agreement to become a partner in my mills next year, and this agreement obstructs his extensive views and arrangements. He wishes me to ascertain from you on what conditions you would retain the management of my mills and give up the agreement for a partnership in our business. If you will give up your claim to the partnership, you may name your own salary. You have now five hundred pounds a year, and whatever sum you will name you shall have.' He appeared very anxious to hear my reply. I said – 'I have brought the agreement with me, and here it is, and I now put it into the fire, because I never will connect myself with any parties who are not desirous to be united with me; but under these circumstances I cannot remain your manager with any salary you can give.' And the agreement was consumed before him. He was not prepared for this decisive proceeding; and it was an act of feeling, and not of judgment, on my part. My constitution and the previous circumstances in

^a Irwell House, near Agecroft bridge, where Drinkwater spent his summers. His town house was at 42 Fountain Street, Manchester.

which I had been placed created these feelings, and I could not have acted otherwise at that time. These feelings again gave a complete change to my future destiny.

Mr Drinkwater said much to endeavour to change my determination, – but ineffectually. My mind was fixed to the decision which my feelings forced upon me. He then said – ‘I hope you will remain until another manager can be procured to take your place, and I must depend upon you for looking out for one who is equal to the duties required.’ To this I agreed. But it was many months after this event before I could meet with any one possessing the requisite qualifications to conduct these establishments as they were then carried on.

When it was known that I was going to leave Mr Drinkwater’s concern, Mr Samuel Marsland,^a who with others had purchased the Chorlton estate, near Manchester, with the view of building a new town upon it, applied to me, and said he was going to build extensive mills upon this property, and if I would join him in partnership he would find the capital and give me one third of the profits. This was a very liberal proposal, but as he did not offer me *half* of the profits, my feelings induced me to decline it.

Here was again the overwhelming influence of feeling which I could not avoid, in opposition to sound judgment. Under the circumstances in which I was then placed, it was my interest to accept it; for I afterwards made a much more unfavourable arrangement with two young men, inexperienced in the business, although they had capital. We were to build mills, and to divide the profits equally between us, and I was to have the management of the whole concern, under the firm of ‘Moulson, Scarth,^b and Owen.’ I commenced to build the Chorlton mills upon land purchased from Mr Samuel Marsland and his partners; but while the mills were erecting, a new arrangement was made, which was destined to give another direction to my future life. This was an agreement with those two rich old established houses, Messrs Borrodale^c and Atkinson of London, and Messrs Bartons^d of Manchester, with whom and

^a Samuel Marsland (d. 1803): the eldest son of Henry Marsland (1733–95) and the former Jane Killert (1737–95).

^b The partnership of Richard Percival Moulson and Jonathan Scarth was apparently short-lived. Scarth was born in Whitby, Yorkshire, in 1772 to a Quaker family, and moved to Manchester c. 1792–3 with capital derived from his father’s success in the whaling trade. In 1800 he was a cotton-spinner at York Street living at 4 Granby Row, while in 1808–9 he was at Oldfield Lane. Shortly thereafter he moved to Ireland. Scarth died in Shrewsbury c. 1850. In 1800, ‘Moulson and Fawcett’ were muslin manufacturers located at 5 Blue Boar Court.

^c William Borradaile (1751–1831) was in partnership in London with his brother Richardson Borradaile. He and John Atkinson were merchants and hat-manufacturers of Greengate, Salford, and had a London headquarters at 34 Fenchurch Street (in 1790). On the Borradailes see *Sketch of the Borradailes of Cumberland* (1881). Another William Borradaile (1787–1844) was of the firm of W. & G. Borradaile, merchants.

^d John Barton was a wholesale merchant and cotton manufacturer of 6 Phoenix Street, Manchester, in partnership with his brother Henry, who appears in the Manchester directories from 1788–1804. In 1788 the firm was George, Henry and James Barton, fustian manufacturers and merchants, of 65 Market Street Lane, Manchester. Henry’s house was at Shudehill in 1788, and Swinton in 1800.

myself a new partnership was formed, under the firm of the 'Chorlton Twist Company,' under my management, assisted by Mr Thomas Atkinson,^a a brother of the one in the firm of Borrodale and Atkinson.

It was nearly a year after I gave Mr Drinkwater notice that I must leave his establishment, before I could find any one competent to supply my place, – but as I had to enter upon my new engagements, I was obliged to give the situation to a Mr Humphreys, an engineer, who had done millwright and other mechanical work for the mills I superintended, – and upon my recommendation Mr Drinkwater accepted him.^b

I had now to superintend the building of our factory, then considered a large one, – to get the machinery made to fit it, – and then to set the whole into action. I left Mr Drinkwater in 1794 or 5;^c and before the new Chorlton mill was at work, it was two or three years later.

I did not erect the mill and machinery to enter into competition with Mr Drinkwater, who had always been kind and liberal to me, except in not being firm in maintaining his engagement with me, and therefore I had no wish to injure him. The machinery which we adopted in the Chorlton Factory was adapted for the Manchester and Glasgow manufacturers' demand for cloths for printing, and for some kinds of muslins. Mr Thomas Atkinson kept the books, and I had to make the purchases of cotton, to manufacture it into yarns, and to dispose of it. The latter duty led me to visit the Lancashire manufacturing towns, and also, after some time, to visit the west of Scotland. On one of these journeys I had to visit Blackburn, where some of our principal customers lived and carried on their manufactures. Among these were Messrs Birley and Hornby.^d I had ridden to Blackburn on a horse hired for the occasion. When I called upon our wealthy customers last mentioned, one of the young gentlemen of the firm asked me if I would go and hunt with him in the morning. I knew nothing of hunting, and had no desire for the sport, and therefore declined, saying I had only a hack hired in Manchester, to bring me to Blackburn, and he was unfit for hunting. – 'Oh!' he replied, 'that need not prevent you, for I have a good hunter at your service.' I was then left without

^a Thomas Atkinson, the brother of John Atkinson, of 14 Bank Street, in 1813.

^b On Owen's relationship with Robert Humphreys, who later worked at New Lanark, see *The Life of Robert Owen, Written By Himself*, ed. John Butt (Charles Knight, 1971), pp. xix–xxi.

^c Probably 1794.

^d John Birley (1747–1831) and John Hornby (1763–1841), of Cardwell, Birley and Hornby, 25 Clayton Street, Blackburn, founded in 1767. The Birley side of the firm was probably begun by Richard Birley (1743–1812), a Blackburn merchant. His third son, Hugh Hornby Birley (1778–1845), was in command of the Manchester Yeomanry at the infamous Peterloo Massacre in 1819. Hornby came from Kirkham to Blackburn in 1779, and after purchasing a share in a Scorton spinning mill, joined Birley. He was worth about £26,000 in 1796, and some £200,000 at his death. His son, Willian Henry Hornby (1805–84), was Blackburn's first mayor and sometime Conservative MP. On the Birley family, see *The Pedigree of the Birley Family of Lancashire* (1930).

any excuse that occurred to me, and I was fairly taken in against my inclination; for I could not well refuse such an offer from one of our best customers, – and I accepted it. The hunter was sent to me the next morning, and I mounted it, being an inexperienced rider upon such horses for such purposes, with the impression that I should never return without broken limbs or even with life. I arrived on the ground just before the game was found, and at this critical moment I found myself by the side of the clergyman of the parish, who was extremely well mounted. He was young, and was esteemed the most dashing rider who followed these hounds. He and I were on one side of what I thought an impassable wall when the fox was started on the other side. ‘Now for it,’ said the Parson to me, and he put his horse to the wall, and cleared it in good style. My horse (which I discovered was a practised hunter, although I was not,) immediately followed the Parson, and how I continued to keep my seat I know not, but so it was that I was safe in the saddle after a pretty good shake, and off went the Parson and I over heavy ground at first, and then there was what was called an excellent run, and the sport was continued for some hours. I was a light weight, my horse was powerful, thorough bred, and a well-taught hunter. I let him take his own way, and I soon found he knew much better than I did which was the best. The Parson and I soon led the field. We kept together, – for the horses appeared to know each other, and we were in at every death, and the sport was not over until late in the day, when I returned to my hotel safe and without over fatigue. As soon as I had cleared the first wall, and found myself safe in the saddle, all fear left me. I had confidence in the horse, and really, greatly to my surprise, enjoyed the sport. Thus I discovered the cause of the pleasure from the air, the exercise, and the excitement, which induces many to spend so much time in following the hounds, to the surprise of those who have never experienced its exhilarating effects upon the spirits during the sport, and on the appetite afterwards.

This was however the only time I ever indulged in this luxury. But not for want of encouragement, – for the next day I was praised by all my Blackburn friends and acquaintances for my performances in the field the previous day, having the credit of being on a par with the Parson, who was esteemed the first in following the hounds with tact and judgment in all that district of hard riders, and who always led the field. I was very fully conscious how little I was entitled to these encomiums, and how much was due to my borrowed horse.

The new Chorlton Twist Company was now becoming well-known and proceeding prosperously. Having many customers in and round Glasgow, it became necessary for me to go to Scotland to see them, and to endeavour to enlarge our business connections. On my first journey to the north, a manufacturer of Preston who had extensive concerns, requested to accompany me as a companion, not having any business to transact in that part of the kingdom, but merely to see the country, which he had not previously visited. We journeyed together, at that time no easy travelling. This was before mail

coaches were established, and we were two nights and three days incessantly travelling in coaches, in going from Manchester to Glasgow, – for the roads were then in a deplorable condition, and we had to cross a well-known dangerous mountain about midnight, called Trickstone bar,^a and which was then always passed in fear and trembling by the passengers. We however at length arrived safe in Glasgow, about five o'clock in the morning, and no one being then up in the hotel at which the coach stopped, my companion and myself went to walk, it being a fine warm morning in summer, on the well-known green of Glasgow, before it was surrounded with houses which have been since erected on the sides of it.

The old washing houses then existed, and the old mode of washing by tramping in tubs on the clothes to be washed, was the common practice. The washerwomen tucked up their clothes for this operation. There were great numbers thus busily engaged, chiefly however old women. It was an early hour, and the weather was warm, and there were no persons walking except ourselves. The walk from the town to the banks of the river where we were going, led close to these wash houses, but the washing operations in the tub were carried on outside the buildings in the open air, exposed to all passers. This practice of washing was new to both of us, and before we came near them we were at a loss to imagine what so many so early in the morning were about, continually in action in these tubs. As we drew nearer, our surprise increased when we saw these women with their naked legs, and their clothes held up much higher than decency required, or than appeared to us at all necessary. My friend stopped, and with the greatest astonishment in his countenance said – ‘Is it possible, Mr Owen, that those are living women?’ I said – ‘They look like them, although I have never seen such an exhibition before; but these must be the habits of a country new to us’ – in which we were confirmed, for as we came up and passed very near to them, they took no more notice than if we had not been near them, and made no difference in their tramping and turning in their tubs. I said when we had passed them, ‘It is evident these women think nothing of this practice. They are no doubt, accustomed to it from their childhood, and have none of our English feelings upon seeing such a practice, – it is another proof among thousands, that, commencing early in life, we may be taught to think any custom right or wrong, and a valuable lesson may be learned from it; for, as you saw, not one appeared to feel or think there was anything strange or wrong in what they were doing.

Up to this period the intercourse between the south and the north was very limited, compared with the change which soon followed the introduction of mail coaches, and the consequent improvement of the roads in Scotland. The surprise at seeing this practice, so strongly expressed by the English on first

^a Probably in Errickstone Hill and Brae, in south Lanarkshire.

visiting Glasgow, induced a change in this custom, and now it is very seldom seen, except in out-of-the-way country places. At the time of my first visit to Glasgow, the inhabitants were unconscious of there being any impropriety in this proceeding; and I have seen it continued when the Green was crowded with people walking in all directions, and no one seemed to notice the washers. But I never afterwards saw the practice so fully carried out as on this occasion; and it therefore gave us, as entire strangers, a singular introduction into Scotland, – for we had not yet been in a Scotch house, and I then little imagined that I should become so interested in this locality as I afterwards was.

The improvements in Glasgow and in Scotland generally, from that period to the present, have not been surpassed probably in any part of the world.

This visit to Glasgow was the cause of a new phase in my history, and became a circumstance which had a great influence on my subsequent proceedings. I have mentioned my knowledge of Mr Robert Spear, the Manchester cotton broker, who sent to me the first two bags of American Sea Island cotton imported into this country. He had a sister, whom I also knew, and who was living with him in Manchester.^a This sister happened to be on a visit to the family of Mr Dale,^b who was then one of the most extraordinary men in the commercial world of Scotland, – an extensive manufacturer, cotton spinner, merchant, banker, and preacher. He had five daughters, – the eldest then about nineteen. While I was one day walking in Glasgow, near to the Cross, then the most public place in the city, I met Miss Spear in company with Miss Dale.^c Miss Spear was glad to meet one whom she knew from Manchester, and stopped me, introducing me at the same time to Miss Dale. I conversed some time with Miss Spear concerning our friends in Manchester. After a short time Miss Dale asked me if I had seen the falls of the Clyde and her father's mills, for if I had not, and wished to see them, she would give me an introduction to her uncle, who was one of the managers of the mills and who lived there. I thanked her, and said I had a friend with me in Glasgow, and we should both like to see the falls and the mills. She said she should like to know what we

^a Probably Ann Spear (? b. 1771).

^b David Dale (1739–1806): industrialist, philanthropist, and, from 1799, Owen's father-in-law. The son of William Dale (1708–96), a grocer and tradesman, Dale began work as a cowherd, then became a weaver at Paisley, a dealer in linen yarn and importer of Flanders yarns (upon which his fortune was founded) before becoming a manufacturer, cotton-spinner, banker, dyer, printer and one of the leading citizens of Glasgow. He was a partner with Sir Richard Arkwright in setting up the New Lanark mills, which began operations in 1786. He also had shares in the Stanley, Catrine and Sunningdale mills. He had one son (William Dale, 1782–9) and five daughters. On Dale, see David J. McLaren, *David Dale of New Lanark* (2nd edn, Glasgow, Heatherbank Press, 1992).

^c Ann Caroline Dale (1779–1831) was the daughter of David Dale (1739–1806) and Anne Caroline Dale née Campbell (1753–91), who were married in September 1777. Anne Caroline Campbell's father's connection as a director of the Royal Bank of Scotland helped Dale to become its agent in Glasgow.

thought of them after we had seen them and had returned. The introduction was sent for me and my friend, and we visited this to us new scenery, and inspected the mills under the guidance of Mr James Dale,^a who, I learned, was half brother to Mr David Dale, the father of Miss Dale. When I had inspected the establishment, which was called the 'New Lanark Mills,' and which then consisted of a primitive manufacturing Scotch village and four mills for spinning cotton, I said to my friend, as I stood in front of the establishment, 'of all places I have yet seen, I should prefer this in which to try an experiment I have long contemplated and have wished to have an opportunity to put into practice;' – not in the least supposing at the moment that there was the most distant chance that the wish would ever be gratified. On returning to Glasgow I called upon Miss Dale to thank her for her kind introduction to her uncle, and to say how much I was gratified with the scenery about the falls of the Clyde, and with the site of the mills. She was at home. Her father was absent about his many occupations, and she was just going out to walk with her younger sisters on the green on the banks of the Clyde. She said they were pleasant walks, and perhaps as a stranger I should like to see them. To which I readily assented, and this was my second introduction to, and my first walk with, my future wife. She was in the habit of walking here frequently with her sisters early in the morning, their residence being close upon the green. We met there once or twice afterwards before I returned to Manchester; and at parting she said, when I came again to Glasgow she would be glad to see me.

During this visit to Glasgow I had extended our business connexions with the Scotch manufacturers, who were previously familiar with my name, from its being printed on every bundle or package of yarn sold to them from Mr Drinkwater's factory while I had the superintendence of his manufactures, and this was a favorable introduction for me, and facilitated my success, to the surprise of my Manchester and London partners.

My partners thought it would be useful for me to make these journeys into Scotland half yearly, as the orders for our produce gradually increased, and a large part of the 'Chorlton cotton twist,' as it was then called by way of distinction, was purchased by the Glasgow and Paisley manufacturers – the remainder was sold in Manchester and other Lancashire towns.

Miss Spear had returned from her visit to Miss Dale, and when I saw her she spoke much of the amiable and good qualities of her kind Glasgow friend; said very much in her favour, and of her position; – of the number of young men in and around Glasgow who were desirous of becoming her suitors; – but that she had seen none among them to whom she could give encouragement, for she had not seen one that she could marry, among the many who had made

^a James Dale (1753–1819): a Glasgow agent and broker who formerly helped manage the New Lanark mills, who was William Dale's son by his second marriage, to Martha Dunlop (1719–96). He married Marion Haddow (1769–1849).

advances to solicit her affections. Miss Dale, she said, thought many of them looked to her expected fortune. As I was now about to return to Scotland, she requested I would convey a letter for her to her friend, which I willingly promised to deliver on my arrival in Glasgow. Letters at that time were rather an expensive luxury between friends residing at a distance. The penny postage had not then been thought of,^a and there was much private letter-carrying between friends. It is to be hoped, from the success of the inland penny postage, that it will become general over sea and land, to facilitate universal intercourse, so as gradually to destroy the idea of foreign, not only in word but in feeling, in order that the family of man may become one in interest, language, and feeling, over the earth, – this being now the evident ultimate object of society, and the means to hasten it being accomplished by the discovery of the electric telegraph.

Upon my arrival the second time at Glasgow, I called and presented Miss Spear's letter to Miss Dale, which she received, and read with much apparent pleasure. Mr Dale was again attending on some of the many branches of his business, and I had not yet seen him. I forget how it occurred, – but a walk upon the green was proposed, and I accompanied Miss Dale and her sisters to the banks of the Clyde. The walk appeared to be enjoyed by the parties, and from some of them it fell out that, if the morning was fine, they were to walk out there early the next day.

These morning walks occurred often while I continued in Glasgow, and somehow or other the same parties almost always met in these excursions; and when I had to return to Manchester I was requested by Miss Dale to convey her answer back to Miss Spear – which I did.

This second visit to Glasgow I found was beginning to create other feelings than those of mere business. As I was now established as a partner in one of the most respectable firms in Manchester, and with every appearance of being successful, I felt inclined to look out for a wife. But I was yet a novice, and backward in forming acquaintance with women, and was much too sensitive in my feelings to make any progress with them except I received encouragement to overcome my diffidence. At this period I was living as a bachelor in 'Chorlton Hall,' an old mansion lately occupied by Madame Minchall,^b the former proprietor of the Chorlton estate, which was now laid out for streets, and to become, as it is now, a large town annexed to Manchester. At some distance lived one of the most wealthy and respectable families, in which were three or four daughters, but no sons. The eldest, at this time a beautiful, well educated, and highly accomplished young lady of seventeen, was the admiration of every one, and was eagerly sought after by the young men of the first

^a Penny postage was introduced on 6 May 1840 by Sir Roland Hill.

^b Barbara Mynshull (1703/4–83).

families, and her's was one of the oldest established in and around Manchester. I often saw this young lady at church, and occasionally at public concerts, which were then frequently given in Manchester, and no one could see her without admiring her for her beauty and her manners, which were fascinating to all. The position of her family was so far in advance beyond any pretensions which I then had in society, that to become known to her was out of the question, and to think of such an act of presumption never entered my head, for I was then far too diffident of my own powers and position. One day, however, when I happened to be at home in Chorlton Hall, two ladies, – an elderly one and a young one, – called to request to be permitted to see the old garden belonging to this old mansion, – to which of course I readily assented, and I conducted them through the walks. These visitors were the lady alluded to and her aunt. I was too timid and bashful to enter into conversation with them, and too unsuspecting to imagine any other object than the one mentioned, – and with the utmost simplicity and deference allowed them to depart as they came, and certainly much disappointed with the result of their visit to one so stupid as I must have appeared, for there was not the slightest indication of gallantry in anything I said or did. In fact, to imagine any other object to their visit, except to see the garden, never for a moment occurred to me. I learned, too late afterwards, that this young lady had been favorably impressed with my character, and that she had for some time preferred me to all the many suitors who were anxious to obtain her hand. I never knew or suspected these feelings in my favour, not even after this visit to me; and so backward was I at this period, that I did not consider I was entitled by it to an introduction to her or her family. That connexion, which I might have obtained had I then possessed sufficient knowledge of the world and sufficient self-confidence to have sought it, would have been well adapted to have met and satisfied all the feelings of my nature. But it was not to be, – circumstances were opposed to it, and another destiny was awaiting me.

Shortly after this occurrence, a house well built and devised was erected by a wealthy Manchester merchant, who imported mahogany from Honduras, and from which were made his doors and window frames, and the principal rooms were supplied with plate glass. This house had a large walled garden and pleasure-ground. It was then about two miles out of Manchester, – although it is now surrounded by a large and populous town. To this house the owner gave the name of Greenheys, and it was just finished complete in every part, at an expense of five thousand pounds, when the owner died, and left a widow and many children, – and not one of the family occupied it for a day. The house was to be sold, and being large, it could be easily divided to accommodate a family in one division, and myself in another part of it; – giving me very complete bachelor accommodations; and a Mr Marshall^a and myself made the

^a M. C. Marshall, a cotton-spinner, of Greenheys, Chorlton Row.

purchase of it, and so divided it. I removed from Chorlton Hall, and occupied Greenheys for two years, having two elderly married persons to take care of the house, the garden, and stable. Thus I lived for two years before my marriage, and I was very comfortable as a bachelor. One of my habits at that period was peculiar. The old housekeeper came always after breakfast to know what I would have for dinner, my reply was 'an apple dumpling,' – which she made in great perfection, – 'and anything else you like;' and this practice was uniform as long as I remained unmarried. My attention was devoted to business and study, and I could not be troubled to think about the details of eating and drinking.

Between my second and third visit to Glasgow I occasionally saw Miss Spear, and on one of my visits to her she asked what I thought of her Glasgow friend, Miss Dale. I said she appeared to me, from the little opportunity that I had of seeing her in our walks around the Green of Glasgow, in company with her younger sisters, to be a very kind and amiable young lady. She then told me her father was very religious, being at the head of a sect of Independents, and that he had the charge of about forty churches in various parts of Scotland, and preached every Sunday to his congregation in Glasgow. That he had been one of the Glasgow magistrates, and that he was much respected far and near, – having extensive concerns in different parts of Scotland. That Mrs Dale died when Miss Dale was twelve years of age,^a and from that period she had had charge of her sisters and of the family. That she was an extraordinarily good young person, and was beloved by all who knew her. Miss Spear added, 'I could tell you a secret worth knowing to you, – or at least it would be so to ninety-nine out of a hundred, if they knew Miss Dale as well as I do. But unless I thought you were as deeply interested about her as I think you are, and must be, I could not reveal it to you, and I do not know whether I should disclose it now to you, or not, – and yet I think it would be for the happiness of both that you should know it.' 'Pray,' I said, 'tell me this secret – for I feel much interested in knowing it, and more especially after what you have just expressed.' 'Well then, as I am sure you will make no improper use of it, I will tell you. It is now I think about a year since you met Miss Dale walking with me near the Cross of Glasgow, when I detained you talking some time, and Miss Dale offered, as my friend, to give you an introduction to her uncle to show you the mills and the falls of the Clyde.' 'I remember it well,' I said, 'for I was struck with her amiable manner and kindness to a stranger.' 'When we parted,' continued Miss Spear, 'she asked me who you were, and all respecting you that I knew, and when I had satisfied her enquiries, she said, "I do not know how it is – but if ever I marry, that is to be my husband." I tell you this because I know you will make only a proper use of it. You have seen her several times

^a Anne Caroline Dale née Campbell died in January 1791.

since, and can judge whether she retains the same feelings for you. But I know she has since that time refused several offers of marriage that would have had her father's consent.' I thanked Miss Spear for her very gratifying information to me, and assured her I should use it only with the view of promoting the happiness of both. This information induced me to look decidedly to Scotland for a wife. Without this knowledge I do not think I should have ventured to think of Miss Dale for a wife. Her father's religious character, his high standing in society, and my not knowing him, would have deterred me from aspiring to such a position as to become his son-in-law. And now I thought there was little chance of overcoming the difficulties which I saw in my way, even should I succeed in gaining Miss Dale's consent. I had, however, to call upon her with a letter and message from Miss Spear. I was kindly welcomed again to Scotland by her, – but her father was not yet at home. I found the morning walks on the banks of the Clyde were continued as usual, and upon this visit I often joined the party, and found I was not avoided. The younger sisters began to allow Miss Dale and myself to walk and talk a little apart from them, – and as there were four of them, they were seen sometimes before and sometimes behind us. During these walks I learned that Mr Dale wished to retire from business, as he was advancing in years, and had no son to succeed him. He had had one, but he had died young.^a He now wished to sell the New Lanark establishment, finding it not managed with the success that he had expected, and as improvements were making in new establishments over the kingdom, which increased the competition in the business, which he was afraid he could not long contend against.

By degrees I ventured to ask Miss Dale if her affections were engaged, and she frankly said they were not. But when I asked her permission to become her suitor, and her consent to receive me as her lover, she said, whatever might be her own feelings on a subject of so much importance to her happiness, she had little expectation that her father could be induced to give his consent to a stranger, whom he had never seen, and of whom perhaps he had never heard. That he was so good a man and so kind a father, that she should never marry without his consent, and she then saw no prospect that it could be attained, and therefore she thought she should never marry, – for she felt convinced he would never force or wish her to marry against her inclination, as she had already discovered. 'But,' she added, 'if you can find the means to overcome my father's objections, it would go far to remove any I may now have, to the request you have made.'

I could not ask more; – but I was fairly placed in a dilemma. I had never seen Mr Dale, and I was unknown to him. I knew not that he had ever heard my name mentioned. I was now fairly in love, and deeply so, from the open and

^a Dale's son died in 1789 at the age of seven.

frank manner in which my feelings had been met. Love is wonderful suggestor of means to overcome difficulties. I was thrown entirely upon my own resources in this matter. 'You must find the means to obtain my father's consent, or you can never obtain mine.' Such was Miss Dale's decision, – and how was this to be accomplished? To me it appeared, day after day, as I thought upon it, a difficulty not to be overcome. I knew not how, in the first place, to obtain a proper introduction. At length it occurred to me that I might make a pretence of enquiring whether a report I had heard of his desire to sell the New Lanark mills was true, and if it were true, on what conditions he would part with them. This was a happy thought that occurred to me, and I called upon him at his counting house of general business. He received me coldly, and I thought suspiciously, and he requested to know my business. I said it was reported in Glasgow that he wished to dispose of the New Lanark mills, and I called to know if it was so, and the terms on which he would offer them if the report were true. I was now about twenty-seven years of age, and young looking for my years, and he said, yet looking suspiciously – 'You cannot want to purchase them – you are too young for such a task.' I said – 'I am connected in partnership with older heads, and with men having large capitals, and we are already largely in the cotton-spinning trade in Manchester.' This aroused his attention, and he then entered more fully into conversation. He said – 'have you seen New Lanark?' I replied that I had taken a very general view of the mills, without looking into the details of the establishment. 'I would recommend you,' he said, 'to go and examine it, and return to Manchester, and make your report to your partners, and if they should have any desire to become the owners of it, I shall be prepared to enter into a negotiation with them for the whole of the property.' I thought by his manner that he did not think me in earnest, but as I received his authority to examine the establishment thoroughly, I posted from Glasgow to New Lanark, a distance of nearly thirty miles, and on which at that time there were three toll-bars at high rates. I had left Glasgow without small change, and had only guineas and half guineas with me. Sovereigns had not been introduced, and scarcely any gold coin; for when at the first toll-gate I presented a half guinea for change, the toll-man turned it over and over, and looked at it as though he had never seen one before, and said, 'have you no notes?' The currency of Scotland at this period was in notes of their local banks. I replied 'no – and the half guinea is the smallest change I have.' 'Then I will trust you until you return.' 'But,' I said, 'I am not sure of returning this way.' 'I will take the chance of that, rather than take money I do not know anything about. I do not understand gold money.' The same occurred at the second and third gate, and as a stranger I thus passed free of toll, an alternative which was preferred by the toll-men, to taking the half guinea, and I believe not one of them had ever seen a gold coin. I concluded I had come into a very primitive district.

I had informed Miss Dale before I left Glasgow of the interview with her

father, and of my proceeding to New Lanark, and a correspondence was thus commenced. On arriving in Manchester I informed my partners of what had occurred in Scotland, but I had no expectation that they would, at once, desire to enter into the negociation. One from each of the two firms with which I was connected proposed to accompany me, and immediately to return to Glasgow. We came by New Lanark, and my partners were much pleased with the situation and with the general outline of the establishment. We then proceeded to Glasgow. By this time Mr Dale had been informed by his daughter of what had passed between us, but he was very adverse to our views. He said I was a stranger of whom he knew nothing – a ‘*land louper*,’ (meaning, I suppose, coming from England to Scotland for a wife,) and he would not hear of it. He wished to have an honest Scotchman to succeed him, one that he knew something about, and could trust. I had been with him on the pretence of purchasing the mills at New Lanark, but he had no expectation that I could induce any parties to buy them, who possessed sufficient means – etc, etc I was informed of this by Miss Dale, who said she thought it would be useless to expect he could be induced to give his consent, and as she would never marry without it, we had better abandon the hope of it, and recommended me to look out for a better wife in England.

Thus matters stood on the arrival of my partners, Mr John Barton and Mr John Atkinson,^a and myself, at Glasgow. We waited on Mr Dale – explained who we were – who we represented, and our object in calling upon him. He was evidently taken by surprise, and was pleased with our explanation, – for at that period the houses of Borrodale and Atkinson in London and Messrs Barton’s in Manchester, stood very high in the commercial world. He said he would make the necessary enquiries, and would consider the subject by the next day, when he would be glad to see us again. We called at his hour of appointment, and he said, – ‘I am now satisfied of your respectability,’ (he was himself at this time the chief of two directors of the Bank of Scotland in Glasgow,) ‘and I am willing to treat with you for the land, village, and mills at New Lanark, with everything as the establishment now stands.’ We enquired the price which he valued this property. He said he was really at a loss to put a value upon it. His half brother, and a Mr William Kelley,^b managed it for him. He himself was seldom there, and only for short periods, as his chief business was in Glasgow. But he said, ‘Mr Owen knows better than I do the value of such property at this period, and I wish that he would name what he would consider a fair price between honest buyers and sellers.’ I was somewhat

^a John Atkinson, cotton-manufacturer, of 23 Lever’s Row, Manchester.

^b William Kelly (d. 1840), originally a clockmaker, was Dale’s manager at New Lanark, and was apparently the first person to turn mules by machinery (John Kennedy, *Miscellaneous Papers*, Manchester, 1849, p. 17). He later founded Kelly and Co. in Liverpool, with his son William Kelly as a partner.

surprised and non-plused at this reference to me, with all its responsible consequences, taking into consideration the position of all parties. My estimate of the establishment, from having taken only the very general inspection of it which I had had an opportunity of doing, was such, that I said, 'It appears to me, that sixty thousand pounds, payable at the rate of three thousand a year for twenty years, would be an equitable price between both parties.'

Mr Dale had been long known for the honest simplicity of his character, and as such was universally trusted and respected, and as a further proof of it, to the surprise of my London and Manchester commercial partners, he replied – 'if you think so, I will accept the proposal as you have stated it, if your friends also approve of it.' And equally to my surprise they said they were willing to accept the terms; and thus, in these few words, passed the establishment of New Lanark from Mr Dale into the hands of 'The New Lanark Twist Company.'

Little did I imagine when I first saw this establishment in company with my friend from Preston, that I should ever become part proprietor and ultimately sole manager of it.

This occurred in the summer of 1797, about six years after I had commenced the management of Mr Drinkwater's factory, and when I was about twenty-eight years of age.

Here was a new combination of circumstances, which had not been at all under my control, but which in their further progress has produced extraordinary results to myself and others, and which will produce yet far more extraordinary results to the entire population of the world.

There were two gardens in the centre of the village of New Lanark, and in these gardens two large cottage houses, one occupied in summer by Mr Dale's children, and the other by the managers of the mills. At the time of the purchase, Miss Dale and her sisters and servants were occupying this house, and her uncle and aunt and their family occupied the one near in the adjoining garden. The new firm were to take immediate possession of the entire establishment, and Mr Dale was going to send for his daughters to leave their summer quarters at once, and to return to Glasgow. We all objected to this, and requested they might keep possession of the house to their usual time of returning for the season; and as I was to take possession of the mills and premises, I remained at the Clydesdale Hotel in Old Lanark, which was only one mile distant, until their usual time of removing. To this Mr Dale assented after some preliminary opposition. The family thus remained for about six weeks, when Mr Dale sent for them to return, learning, I suppose, that Miss Dale and I had under this arrangement frequent opportunities of seeing each other, – and with her sisters we often enjoyed walks among the beautiful scenery on the banks of the Clyde, and our time was thus spent very much to our satisfaction. Mr Dale, however, continued averse to any thoughts of our union, and this he expressed very strongly after the return to Glasgow of the young ladies. There were however two warm friends of mine in Glasgow, who

had great influence with Mr Dale. These were the co-director of the Royal Bank of Scotland with Mr Dale – a Mr Scott Moncrief,^a and his lady,^b two elderly and much respected persons, who were much attached to Mr Dale and his family, and were near neighbours. These became Miss Dale's confidants in our affairs.

Before she parted from me at New Lanark, she said she never would marry against her father's consent, but she had made up her mind that she would remain unmarried unless he could be induced to consent to accept me for his son-in-law. I had reason to believe that on her return to Glasgow she stated so much to her father, who was and had always been a most affectionate and indulgent parent to all his children, and to her, being several years older than the others, more especially. I had often to return to Glasgow to see Mr Dale respecting the change of proprietorship of the establishment, and to learn many things connected with it and the parish and county affairs, and this brought us often into business communication. His cold and distant manner to me gradually diminished, until he began to be more at his ease when we met, and at length he relaxed so far in his manner as to receive me pleasantly, and after a little time in a friendly and almost cordial manner. I discovered that Mr and Mrs Scott Moncrief were daily using their influence in our favour, and at length they overcame all Mr Dale's objections to the union, and our marriage was fixed for the 30th of September.

In the meantime I was becoming daily more at home with Mr Dale, and he began to receive me at his house cordially and with increasing confidence. My property by this time had accumulated to three thousand pounds. Mr Dale proposed to give three thousand pounds with his daughter, and that I should settle three hundred a year upon her and her children in case of my death, under the supposition that my property would now annually increase. I made no bargain on this occasion, but left it to be arranged by Mr Dale and Mr Scott Moncrief, for I had offered to take Miss Dale without any fortune. These matters being arranged, before the day of our marriage arrived, Mr Dale had become as much satisfied and as much pleased with the idea of our union, as though he had at no time had any objection to it. All his prejudices had been overcome, and I was gradually becoming a favourite with him.

Our marriage took place in Mr Dale's house, in Charlotte Street, near to the Green of Glasgow, where our early courtship commenced. The ceremony, if ceremony it could be called, was according to the marriage rites of Scotland, and surprised me not a little. We were to be married by the Reverend Mr Balfour^c –

^a Robert Scott Moncrieff (1748–1814), who began as agent for the Royal Bank of Scotland in 1783, working with David Dale, and retired in 1803.

^b Moncrieff married Jean Hogg on 13 February 1763.

^c Robert Balfour (1748–1818): minister of St Paul's Outer High Kirk, 1779–1818.

an old friend of Mr Dale's, although he was of the regular Scotch Church, and Mr Dale was at the head of a dissenting or independent sect.^a

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

I observed to Mr Balfour that it was indeed a short ceremony. He said it is usually longer. I generally explain to the young persons their duties in the marriage state, and often give them a long exhortation. But I could not presume to do this with Mr Dale's children while he lived and was present, knowing that he must have previously satisfied himself in giving them such advice as he deemed necessary and sufficient. I bowed assent, and said, as he was satisfied that it was all right, I was equally so, and was obliged to him for his compliment to Mr Dale and ourselves. Mr Dale's carriage was in waiting to convey us the first stage on our road to Manchester, and as soon as breakfast was over we set out, accompanied by Miss Dale's maid, who was to be taken with her to England. The ministers in Scotland who marry any parties usually receive some present from the immediate friends of the parties married, or from the parties themselves. On this occasion I enquired of Mr Dale what was the custom, and what in our case would be deemed proper. He said he would see to that business with Mr Balfour; and we learned afterwards that he gave him a full suit of clothes, hat and all, of the finest description for a minister, and which became his best suit as long as he lived, – such especial care did he take of Mr Dale's highly valued present, although they were ministers of different sects of religion.

After the first stage we left Mr Dale's carriage to return, and we then posted to Manchester, over very bad roads. Mail coaches had not yet been established, and the old line then travelled was a very different one to the line which now communicates between Glasgow and Carlisle. On arriving in Manchester and passing through the Chorlton district to go to Greenheys, my then residence, we had to pass in sight of a small and low building erected by the well-known Mr Henry for the manufacture of his concentrated essence of vinegar, and I pointed it out as soon as in sight, there being no other buildings near, as our future residence, – and wished to know from my new wife what she

^a Dale seceded from the Church of Scotland to form his own sect, known as the 'Old Independents', which owed much to the teachings of John Glas, who was ordained in 1719. They accepted the authority of the Bible alone, and opposed the use of professional or appointed ministers. Generally conservative in their outlook, they were nonetheless strongly devoted to charity and good works, and opposed the exploitation of the poor. Thomas Spence, whose views were similar to Owen's in some respects, was also connected with the Glassites.

thought of it. She evidently did not expect to find that I lived in a house with that common appearance, and she said she thought the house I had described to her was different. The old servant was, I perceived, disappointed that her young mistress was to be no better accommodated. After we had passed it they perceived I had not been serious in describing my residence, and we soon drove into the grounds of Greenheys, and entering into the house through a part well contrived and neatly arranged as a greenhouse, and the interior being well-constructed and furnished, and nicely arranged, both my wife and her servant were uncommonly well pleased. And here we passed our honeymoon.

I had arranged all matters as well as I could at New Lanark before I left it, under the same management as when Mr Dale had given it to us, and I expected they would have carried it on with ordinary success, – but we soon found that there was little cordiality between the two managers, and they were little capable of conducting such a concern in the manner we wished and expected. I had retained the direction of the Chorlton Mill, and Mr Thomas Atkinson kept the accounts up to this period. It was now thought it would be necessary for me to return to Scotland and take the immediate direction of the New Lanark establishment and of our Scotch business generally; and that Mr Thomas Atkinson, assisted occasionally by the other partners, should undertake the management of the Chorlton Mill and Lancashire business. And thus it was mutually agreed upon, and I returned with my wife and servant to Glasgow in three months after our marriage, and we were warmly and affectionately received by Mr Dale, and I entered upon the government of New Lanark about the first of January, 1800.

I say ‘government,’ – for my intention was not to be a mere manager of cotton mills, as such mills were at this time generally managed; – but to introduce principles in the conduct of the people, which I had successfully commenced with the workpeople in Mr Drinkwater’s factory; and to change the conditions of the people, who, I saw, were surrounded by circumstances having an injurious influence upon the character of the entire population of New Lanark.

I had now, by a course of events not under my control, the groundwork on which to try an experiment long wished for, but little expected ever to be in my power to carry into execution.

On commencing my task I found it full of formidable obstacles. The former managers had acquired their own views of managing. They had old notions and habits, all directly opposed to mine, and from these parties I expected little assistance. The people were surrounded by bad conditions, and these bad conditions had powerfully acted upon them to mis-form their characters and conduct. I soon perceived that there would be much to undo and much to do, before I could obtain the results which I intended to accomplish. The people had been collected hastily from any place from whence they could be induced to come, and the great majority of them were idle, intemperate, dishonest,

devoid of truth, and pretenders to religion, which they supposed would cover and excuse all their short-comings and immoral proceedings. My first object was to ascertain all the errors against which I had to contend, and as I investigated each department, I thought there would be no termination to the changes required. I soon found that a *re-construction* of the whole establishment would be necessary for my views, and for the pecuniary success of the concern. I therefore commenced cautiously laying the groundwork for the intended changes, and I wished to make the old superintendents of the different departments my agents for this purpose. But I soon found that they were wedded to their own notions and ancient prejudices, and that for new measures it was necessary to have new men; for the old ones preferred to leave their situations, rather than be engaged in a work of such reform as I contemplated, which they said was impracticable. And to them it was so; for they had no conception of the principle on which I proposed to act, and by which I intended to govern the population. It is from this same ignorance that the public now think my views impracticable.

I soon found I had every bad habit and practice of the people to overcome. They were intemperate and immoral, with very few exceptions, throughout the whole establishment. The brother of one of the chief managers was in the frequent practice of taking what is called a '*spre*,' – that is, being intoxicated day after day for weeks together, without attending to his occupation during the whole period. Theft was very general, and was carried on to an enormous and ruinous extent, and Mr Dale's property had been plundered in all directions, and had been almost considered public property. The population had been collected from anywhere and anyhow, for it was the most difficult to induce any sober well-doing family to leave their home to go into cotton mills as then conducted.

Knowing by this time the influence of circumstances over human nature in every part of the world, my first attention was to discover the evil conditions existing among the people, and how in the shortest time they could be superseded by better. There were two ways before me, by which to govern the population. 1st, By contending against the people, who had to contend against the evil conditions by which, through ignorance, they were surrounded; and in this case I should have had continually to find fault with all, and to keep them in a state of constant ill-will and irritation, – to have many of them tried for theft, – to have some imprisoned and transported, and at that period to have others condemned to death, – for in some cases I detected thefts to a large amount; there being no check upon any of their proceedings. This was the course which had ever been the practice of society. Or, 2ndly, I had to consider these unfortunately placed people, as they really were, the creatures of ignorant and vicious circumstances, who were made to be what they were by the evil conditions which had been made to surround them, and for which alone society, if any party, should be made responsible; and, instead of

tormenting the individuals, – imprisoning and transporting some, hanging others, and keeping the population in a state of constant irrational excitement, – I had to change these evil conditions for good ones, and thus, in the due order of nature, according to its unchanging laws, to supersede the inferior and bad characters, created by inferior and bad conditions, by superior and good characters, to be created by superior and good conditions. And this is now the course which for the happiness of all should be universally adopted in practice.

This latter mode required a knowledge of human nature, and of the science of the influence of circumstances over it, with illimitable patience, forbearance, and determination. But *with these conditions*, certain ultimate success would inevitably follow. While the first mode could not insure success if persevered in to the end of time, – and so long as it is continued must keep society in never-ending varied confusion, counteraction, and opposing feelings.

But from what source could the knowledge of human nature, the science of the influence of the circumstances over it, with illimitable patience, forbearance, and determination, be obtained? – seeing that these qualities combined had remained unknown during the past history of the human race. This is the great secret worth knowing, and which has been so long hidden from the world.

From one source only could this secret be derived; – that is, from the discovery of the knowledge ‘That the character of each of our race is formed by God or nature and by society; and that it is impossible that any human being could or can form his own qualities or character.’

This knowledge I had now acquired by the gradual teaching of nature, through experience and reflection, forced upon me by the circumstances through which I had passed; and it was now to be ascertained whether it had given me the patience, forbearance, and determination, to proceed successfully in my task, – for I had decided to govern the New Lanark population according to these new views, – that is, on the second mode stated. For this purpose I had to lay my plans deep and wide, and to combine them with measures to insure profits from the establishment, sufficient to satisfy my commercial partners, and at first not to do too much, so as to alarm their prejudices or those of the public.

Mr James Dale and Mr Kelly were incompetent to comprehend my views, or to assist me in my plans. They both therefore left New Lanark, and returned to Glasgow, to commence different businesses, each for himself. Application was now made to me for a situation by the Mr Humphreys whom I had recommended to Mr Drinkwater to succeed me. Mr Humphreys could not keep up to the quality of yarns or to the general management of the establishment as I had left it to him. Mr Drinkwater had discovered that Mr Oldknow’s pecuniary position was not what he had anticipated, and therefore the match between Mr Oldknow and Miss Drinkwater did not take place. Mr Drinkwater became

dissatisfied with the business, sold the factory, and Mr Humphreys lost his situation. I engaged him to manage the machinery under my direction, and retained him for some years, until he was tempted to leave my service for what he deemed a better position, but which proved his ruin.

Mr Dale knew little about cotton spinning, having always left the management of his various mills (for he had other cotton mills besides New Lanark,) to such managers as he could procure; and by this time improvements were taking place in machinery, which would have soon distanced the state in which Mr Dale's managers kept his various establishments. He had one at Newton-Douglas, in partnership with Sir William Douglas,^a – one in Ayrshire, at Catrine, in partnership with Mr Alexander of Ballochmyle,^b – another in Perthshire, – and a fourth in the far north, in partnership with Mr George Macintosh,^c the father of the inventor of the India Rubber 'Macintoshes'^d and other manufactures from that material. I advised him to dispose of these as soon as he could meet with purchasers for them, and he followed my advice.

I had now to commence in earnest the great experiment which was to prove to me, by practice, the truth or error of the principles which had been forced on my convictions as everlasting principles of truth, and from which all great and permanent good in practice must proceed – to commence the most important experiment for the happiness of the human race that had yet been instituted at any time in any part of the world. This was, to ascertain whether the character of man could be better formed, and society better constructed and governed, by falsehood, fraud, force, and fear, keeping him in ignorance and slavery to superstition, – or by truth, charity, and love, based on an accurate knowledge of human nature, and by forming all the institutions of society in accordance with that knowledge. It was to ascertain, in fact, whether by replacing evil conditions by good, man might not be relieved from evil, and transformed into an intelligent, rational, and good being: – whether the misery in which man had been and was surrounded, from his birth to his death, could be changed into a life of goodness and happiness, by surrounding him through life with good and superior conditions only. Such were the impressions made upon my mind of the importance of the task which I was about to undertake, and from which no opposition – no obstacles or discouragements, could ever divert me.

When to my friends and nearest connexions I mentioned that my intensions were to commence a new system of management on principles of justice and

^a Sir William Douglas of Gelston (1745–1809), whose wealth was made privateering and in Virginia trading with the Indians. He bought Gelston in 1792 and renamed it Castle Douglas.

^b Claud Alexander of Ballochmyle (1752–1809), who made a fortune with the East India Company before becoming Dale's partner at the Catrine cotton mill, Ayrshire, c. 1787.

^c George Macintosh (1739–1801), with whom Dale began red turkey dyeing at Barrowfield in 1785.

^d Charles M. Macintosh (1766–1843), who began as a clerk interested in chemistry.

kindness, and gradually to abolish punishment in governing the population, – they, one and all, smiled at what they called my simplicity, in imagining I could succeed in such a visionary scheme; and they strongly urged me not to attempt such a hopeless impossibility. My mind, however, was prepared for the task, and to encounter whatever difficulties might arise; and I was much encouraged to proceed by the success which I had experienced with my mode of governing the populations in Mr Drinkwater's factories.

The population of New Lanark at this period consisted of about 1,300, settled in the village as families, and between 400 and 500 pauper children, procured from parishes, whose ages appeared to be from five to ten, – but said to be from seven to twelve. These children were by Mr Dale's directions well lodged, fed, and clothed, and there was an attempt made to teach them to read, and to teach some of the oldest to write, after the business of the long day was over. But this kind of instruction, when the strength of the children was exhausted, only tormented them, without doing any real good, – for I found that none of them understood anything they attempted to read, and many of them fell asleep during the school hours.

The instructor was a good schoolmaster, on the old mode of teaching, and kind and considerate to the children, but what could he do with 400 or 500 of them under such circumstances? The whole system, although most kindly intended by Mr Dale, was wretchedly bad, and the establishment had been constructed and managed by ordinary minds, accustomed only to very primitive proceedings. I determined therefore that the engagements respecting the children, made by Mr Dale with the parishes, should run out; that no more pauper children should be received; and the village houses and streets should be improved, and new and better houses erected to receive new families, to supply the place of the pauper children; and that the interior of the mills should be re-arranged, and the old machinery replaced by new. But these changes were to be made gradually, and to be effected by the profits of the establishment.

My first task was to make arrangements to supersede the evil conditions with which the population was surrounded, by good conditions. And as soon as society can be made to think rationally on a true foundation, to replace inferior by superior conditions will be found to be the task which society has to learn, and in good earnest to commence in practice. In fact, this is the great lesson which mankind has now to acquire and to put into execution over the world. For, with the certainty of a law of nature, – as are the circumstances or conditions with which man is surrounded through life, so must he become. Surround him with evil circumstances or conditions, – and this thoughts and conduct must become evil; while when surrounded through life with good conditions only, his thoughts and conduct must be good. The problem for man now to solve, therefore, is – 'What are evil, and what are good conditions? And how are the evil to be superseded by the good, in peace, beneficially for

all, and with universal consent?' And when the first principle on which society should be based shall be understood and consistently applied to practice, the problem will be easily solved and carried into execution.

The profession of religion, and attention to its forms and ceremonies, which were strictly observed, were the foundation on which Scotch character and society were formed. The profession was, and is, most essential to enable anyone to become respectable, as it is called, in any part of Scotland; and this profession of religion, with attention to its forms, was deemed by many all that was necessary. Sobriety and correct conduct were in much less estimation.

But the character of the population of the world, in consequence of its having been based, under all its varied forms on superstition and on the false notion that each forms its own qualities and powers of feeling, thinking, willing, and acting, is a sham and a falsehood; and, in consequence, a surface, artificial, and irrational character is alone to be seen from east to west and from north or south over the globe. Who shall overcome this universal error and great evil?

This experiment at New Lanark was the first commencement of practical measures with a view to change the fundamental principle on which society has heretofore been based from the beginning; and no experiment could be more successful in proving the truth of the principle that the character is formed *for* and not *by* the individual, and that society now possesses the most ample means and power to well-form the character of every one, by reconstructing society on its true principle, and making it consistent with that fundamental principle in all its departments and divisions. As soon as the authorities in the world can be convinced of the incalculable advantages which will arise in perpetuity to all, from basing society on its true principle, there will be little difficulty in creating a good and valuable character for all, and in building up society with good conditions only.

But I had to commence my experiment, not only in opposition to the disbelief in the truth of the fundamental principle on which I was about to found all my proceedings, but with the strongest prejudices in favour of the truth of the principle which I intended to disprove and overcome. The evil conditions which I had to contend against were the ignorance, superstition, and consequent immoral conduct and bad habits of the great majority of the population; the long day's work which they had to undergo; the inferior qualities and high price of everything which they had to purchase for their own use; the bad arrangements in their houses for rearing and training their children from their birth through infancy and childhood; and their prejudices against an English manufacturer becoming a hard task master, as they imagined I was going to be, because they saw I was going to adopt what they called new-fangled measures.

In addition to these evil conditions around the workpeople, I found it necessary, as the foundation of all future success, to make the establishment not only self-supporting, but also productive of a sufficient surplus profits to

enable me to effect the changes to the improved conditions which I contemplated. My partners were all commercial men, and expected a profit in addition to interest for their capital. I had therefore to re-adjust the whole business arrangements, and to make great alterations in the building, and gradually to change the whole machinery of the mills.

The workpeople were systematically opposed to every change which I proposed, and did whatever they could to frustrate my object. For this, as it was natural for them to dislike new measures and all attempts to change their habits, I was prepared, and I made due allowance for these obstructions. My intention was to gain their confidence, and this, from their prejudices to a stranger from a foreign country, as at this time the working class of the Scotch considered England to be, was extremely difficult to attain. My language was naturally different from their lowland Scotch and the highland erse, for they had a large mixture of highlanders among them. I therefore sought out the individuals who had the most influence among them from their natural powers or position, and to these I took pains to explain what were my intentions by the changes I wished to effect. I explained that they were to procure greater permanent advantages for themselves and their children, and requested that they would aid me in instructing the people, and in preparing them for the new arrangements which I had in contemplation.

By these means I began slowly to make an impression upon some of the least prejudiced and most reasonable among them; but the suspicions of the majority, that I only wanted, as they said, to squeeze as much gain out of them as possible, were long continued. I had great difficulty also in teaching them cleanly habits, and order, and system in their proceedings. Yet each year a sensible general improvement was effected.

The retail shops, in all of which spirits were sold, were great nuisances. All the articles sold were bought on credit at high prices, to cover great risks. The qualities were most inferior, and they were retailed out to the workpeople at extravagant rates. I arranged superior stores and shops, from which to supply every article of food, clothing, etc, which they required. I bought everything with money in the first markets, and contracted for fuel, milk, etc, on a large scale, and had the whole of these articles of the best qualities supplied to the people at the cost price. The result of this change was to save them in their expenses full twenty-five per cent., besides giving them the best qualities in everything, instead of the most inferior articles, with which alone they had previously been supplied.

The effects soon became visible in their improved health and superior dress, and in the general comfort of their houses.

This measure tended also to weaken their prejudices against me. But it was long before the majority of the people could be convinced that I was earnestly engaged in measures to improve their permanent condition. At length an event occurred which overcame their prejudices, and enabled me to gain their

full confidence. We were now (1806), receiving a large amount of our supply of cotton from the United States, and in consequence of diplomatic differences between their government and ours, the United States laid an embargo on their own ports, and no cotton was allowed to be exported, and it was not known how long this embargo might continue, or to what ultimate consequences it might lead.^a The prices of all kinds of cotton immediately advanced so rapidly and so high, that the manufacturers of the article were placed in a dilemma. The master spinners had to determine whether to stop their machinery and discharge their workpeople, (which most of them did,) or to continue to work up the material at the high price it had attained, and run the risk of a great sudden fall in the price of the raw material and of their manufactured stock, should the embargo be removed. Some adopted the one course, and some the other.

We were now spinners on a large scale, and to proceed in our operations was most hazardous. To discharge the workpeople, whom I then had more than half trained to my wishes, and who, if I discharged them from our employment, would have suffered great privations, would be, as it appeared to me, cruel and unjust. I therefore concluded to stop all the machinery, retain the people, and continue to pay them their full wages for only keeping the machinery clean and in good working condition. I continued to do this as long as the embargo was maintained. It was four months before the United States government terminated the embargo, and during that period the population of New Lanark received more than seven thousand pounds sterling for their unemployed time, without a penny being deducted from the full wages of any one.

This proceeding won the confidence and the hearts of the whole population, and henceforward I had no obstructions from them in my progress of reform, which I continued in all ways, as far as I thought my monied partners would permit me to proceed, and indeed until their mistaken notions stopped my further progress.

Soon after I left Manchester and was established as the sole managing partner at New Lanark, proposals were made to the Chorlton Twist Company, our Manchester firm, for the purchase of our Chorlton mills, and the negotiation terminated by the sale of them to Messrs Birley and Hornby, and former Blackburn customers, who yet retain them, having made considerable additions to them. Thus ended my commercial interest in Manchester, more than half a century ago; and great and extraordinary have been the changes in the town from that period to the present. Few, if any, of its then leading men in commerce or the professions are now living, and a new generation has arisen who know me not.

^a Jefferson's Non-Importation Act of April 1806, followed by his Embargo Act of December 1807, aimed to counter British violations of American neutrality during the Napoleonic Wars. Cotton prices fell by nearly half in the South, until exports began to escape again through Canada. The Embargo Act was repealed in March 1809.

Some account of my friendship, partnership, and transactions with the late celebrated Robert Fulton,^a the inventor and introducer of the profitable steamboat in the United States of North America.

This will be a proper place, before I take leave of Manchester, for me to state some particulars respecting my connexion with that ultimately ill-used man of genius and high enterprise, Robert Fulton, who did so much for his country, which did so little for him.

In 1794, Robert Fulton and myself were boarding inmates at No. 8. Brazen Nose Street, Manchester. We became friends, and he in confidence informed me, that in prosecuting an invention which had occurred to him, for more expeditiously and cheaply digging or raising earth in forming canals, and in obtaining a patent for the invention, he had expended all his funds and he knew not, except by disposing of part of the interest in his patent, how to obtain more, for all his means and credit were exhausted. He said there was a canal to be constructed near Gloucester, and if I could supply him with funds to go there and see the commissioners appointed to carry it into execution, he might perhaps succeed in obtaining a contract for digging a portion of it, and might thus bring his new patent into notice and profitable action, and he would give me half of the interest in his invention, the success of which was however very problematical. I supplied him with funds and he went to Gloucester.

My first written communication from him is dated the 20th of November, 1794, and is filled with curious calculations respecting his new digging machine. His first letter to me is dated the 26th of December 1794, informing me of his intention to go to Gloucester about the first of January, 1795, giving additional calculations, and suggesting new improvements in his machine, and ending by saying – ‘I will send you a sketch and description after digesting the subject.’ And although he was then in considerable pecuniary difficulties, to show the buoyancy of his spirits, he concludes thus – ‘Please to write to me immediately, and let me know how the improvement in the model succeeds. Present my best respects to Mr Moulson, and my volunteer friend, Mr Marsland, and his good lady. By ‘volunteer friend,’ I do not mean that Mr Marsland is, or should be, a fensible, – but a volunteer, in the *corps of benevolence and unanimity*, the principles of which contributed much to my amusement, and which I remember with so much pleasure. That all men may be *drilled* to this glorious exercise, *God of His infinite mercy grant.*’

The next document in succession I find to be articles of agreement of partnership between Mr Fulton and myself, which I give here in full as a curiosity to his friends in the United States. These articles were as follows:

^a Robert Fulton (1765–1815): American inventor of steamships and torpedoes.

'Minutes of agreement made this seventeenth day of December, 1794, between Robert Fulton, of the city of London, engineer, of the one part, and Robert Owen, of Manchester, in the county of Lancaster, cotton manufacturer, of the other part.'

'Whereas the said Robert Fulton hath lately invented and obtained his Majesty's Royal Letters Patent for the exclusive exercise for a term of fourteen years of a certain machine for transferring boats and their cargoes to and from higher levels and lower levels in and upon canal navigations independent of locks, of which machine thirty parts or shares (the whole into thirty-two parts being divided,) are now vested in the said Robert Fulton. And also hath invented and shortly intends to make application for letters patent for a certain other machine for removing earth out of canals to the banks thereof in cases of deep digging without the use of wheelbarrows, the sole and whole property in which is now vested in the said Robert Fulton. And whereas the said Robert Fulton and Robert Owen have agreed to become co-partners in the said machines and in the exercise thereof at the time and upon the terms hereinafter mentioned, that is to say:-

That the said Robert Owen shall immediately advance to the said Robert Fulton the sum of sixty-five pounds to be by him employed toward putting the said machines in motion, and that when and as soon as the said machine for removing earth shall clear two-pence per cubic yard of the contracts for which it may be engaged, or the machine for transferring boats shall raise a five ton boat to any height not exceeding two hundred feet in ten minutes, (the construction of which shall not amount to half the sum annually expended in locks,) or previous to the execution before stated, at the option, of the said Robert Owen, the said Robert Fulton and Robert Owen shall become co-partners and jointly interested in the said machines and in the whole benefit to arise from the working and use thereof for the term of fourteen years, or until the expiration of the term limited or to be limited in the said respective letters patent for the exclusive exercise of the said machines in the proportions following, that is to say -

That the said Robert Fulton and Robert Owen shall be entitled to the said earth-removing machine and to the benefit thereof in equal proportions; and that the said Robert Fulton shall be entitled to fifteen of the said thirty parts or shares of the said boat-raising machine and the benefit to arise therefrom; and the said Robert Owen to the remaining fifteen shares thereof. And the said Robert Fulton shall at the commencement of the said co-partnership, or as soon afterwards as the said Robert Fulton shall be enabled so to do, by proper assurances, as the counsel of the said Robert Owen shall advise, assign a proportionate part or share in the said machines and in the letters patent already and hereafter to be granted for the exercise thereof to the said Robert Owen accordingly.

That the said Robert Owen shall advance the sum of four hundred pounds,

as the business may require, to the said co-partnership, which shall be lodged in a bank by the said parties, to be by them employed toward the expense of completing and working the said machines when and as the same shall be wanted.

That an account shall be taken quarterly from the date hereof, of the profits, expenditure, and loss arising from the working of the said machines, and that in such account the said Robert Owen shall have credit given him for one half of the said sum of four hundred pounds, and all such other sums of money as he shall advance, (the said sum of sixty-five pounds only excepted,) as a debt owing by the co-partnership, and shall be paid the same out of the first profits arising from the said business; and that then the profits shall be divided between the said parties in the proportion before mentioned.

That neither of the parties shall assign his share or interest either in the said letters patent or in the profits to arise from the exercise thereof, without the consent of the other first had and obtained in writing.

That the same Robert Fulton shall, from the date hereof, and after the commencement of the said co-partnership, to the end of the same, apply his whole time and exertions in the said business; but that the same Robert Owen shall not be obliged so to do until one of the said machines shall be put in motion to the effect herein before-mentioned, at which time the said Robert Owen shall likewise apply his whole time and exertions to forward the same.

That neither of the parties shall use the effects or credit of the co-partnership, but for its sole benefit and in the regular course of business.

That any invention, speculation, or other business which may suggest itself to either party during the said co-partnership term, which may be likely to be productive of any advantage, shall be the joint property of the said parties.

That neither of the parties shall during the said co-partnership engage in any other business or employment, undertaking or speculation, other than that of this co-partnership, without the consent of the other of them; and in which case the said parties shall be jointly and equally interested therein.

That all notes, bills, bonds, and other securities for money shall be signed by both the said parties; and if not so signed, shall be taken as given on the separate account of the party giving the same; except bills of exchange in the common course of business, which may be signed by one of the parties on behalf of both in and said firm of the said co-partnership.

That the parties shall inform each other of all matters relating to the co-partnership.

That neither of the parties shall lend money to or make contracts with any person or persons whom the other shall have forbidden to be connected with; if he does, in one case he is to pay the sum lent to the cash of the co-partnership, and in the other to bear the loss, if any, on such contracts himself.

That the expenses of all such journeys as are evidently taken for the benefit of the co-partnership, and all other expenses and the losses of the business, if

any, shall be born by the co-partnership; and if deficient, by the parties themselves, in the same proportions in which the same parties are interested in the profits.

That neither of the partners shall give bail for or become bound with any person without the other's consent in writing, nor do any act whereby the partnership may be prejudiced.

That proper books of account shall be kept.

That all monies, bills, and notes shall on receipt be entered in the cash book of the said co-partnership.

That a general account shall be taken at the end of the said co-partnership or its dissolution; and that then the parties shall pay their respective shares of the debts owing by the partnership, and that the machines and other stock shall be sold by public sale, and the amount thereof divided between the said partners in the proportions before mentioned.

To give bonds to each other for the payment of their respective shares of the debts.

In case of the death of either party, the surviving partners shall continue to carry on and conduct the said business in what manner he shall think proper; and in case the deceased partner shall leave either a wife or children, the survivor shall pay quarterly to the executors or administrators of the deceased partners one moiety of the profits arising from the said business during the said term; and in case the deceased partner shall not leave either a wife or children, then that the surviving partner shall pay to the executors or administrators of the deceased partner only the fourth part of the said clear profits payable as aforesaid.

And at the expiration of the said co-partnership the stock shall be publicly sold, and the money arising therefrom divided between the surviving partner and the executors or administrators of the deceased partner, in proportions equal to their respective shares of the profits in the cases last before stated.'

'ROBERT FULTON. ROBERT OWEN.'

This took place during the interregnum between my leaving Mr Drinkwater and my commencement as a partner in the Chorlton Twist Company in Manchester.

The next paper of Mr Fulton's is an account of his debt to a Mr Thomas Lenning, which he requested me to pay for him.^a Then follows a long letter from Mr Fulton to me, with new calculations and diagrams of more improvements on his former invention, and concluding – 'When the rhino is gone, I will write to you.' Then follow seven letters in rapid succession, from the 14th

^a Fulton died penniless in 1815. Lenning was possibly the cotton-spinner Thomas Leeming of Salford.

of January, to the 26th of February, 1795, with new calculations, various sketches of new machines and improvements, and asking for more money.

He had had a previous unsettled contract with a Mr McNiven, a canal contractor, to whom he had requested me to send a letter from him to Mr McNiven,^a with proposals for a settlement, but Mr McNiven would not agree to the conditions Mr Fulton had proposed. I had therefore to write to Mr Fulton to advise him to come from Gloucester, whence his letters were dated, to Manchester, to settle this business, as Mr McNiven had threatened to adopt strong measures to enforce a settlement. It seems that he then came to Manchester, and made new proposals to me, to continue the partnership, or to make my advances to him a debt, which he would repay me with five per cent. interest; and it appears that I preferred and accepted the latter conditions. The following is the memorandum of proposal made by Mr Fulton, dated 17th March, 1795: –

'Manchester, 17th March, 1795.

'Memorandum. – Mr Robert Owen having advanced the sum of £93.8s. in part towards promoting the two projects of running boats independent of locks, and removing earth out of canals – it is hereby agreed that the said Robert Owen shall advance to the said Robert Fulton a further sum, not exceeding £80, to enable him, the said Robert Fulton, to make a fair experiment on the earth-removing apparatus; that on finishing such machines, should the said Robert Owen think proper to proceed in the partnership as per contract, he shall be at full liberty so to do. But should a partnership be presented to the said Robert Fulton previous to finishing the said machine, he shall be at liberty to accept of the same on the proposal of the said Robert Owen. And in such case, the said Robert Fulton to pay to the said Robert Owen, five per cent. per annum, for the monies advanced until the said Robert Fulton shall be enabled to refund the principal.'

'ROBERT FULTON.'

My next letter from him is dated the 2nd of November, 1795, regretting his inability to pay me any part of his debt. My next letter from him is dated London, the 19th of September, 1796, still saying he could not pay me, but informing me that his new speculations were beginning to be successful in some tanning improvement, in addition to his canal contract, which continued to give him prospects of ultimate success. My next letter from him is dated London, the 28th of April, 1797, and being of a more cheering nature, and more satisfactory as to his prospects and future proceedings, I give it entire.

^a Charles McNiven (d. 1815) was an engineer who helped build the Manchester, Bolton and Bury canal.

'London, April 28th, 1797.

DEAR SIR, —

Yesterday Mr Atheson^a presented me with your kind letter, and I beg you, together with all my old companions, to accept my most sincere thanks for the friendly sentiments and good wishes they entertain in my favour.

It was my intention to write to you about the 18th of next month, at which time I shall have a bill due, and I hope to be in possession of cash.

The arrangement I have now made, I hope will crown my wishes; having sold one fourth of my canal prospects for £1500 to a gentleman of large fortune and considerable enterprise, who is gone to reside at New York. Of this £1500, I shall receive £500 on the 17th of next month — £500 in six months, and £500 on my arrival in America, which I hope will be about June, '98.

Now, my friend, this being the state of my money prospects, it becomes necessary that I should deal equal with all my creditors, whose patience in waiting the result of my enterprise I shall long remember with the most heart-felt satisfaction, in which, *thank Heaven*, (some men would say *please the pigs*,) I have succeeded.

In the appropriation of the first £500, it is stipulated between my partner and me, that I should go to Paris and obtain patents for the small canal system — this I calculate will cost me about £200. Of the remaining £300, I will send £60 as your portion, and pay you the remainder in six months, which, I hope, will answer your purpose. I shall also be happy to pay any loss you may sustain by paying interest.

In about three weeks I mean to set out for Paris, and hope to return in time to be with you at Christmas; and about this time next year I expect to sail for America, where I have the most flattering field of action before me, having already converted the first characters in that country to my small system of canals. My *sensations* on this business are consequently pleasing — and I hope it will please all my friends; to whom remember me kindly. To the Mr and Mrs Marsland, Moulston,^b Scarth, Clarke,^c Jolly,^d and the whole assemblage of Worthies, remember me, good *Owen*.

Adieu my friend for this time,

Believe me, sincerely yours,

'ROBERT FULTON.'

I had one more letter from him, dated also from London, of the 6th of May, having paid me £60, and promising the remainder in five months; and I had no subsequent communication from him before or after his return to the United States.

^a Possibly the Holborn solicitor Nathaniel Atheson.

^b Moulson.

^c Probably Joseph Clarke, a cotton-spinner of Oxford Street (in 1790).

^d Probably John Jolley, Dimity Warehouse, 10 Cromford Court (in 1790).

The money which he received from me enabled him to go to Glasgow, where he saw Bell's imperfect, and, as to profit, impotent steamboat, on the Clyde, which was not capable of going, without cargo, more than five miles an hour.^a Fulton saw immediately in what the defect lay, and knowing how to remedy it, immediately proceeded to the United States, and did more to promote their rapid progress to great prosperity, than any one living; and I consider the little aid and assistance which I gave to enable him to bestow so great advantage on his country and the world, as money most fortunately expended.

While Fulton was with us in Manchester, forming one of a circle of enquiring friends, who very frequently met, he was considered a valuable addition. The late Dr John Dalton, as I have before stated, was one of this circle, and Coleridge came occasionally from his college, during vacations, to join us.

I must now return to my progress in Scotland.

I had one son born in a year after my marriage, – but he died in infancy. Another, named Robert Dale, was born the end of the second year. William Dale, two years afterwards. Then followed two daughters – Anne Caroline, and Jane Dale – about two years between each. Then David Dale, and Richard; and my youngest daughter, Mary, closed the number of my family.^b

In the summer we lived in the cottage in the gardens in the centre of the village and works, and in winter we resided with my father-in-law in Charlotte Street, Glasgow. I rode on horseback frequently to and from Glasgow, where our warehouses and offices for our stock of cotton and yarns, and counting houses for the transaction of our receipts and payments, were situated. In winter, as stated, we lived with Mr Dale, and he was much attached to the family, and became gradually more and more confiding in me. He was one of the most liberal, conscientious, benevolent, and kind-hearted men I have met with through my life. He was universally respected for the simplicity and straightforward honesty of character. His good nature was often much imposed upon, and he gave away large sums, often in mistaken charities, which were pressed upon him through his being the pastor of upwards of forty churches or congregations, dissenters from the Church of Scotland, composed chiefly of poor persons, learned in the peculiar cause of their dissent, but otherwise

^a Henry Bell (1767–1830) tested a steamboat in 1800.

^b Robert Dale Owen (1801–77): later a politician and social reformer, and the closest in outlook and ambition of his father's sons. See his *Threading My Way. Twenty-Seven Years of Autobiography* (1874). William Dale Owen (1802–42) was later a merchant and bank director. Anne Caroline Owen (1805–30) remained in Scotland and never married. Jane Dale Owen (1805–90) married a civil engineer, Robert Fauntleroy, and settled at New Harmony. David Dale Owen (1807–60) was later a renowned geologist. Richard Owen (1810–90) became a farmer at New Harmony, then a geologist and doctor, and eventually a founder and President of Purdue University. Mary Owen lived from 1810–32. For a rare reflection by Owen about his family, see *Lectures on an Entire New State of Society* (1830), pp. 193–202.

uninformed as to general knowledge. Mr Dale received all these kindly and hospitably, and was truly a good pastor to them in every sense of the word. He was a bishop among them, without receiving anything from his flock; but, on the contrary, expending his private fortune freely to aid and assist them.

From my marriage to his death, he and I never exchanged one unpleasant expression or an unkind word; – and this was the more remarkable, because our religious notions were very different at the period of my marriage, and we distinctly knew this difference. But Mr Dale being sincerely religious, was most charitable to those who differed with him. We had frequently many friendly discussions respecting our convictions on religion. I took my ground with him on the error of all religions in placing any virtue in the faith or belief in their respective dogmas. I held that belief never was and never could be in the power of anyone; that it was forced upon all by early instruction, or by conviction of the strongest evidence made upon the mind; that in either case the individual was compelled to have the faith or belief, whatever it might be; and that it was in every instance an involuntary act of the mind, and for which no one could be justly or rationally praised or blamed, rewarded or punished. And as all religions were based on the presumed power of man to believe or disbelieve by the power of an independent will of his own creation, and as this supposition was opposed to all facts, all the religions of the world were emanations of disordered or misinstructed minds, although in many cases supported by the most sincere, benevolent, and well-intentioned individuals, who had been so impressed with their truth and importance, that they, like the equally mistaken patriots of the present day, often willingly sacrificed their lives in defence of their faith or of the religious notions which, unknowing the cause whence arising, they were compelled to have.

I told him I could no more force my mind to believe that which he had been made conscientiously to believe, than he could force his own mind to believe as I had been compelled to believe; that that which had been forced into his mind as divine truth, was made to appear to me as ignorant human falsehood, and which, whenever brought under discussion with me, I was conscientiously compelled to endeavour to disprove.

After a certain time, finding these facts could not be justly denied, and being extremely liberal and truthful, he admitted them, and acknowledged I was consistent according to my view of human nature; but he often concluded our discussions, which were always continued in the kindest spirit and with full charity for each other's opinions, by saying, with one of his peculiar kind and affectionate expressions, (for I had become a great favourite with him,) – 'Thou needest be very right, for thou art very positive.' And I am sure he deeply reflected on all I said.

In this manner and in this spirit all our discussions upon religion terminated; but after sometime, when each party knew the other's opinions, these discussions ceased, and our conversations were generally directed to elicit some

practical measure of improvement for the poor and workpeople, or to some domestic affairs. But such were the feelings created in me by his natural simplicity, his almost unbounded liberality and benevolence, and his warm-hearted kindness, that my affection for him daily increased as long as he lived.

I have previously mentioned that he was a partner with Mr George Macintosh, father to Charles, who invented the manufacture of India rubber into the well-known 'Macintoshes' for preserving from rain; and, as I advised Mr Dale to terminate some of his many business establishments, he wished me to go with his partner, Mr George Macintosh, into Sutherland, where the cotton mill in which they were partners was situated. This was at that period (1802,) a formidable undertaking. There were no steamboats, – no mail coaches, – not even the common stage coach, – and the roads were in a wretched state, carried over the tops of the hills, having been made under the direction of General Wade as military roads,^a in a supposed enemy's country to prevent surprise. The usual mode of travelling was on foot or on horseback, or by very slow going carriage vehicles. In one case we had to engage a chaise, horses, and driver, to go the whole journey and back with us. It is useful to notice the progress of travelling and of civilisation in this part of the British dominions. Our engagement with the owner of the carriage and horses was – to pay thirty shillings a day for each day, until our return; to travel on the average not more than twenty miles a day – and that upon those roads was considered a hard day's work for horses and driver; and so we found it. We were also to pay all tolls and the driver, – but I do not recollect whether, we were to feed the horses or not; but, however that might be, we had generally to walk up all the hills, and down many of them, and occasionally, when the hill was long and steep, we had to assist the horses by pushing behind the carriage.

Mr Macintosh knew everything on this route, the principal houses, and who occupied them; being himself a Highlander, born in Ross-shire, highly intelligent, humane, and an excellent travelling companion. He had, from love of his country, induced Mr Dale, who first commenced cotton spinning in Scotland at the New Lanark establishment in partnership with Mr, afterwards Sir Richard Arkwright, to join him (Mr Mackintosh,) in this cotton mill in Scotland – called the 'Spinning Dale Cotton Mill,' with a view of introducing this new machinery into the north highlands, and to give employment to the people. Mr Dale sent instructed people there to manage the business for him and Mr Macintosh, but he himself never went there.

Our journey was to me one of great interest. I had never been in the Highlands. The scenery and everything connected with the country were new to me, and on this occasion I had an excellent travelling companion. After we

^a General George Wade (1673–1748) began the construction of a series of important military roads in Scotland in 1726.

arrived in the Highlands we found it difficult enough to make out the average of twenty miles a day, but I was amply gratified by the wild scenery through which we passed, and was amused with the primitive accommodations we met with among the mountaineers, for there was at that period very little travelling through those districts.

Sir Walter Scott^a was at this time unknown to fame, and the Highlands were very seldom visited by the English; but Mr Macintosh well knowing the country and its customs, we passed on our way, though slowly, much better than I anticipated at the commencement of our journey.

As an evidence of our rate of travelling – one day, as usual, we were walking up one of the long hills, and were overtaken by one of the young men of the country, who appeared to be about twenty-five years old, and who was going some distance in our direction. We entered into conversation with him, and found him well acquainted with the locality for a considerable distance around, and we obtained much useful information from him before we attained the summit of the long hill, when Mr Macintosh and I got into the carriage to descend on the other side. Our new companion, as the horses could only proceed at a slow walk, such was the then state of the road, for some time accompanied us by the side of the carriage, and continued our conversation. But our progress was so slow that at length he said – ‘Really gentlemen I am very sorry to leave you, – but I cannot delay my journey any longer;’ and bidding us ‘good morning,’ he soon left us far behind, and in a few minutes was out of sight. I said – ‘Mr Macintosh, this is really too bad – here are we with a carriage, a pair of horses, and a driver, – and this young man on foot cannot wait our slow movements. How much more independent he is, than we are with these appendages!’ He said that many of these young men thought nothing of walking fifty or sixty miles in the day for pleasure, and occasionally more, if necessity required them to extend the distance.

We soon began to enjoy the fresh air of the mountains, and being obliged to wait long at our stages for feeding and resting the horses, we made frequent excursions to see the best views and the finest scenery within our reach. I enjoyed the exhilarating mountain breezes very much, and we found a great increase to our appetite, especially after travelling a long stage before breakfast, on which occasion the landlord’s eggs, etc, suffered a great diminution.

This journey added considerably to the strength of my constitution, and to my surprise I found, such was the keenness and purity of the air, with the exercise we took, that, contrary to my former habit, I could take the spirit manufactured then so pure in the Highlands, in moderate quantity, without suffering any inconvenience, but which practice I never could adopt in the Lowlands.

^a Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832): popular Scottish novelist.

In passing through one of the extraordinary glens on our route, inclosed on either side with high mountains, Mr Macintosh said – ‘I have great cause to remember this glen, for on one occasion, when I was passing through it alone on horseback, and when I was about the middle of it, I was suddenly surprised by an eagle darting close by me, which startled me from abstract musings in which I was intently occupied at the time, and looking around me I saw two large eagles hovering above me, and I soon discovered that they intended to make a morning feast upon me, and upon the pony on which I rode, – for immediately one of them again darted direct at my eyes. Fortunately I had a short strong riding whip with a long lash, and with this I parried their attacks, which they made singly, one some minutes after the other, and I had the greatest difficulty in guarding my head against their repeated attempts at my eyes, which were evidently their aim. If they had attacked me both at the same time, their swiftness and power were such that I doubt whether I could long have resisted their united forces; and never did I feel the escape from imminent personal danger so much as when I cleared the glen and was freed from those ferocious and powerful birds.’

We at length arrived at Inverness, where Mr Macintosh was well known to the authorities of the burgh. He made known to them who his travelling companion was, – whom I represented, – and that the object of our journey was to see what could be done towards extending the cotton manufacture in the north Highlands; which measure had been for some time a favorite plan with Mr Macintosh, who, from seeing Mr Dale’s success in various places in the south of Scotland, had a strong desire to thus benefit his native district.

From respect and regard for Mr Macintosh we were officially solicited to accept the honorary freedom of this royal and loyal burgh, and we were invited to a public dinner, to be given on the occasion, at which the Provost presided. After dinner the freedom of the burgh was presented to us in curious boxes prepared for the purpose, and given with great official formality. The usual complimentary speeches and replies were made. This was the first time I witnessed the public proceedings of a royal burgh in Scotland, – but afterwards I saw more of them, to my cost, in election matters. In this case we were much gratified with the kindness and disinterested hospitality of the authorities of Inverness, where, after travelling so long through the Highland districts, I was surprised to hear the English language spoken in great purity by the inhabitants generally.

At length we crossed the Murray Firth, and attained the utmost extent of our travels northward, and arrived at ‘Spinning Dale Mills.’ The works were not extensive, and were in ordinary condition; and we remained only long enough for me to discover what improvements to recommend without going to too great expense, for the locality was unfavourable for extension or for a permanent establishment. Mr Dale soon after our return sold his interest in it, and induced Mr Macintosh to follow his example.

Upon our return we visited several respectable Highland families, remaining a longer or shorter period with each family. I kept a journal of this journey, which in my many changes of residence and extensive travelling since, has been mislaid – which I regret; for our visits were very interesting, and the kindness, hospitality, and good sense of the parties to whom Mr Macintosh introduced me, gratified me very much at the time, and left a pleasing impression on my mind. The names of the parties and places of residence I cannot now recall to memory, but Mr Grant, of Logan,^a was one of them, and with whose conversation I was much interested.

Feeling always the importance to the human race of the knowledge which I had acquired of the true principles of the formation of character, and of the overwhelming influence of circumstances, or of good or bad conditions, in forming character, – perceiving also that the happiness or misery of our race depended upon an accurate knowledge in principle and practice of this formation, – I always endeavoured in every new society to introduce and enforce these subjects by the most plain and simple arguments and explanations. All subsequent experience tended to prove to me the endless crimes, errors, and evils, created by, and necessarily emanating from, the grossly deceived imagination which led our earliest and most ignorant ancestors to take it for granted, despite of the hourly opposing facts to disprove their false notions – ‘that each one forms his own qualities, and therefore should be made responsible to his fellow man and to God for them.’ Seeing vividly the immense evil consequences arising from this most fatal of all errors, it gradually became the great business of my life to endeavour to convince all parties with whom I came into communication, of the lamentable consequences which have necessarily arisen from it to the human race, through all past ages, – of its obstruction to knowledge of ourselves, (the most valuable of all knowledge,) – of its creation of sin and misery, while without it, ignorance, sin, and misery would be now unknown over the world, – and to the total destruction of the principle of charity, morality, and justice. Its evils were always present to my mind, and my habit became uniform to oppose it everywhere, under all its varied forms and vicious results.

It was this habit of my mind that induced Hazlitt some years after this period to say in his writings that I was ‘a man of one idea.’^b Had he said that I was a man of one fundamental principle and its practical consequences, – he would have been nearer the truth. For instead of the knowledge that ‘the character of man is formed *for* and not *by* him,’ being ‘one idea,’ – it will be found to be, like the little grain of mustard seed, competent to fill the mind with new and true ideas, and to overwhelm in its consequences all other ideas opposed to it.

^a Grant cannot be identified with any certainty.

^b See William Hazlitt, *Table Talk* (2 vols, 1821), vol. 1, p. 151. Here, in an essay ‘On People With One Idea’, Hazlitt claimed that Owen’s was ‘that of himself and the Lanark cotton-mills’, which he was prone to offer to others ‘with the air of a schoolmaster and a quack-doctor mixed’.

It was upon this tour to the Highlands of Scotland that on our different visits to Mr Macintosh's hospitable friends I began my mission to openly propagate my 'new views of society;' and this was in the summer of 1802, above half a century ago.

The argument with which I was the most frequently met, was, not that the principle which I advocated was untrue, or in any particular unsound; but that it was utterly impracticable. And impracticable because it would overturn all the existing ideas of right and wrong, – all the institutions of society, – and would revolutionise both man and all his proceedings. The argument, so far as the overturning of all existing ideas of right and wrong, and the changing of all the institutions of society, is correct; and it is the knowledge of this extensive and overwhelming change, without any correct knowledge of what the change will lead to, or how it is to be peaceably and beneficially for all effected, that so far has deterred the authorities of the world in churches and states from allowing the subject to be fairly and freely investigated from its foundation through all its ramifications as it will affect the practice of society in every department of life. The human mind over the world, as it has been hitherto taught and filled from birth with false and most incongruous ideas, has no clear conceptions of truth in principle, or of right and wrong in practice; hence its incongruity, contests, wars, and universally irrational conduct at this day over the world. All the nations of the earth, with all the boast of each respecting their advance in what they call civilisation, are to-day governed by force, fraud, falsehood, and fear, emanating from ignorance in governors and governed. For all are lamentable sufferers from so governing and being so governed. Truth, goodness, wisdom, and happiness, will be for ever unattainable under any state of society, based, as society ever has been and now is based, upon the supposition that each one forms his own qualities, possesses a free will to believe or disbelieve, or to love or hate persons or things at pleasure, – and that man ought to be responsible to God and society for his qualities of mind and body, for his belief or disbelief, for his love or hatred, and for all his actions proceeding from them. And, once for all, I now, at the near approach of eighty-six years, (1857,) after a life of great and extraordinary experience among all classes, creeds, and colours, and in many countries, state, upon the clearest conviction forced on my mind, that all the petty schemes of reform proposed by any political or religious parties, short of this radical change in principle and practice, and making the practice without deviation, in outline and detail, consistent with the principle, are not only of no value, but that they are mischievous obstructions to the immediate attainment of goodness, wisdom, and happiness, to all of the human race.

It was this knowledge of human nature, consistently applied to practice, that enabled me at twenty years of age to govern most successfully five hundred men, women, and children, and to conduct one of the most difficult manufactures to a high degree of prosperity over all competitors. It was this knowledge

that, at the period of the history of my life which I am now narrating, induced me to undertake to govern a more difficult and extended population, amidst all manner of counteractions and opposing forces, on these new principles, – and with what success will be seen as I proceed with my narrative, to which I now return.

Mr Dale and Mr Macintosh sold the 'Spinning Dale Mill,' and Mr Dale and Sir William Douglas sold the mill at Newton-Douglas. The Catrine Mills, in Ayrshire, which Mr Dale possessed in partnership with Mr Alexander of Ballochmyle, were also sold, to Messrs Kirkman Finlay and Co., of Glasgow.

These sales released Mr Dale from much anxiety, and allowed him to pass the remainder of his life more quietly and much more to his satisfaction. During summer, while we were living at New Lanark, Mr Dale occasionally came to remain for a short time with us. His situation as director of the Bank of Scotland in Glasgow, prevented his being long absent from that city. Year after year he witnessed the changes which were in progress – the improved condition and increased industry of the people; and they presented a striking contrast to the state of the establishment when we purchased it. He said to the people, 'If the mills had been managed as they now are, and you had worked for me as you are now working for Mr Owen, I would not have sold the establishment to strangers.' At this time I had but one-ninth interest in the partnership, – but I had one thousand a year as sole manager, and Mr Dale would have preferred, could we have foreseen events, that it should have remained entirely in the family.

When I have stated that in improving society I would effect the change by superseding existing evil conditions by good ones, the question has often been asked – How will you begin? My reply has been, 'in the same manner that I commenced the change in New Lanark. I studied the existing local causes which were creating the evils and errors, and I gradually superseded these causes by others less productive of evil – by such causes as were calculated to produce beneficial instead of evil effects.' And thus, to act rationally, must the change be effected everywhere. The local causes producing evil in all situations must be well considered, and then measures properly adapted to those circumstances should be devised to supersede the evil causes by good.

But in this practice the population of the world is even now a novice, or very imperfectly informed. In consequence of the false fundamental principle, '*that man forms himself to be what he is,*' – few, if any, know what are evil and what are good conditions, and how to supersede the evil by the good. And hence the failure of all churches and governments to train any portion of the human race to become rational, or to become good, wise, and happy. While if they had understood this practice at an early period, the entire population of the world, thousands of years past, would have been so surrounded by good conditions only, that all would have enjoyed a state of existence in which from birth all would have been forced, without individual rewards or punishments, but solely

through the influence of surrounding good conditions, to become good, wise, and happy.

To prepare the population for this change, to show them by example the effects of so simple a practice, had now to become the business of many years of my life, and I set about it in good earnest.

Had I then had to commence *de novo* in creating my own combination of conditions, they would have been very different from mere cotton mill combinations – very different from those which existed at this period in the village and works of New Lanark. There would have been no difficulty in forcing, without individual punishment or reward, a good character upon all; nor in enabling them with pleasure to surround themselves at all times with a superfluity of the most valuable wealth, if I had had the means to create, on a new foundation and site, the combination of conditions which can alone effect these results. Society has never yet put it into my power to show the world an example of these conditions, – although it is the highest and most permanent interest of all that this example should be given in my lifetime, because my experience in scientific practical arrangements for superseding evil by good conditions, is the only experience of that character yet known to the world.

I had a very different and a far more difficult task to perform at New Lanark. I was obliged to commence with a combination of vicious and inferior conditions – but conditions to which the population had been long accustomed, and to many of which they were strongly attached. The difficulty of *undoing and overcoming* that which has long been wrong, greatly exceeds the difficulty of putting matters right from the beginning. That which I could have done comparatively perfectly in two years, had I possessed the means unfettered by partners and ignorant prejudices, I could not effect under the erroneous combination of a cotton spinning establishment, such as then existed at New Lanark, with the most devoted attention to the subject, in the thirty years during which I directed the operations of that establishment. Nor could such an establishment ever be made tolerably perfect in my estimation, with the conditions necessarily connected with a mere manufacturing establishment. Its foundation is an error; and its superstructure could be amended only by an entire re-creation of new conditions.

But the new conditions with which I propose to surround the human race must be every where introduced while present conditions exist. It should, however, be distinctly understood, that the conditions of the proposed new state of human existence, must commence on new sites; for those of the old can never be united to make a consistent, rational, true, and beneficial society. All therefore that I could expect to accomplish at New Lanark, was to ameliorate to some extent the worst evils of a fundamentally erroneous system. Yet, in the estimation of the public, the change which was effected at New Lanark exceeded all expectation. Those strangers who came to scrutinise and examine it, said that the change appeared to them, until they witnessed it, to be utterly impracticable.

I here make these explanations, because the public supposed that I made New Lanark the model of the system which I advocated, and that I wished the world to be composed of such arrangements as New Lanark exhibited in its improved state. Although before I had half accomplished what I ultimately effected there, the improvement in the condition of the workpeople was such that the strangers who visited the works were satisfied; and, compared with all other similarly situated workpeople, these were happy, and publicly expressed their full content with their condition, – still, I knew too well the inferiority of their mind and condition, and the injustice they were yet suffering, to be satisfied for them, – knowing how much more society could beneficially do for them, and for all other classes.

Let it therefore be kept in everlasting remembrance, that that which I effected at New Lanark was only the best I could accomplish under the circumstances of an ill-arranged manufactory and village, which existed before I undertook the government of the establishment.

After the events which had taken place at New Lanark in consequence of the American embargo upon their own ports, I had the confidence of the workpeople heartily with me, and then I urged forward with greater rapidity my measures for the improvement of their condition, physically and morally. Finding their temptations too strong for them to be honest and sober, and steadily and regularly industrious, I devised new conditions to counteract these temptations. I adopted checks of various kinds in all the departments of the business, to render theft impracticable without almost immediate detection. In one department in which theft had been carried on to a ruinous extent, and in which a hundred thousand of the kind of objects pilfered passed daily through four different set of hands, I devised a plan by which, without counting, should one be taken, the loss would be at once discovered, and in whose department it occurred. I had also a daily return presented to me every morning of the preceding day's operations, and frequent balances in every department.

But that which I found to be the most efficient check upon inferior conduct, was the contrivance of a silent monitor for each one employed in the establishment. This consisted for a four-sided piece of wood, about two inches long and one broad, each side coloured – one side black, another blue, the third yellow, and the fourth white, tapered at the top, and finished with wire eyes, to hang upon a hook with either side to the front. One of these was suspended in a conspicuous place near to each of the persons employed, and the colour at the front told the conduct of the individual during the preceding day, to four degrees of comparison. Bad, denoted by black and No. 4, – indifferent by blue, and No. 3, – good by yellow, and No. 2, – and excellent by white and No. 1. Then books of character were provided for each department, in which the name of each one employed in it was inserted in the front of succeeding columns, which sufficed to mark by the number the daily conduct, day by day, for two months; and these books were changed six times a year, and were

preserved; by which arrangement I had the conduct of each registered to four degrees of comparison during every day of the week, Sundays excepted, for every year they remained in my employment. The superintendent of each department had the placing daily of these silent monitors, and the master of the mill regulated those of the superintendents in each mill. If any one thought that the superintendent did not do justice, he or she had a right to complain to me, or, in my absence, to the master of the mill, before the number denoting the character was entered in the register. But such complaints very rarely occurred. The act of setting down the number in the book of character, never to be blotted out, might be likened to the supposed recording angel marking the good and bad deeds of poor human nature.

It was gratifying to observe the new spirit created by these silent monitors. The effects and progress of this simple plan of preventing bad and inferior conduct were far beyond all previous expectation. Each silent monitor was, as stated, so placed as to be conspicuous, and to be seen to belong to its own individual. I could thus see at a glance, as I passed through each room of every factory or mill, how each one had behaved during the preceding day.

At the commencement of this new method of recording character, the great majority were black, many blue, and a few yellow; gradually the black diminished and were succeeded by the blue, and the blue was gradually succeeded by the yellow, and some, but at first very few, were white.

For the first eight years I was continually occupied in training the people, improving the village and machinery, and in laying the foundation for future progress. It was intended as much for an experiment for the benefit of the world, as for cotton-spinning, so far as much an experimental establishment could be applied for such purpose, with its radical defects. My time, from early to late, and my mind, were continually occupied in devising measures and directing their execution, to improve the condition of the people, and to advance at the same time the works and the machinery as a manufacturing establishment.

During this period my father-in-law's health began to decline. We had acquired a sincere friendship and a strong affection for each other. He, a genuine good and religious man, — while I was a conscientious believer in the fundamental error of all religions. Yet we were as cordially united in feeling as two men could be. Each respected the conscientious feelings of the other, and upon these differences the utmost charity prevailed on both sides. He was the only religious man I ever knew who possessed real charity for those who so differed from him. He gave me his full confidence, and asked my advice on all his affairs, and adopted my recommendations, I think, in every instance.

In his last illness I was, by his earnest request, continually with him; he always wished me to give him his medicines, and he was unwilling to take them from any one else.

When he thought that he could not live much longer, he requested me to

tell him what I thought he should do for others not of his own immediate family, having already made his will as to them. The late Mrs Dale had left two maiden sisters and one married one,^a and I knew their family expected Mr Dale, who had been always very liberal to them, would remember them in his will. But having five children and expecting many grandchildren, he did not think it necessary to do so, as their immediate relatives were wealthy, although their own incomes were limited.

I said – ‘I am sure they will feel very much disappointed.’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘write down what you think should be done for them.’ At that time I thought Mr Dale’s property was much more valuable than from many changes it afterwards proved to be. I therefore wrote what I intended to be a codicil to his will, leaving each of these ladies one hundred a year for life, and making some other legacies, the amount of which I do not recollect.

These ladies had one brother living, doing well, connected with high families, and himself a well employed writer to the signet in Edinburgh,^b and another brother deceased, General Campbell,^c who had been deputy Governor of Gibraltar, and commandant under his Royal Highness the late Duke of Kent.^d General Campbell was a very superior officer and a great favourite with the Duke. In consequence of the General’s eminent services, his eldest son, the present General Sir Guy Campbell,^e was made a baronet, and upon a visit to me while I resided at Braxfield (to be afterwards mentioned,) he met

^a Anne Carolina Dale née Campbell’s sisters were Arabella (b. 1752); Christian (b. 1758); Catherine (b. 1760); and Mary (b. 1765).

^b Anne Carolina Dale née Campbell’s brother was John Campbell (1753–1829) of The Citadel, a Writer to the Signet and the eldest son of John Campbell (d. 1777), first cashier of the Royal Bank of Scotland. The elder Campbell married Anna Caroline Campbell, the eldest daughter of James Campbell of Tofts, on 14 April 1751. Their fourteen children included Colin (1754–1814); James (b. 1756); Patrick (b. 1761); and Archibald (b. 1767). The younger Campbell, of The Citadel, married three times, to Helen Callandar (d. 1783) in 1779; to Margaret Campbell in 1787; and to Sophia Stewart in 1801. His eldest son was John Archibald Campbell (1788–1866), also a Writer to the Signet. Writers were engaged in public legal administration, conveyancing and legal advice.

^c Lieutenant-General Colin Campbell (1754–1814) who died at Gibraltar of a fever contracted while on campaign, and is buried at the chapel there. He married Mary Johnstone. Their children included: Guy (1786–1849), John (d. 1841), William Johnson (1789–1854), Colin Alexander (1739–1860), and James Thomas (b. 1801; d. c. 1869).

^d Edward Augustus, Duke of Kent (1767–1820): 4th son of George III. Much in debt by the time he met Owen, Kent had served in the West Indies during the Napoleonic Wars, where he gained a reputation for strictness and detail. He returned in 1798, and became Duke in 1799. As Governor of Gibraltar in 1802, he provoked a mutiny by forbidding any but commissioned officers from entering wine-shops. He supported Catholic emancipation, and patronised the British and Foreign School Society, the Anti-Slavery Society, the Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, and the Bible Society. He married in 1818; the only child was the future Queen Victoria, born in May 1819. He died suddenly of an inflammation of the lungs on 23 January 1820. Some of his correspondence with Owen is reprinted in *The Rational Quarterly Review*, no. 1 (February 1853), pp. 27–35.

^e General Sir Guy Campbell (1786–1849).

with Miss Fitzgerald,^a the daughter of Lord Edward Fitzgerald,^b who was then upon a visit with our neighbour Lady Ross Bailey,^c of Bonnington, whose eldest son, Sir Charles Ross, Bart.^d had married Lady Mary Fitzgerald,^e sister of the Duke of Leinster.^f Sir Guy and Miss Fitzgerald were married at Bonnington, and I gave the lady away, being also her co-trustee with the Duke of Leinster, her uncle.

These circumstances I mention to show the wealthy and superior connexions of the Campbell family, which induced Mr Dale to say that he thought the legacies which I recommended him to leave to the Misses Campbell were not called for, and could not be reasonably expected. I knew, however, that the disappointment of these ladies and their brother would be very afflicting to them if they were forgotten. Soon after I had written the letter containing these proposed legacies, the brother arrived from Edinburgh, and reading the paper which I had written, he became very anxious that Mr Dale should sign it, and urged him very much to do so; but Mr Dale was very firm and decided, not to sign it. 'Then,' Mr Campbell said, 'it will be useless, and as a dead letter;' – but the more Mr Dale was solicited the more unwilling he became to accede, and at length he said, 'I leave with my son-in-law to act after my death as he may decide,' – and thus this matter was concluded. Mr Campbell was much respected as the head of a religious sect, and a popular W.S.

In two or three days afterwards Mr Dale died, and this death was felt as a great public loss, – for he was universally respected, and was loved by all who knew him. There was a peculiarly attractive and winning benevolence in his manner, that won the hearts of all who were known to him, – but especially of those who were admitted to his familiarity. To me, who had his full confidence in all his affairs for the last six years of life, and to whom he was most affectionately kind, his loss, as a parent and confidential friend, to whom I was attached in a manner only known and felt by myself, was as though I had been deprived of a large part of myself. The morning after his death the world appeared a blank to me, and his death was a heavy loss to and severely felt by every member of his family.

The inhabitants of Glasgow made his funeral a public one. They closed their

^a Pamela Fitzgerald (1796–1869), the daughter of Mme de Genlis, who married General Sir Guy Campbell in 1820.

^b Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1763–98): Irish rebel leader.

^c Elizabeth Baillie, who married Sir John Lockhart Ross.

^d Sir Charles Lockhart Ross (1763–1814): 7th baronet, Lieutenant-General, and MP.

^e Lady Mary Rebecca Fitzgerald, sister of the 2nd Duke of Leinster, who married Ross in 1790.

^f William Robert Fitzgerald, 2nd Duke of Leinster (1749–1804): Irish MP.

shops, suspended their business, and attended the funeral of the man without guile, benevolent and kind to all, regardless of creed and country.

To return to the New Lanark Establishment and its population.

In searching out the evil conditions in which the workpeople were involved, their domestic arrangements for rearing their children from infancy appeared to me especially to be injurious to parents and children, and my thoughts were now directed to measures which should, as far as practicable under our circumstances, relieve both from the worst of the evils which they were suffering.

The houses of the poor and working classes generally are altogether unfit for the training of young children, who, under the limited space and accommodations of these dwellings, are always in the way of their parents, who must be occupied about their daily affairs; the children are therefore spoken to and treated just the reverse of the manner required to well-train and well-educate children. And in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, parents are altogether ignorant of the right method of treating children, and their own children especially. These considerations created in me the first thoughts respecting the necessity of an infant school, to be based on the true principle of forming character from the earliest period at which the infants could leave their parents.

These children were now surrounded by evil conditions. I wished to take them, as much as our establishment could be made to admit, out of those evil conditions, and to place them within better conditions for forming their tempers and habits. I was surrounded with difficulties to oppose the carrying of my views into practice. To erect and finish a building for my purpose would require an expenditure in the first instance of about five thousand pounds, – and a considerable annual outlay afterwards. But this I estimated would gradually be amply repaid by the improved character of the children, and the improved condition of the parents. I had then, when the building should be erected, to overcome the prejudices of the parents against sending their children so young to school. I had to meet the objections of my partners, who were all good commercial men, and looked to the main chance, as they termed it, – which was a good return for their capital. And I was opposed in all my views by the parish minister. In contemplating this new measure, my mind led me to the necessity for making arrangements to well-form the character of the rising population of New Lanark from the earliest period of maturity, as far as a cotton spinning establishment could be made to effect it, and commercial men to agree to it. I therefore laid the plan as deep and wide for this purpose as the means under my control would admit.

My mind had been early deeply impressed while in Manchester with the importance of education for the human race. I had watched and aided the progress of Lancaster in his early attempts to commence something towards a beginning to instruct the poor, and had encouraged him to the extent that my

means permitted. And when the church set up Dr Bell^a in opposition to Lancaster, I was inclined equally to encourage Dr Bell.^b

I immediately perceived the fundamental error of both church and dissent; but the beginning of some education, however defective, was much better than the entire neglect of it; and I confidently expected that when once commenced it would gradually progress towards a much more matured state. I therefore assisted Lancaster, from first to last, with a thousand pounds, and offered to Dr Bell's committee a like amount, if they would open the national schools to children of parents of every creed; but I offered to give them only half the sum if they persisted in their rule to shut the doors against all except those professing the creed of the church of England. The committee of the national schools debated this proposal of mine for two days, and at length decided, by a small majority of votes, as I am informed, to receive the five hundred pounds, keeping their doors closed against dissent; and declined to open them for a gift of double the amount. I thus saved my five hundred pounds, and I had the satisfaction to learn that the result of those two debates was to cause the doors of the national schools to be opened to dissent in about twelve months afterwards.

In following up the subject from that period to the present, my mind has attained the knowledge of the all-importance of education in its true meaning, for forming a good character, not merely for the present period, but permanently and universally for the human race.

In making preparation for training the rising generation in the village of New Lanark, I had not the means to create anew the extended arrangements required to give a good and valuable permanent character to all. I was compelled by circumstances to use such means as were placed within my power, and in consequence of the many obstacles opposed, to proceed only at a snail's pace. I began in 1809 to clear the foundation for the infant and other schools, to form the new character of the rising population; but until the first of January 1816 I was prevented carrying my scheme into actual practice, by the events to be narrated.

I had by this time (1809,) made such progress in training the people in better and more sober and industrious habits, and in discovering the capacity of the establishment for more extended operations, that I recommended to my

^a Andrew Bell (1753–1832): founder of the Madras System of education, which used senior pupils to instruct those younger; also schemes of national education with schools supervised by parochial clergy.

^b Joseph Lancaster (1778–1838) emphasised a similar 'monitorial' system of instruction, where elder students helped the younger. The Royal Lancasterian Society (founded 1809, with William Allen a trustee) became the basis for the British and Foreign School Society (1814), whose non-denominational emphasis was later integrated into the state educational system. At this time a controversy erupted between Andrew Bell, who was supported by the Church of England, and Lancaster, who favoured non-denominational teaching. See David Salmon, *Joseph Lancaster* (Longman, 1904).

partners in London and Manchester the advantages that might be derived by the changes and reforms which I advocated. The statements which I made to them went beyond their views and alarmed them by their extent. The leading partners from each house came from London and Manchester to see what I had done and was doing. They staid on a visit to me for several days, and after inspecting everything, and hearing what I had further to recommend, they expressed themselves highly pleased with the progress made and with the present condition of the whole establishment. They said they would communicate to our other partners my views as I had explained them, and would take them into consideration. Upon their return they decided to present me with a large silver salver, with a very flattering inscription engraved upon it, and I concluded that my plans for future progress would be agreed to. But some of the parties were timid, and were afraid to agree to my extended recommendations; and after some months' consideration, some more of the acting and principal partners came again to hear the full outline and detail of that which I proposed to do.

I explained to them my intended measures, step by step, and stated the beneficial effects which I expected they would produce. When I had fully delivered myself of all I intended to say upon the subject, and to which they listened with great interest, I was struck and much amused by the reply of their appointed spokesman. He said 'Each of your propositions is true individually; but as they lead to conclusions contrary to our education, habits, and practices, they must in the aggregate be erroneous, and we cannot proceed on such new principles for governing and extending this already very large establishment.' My reply was, 'I can govern and conduct this population, and direct the establishment only upon the principles which appear to me to be true, and through the practice which I understand, and which hitherto has always been successful.' They however seemed to be doubtful, and to hesitate what to say or do; for they saw I was decided to manage, while I remained the managing partner, in the way I knew would succeed the most effectually. Seeing the dilemma in which they appeared to be, I said, 'If you are afraid to proceed with me, I will offer you a sum for the establishment, which I will either give for it, or accept from you, and in the latter case the establishment shall be yours and under your own control.' The reply was, 'your offer is fair and liberal. What is the sum you fix as its value?' I said, 'Eighty-four thousand pounds.' After some short conversation among themselves, they replied, 'We accept your offer, and the establishment is yours.' I thus for the second time fixed the price for these mills.

I had previously had applications made to me, to join me in partnership whenever an opportunity offered, from two wealthy and influential merchants of Glasgow, who stood high in estimation as commercial men, carrying on very extensive foreign trade in two separate establishments. They had both

married daughters of Mr Campbell^a of the Island of Zura, which island was his property, and he was a near relation of Mrs Owen. Sometime previous to this change in the New Lanark establishment, Mr Campbell of Zura had requested me to receive and keep for him at interest twenty thousand pounds, which he said, for family reasons, he did not wish his son-in-law to know that he possessed; and at this period it had been in my keeping for some time.^b I put this for greater security for Mr Campbell into the firm of the New Lanark Company, although it was entrusted to me individually. I knew nothing until afterwards of the reasons which induced Mr Campbell to entrust me with the keeping of his money in preference to his son-in-law.

When it was known that I had purchased the New Lanark property, Mr Dennistoun^c and Mr Alexander Campbell,^d the son-in-law of Mr Campbell of Zura, claimed the promise of joining me in the business, and we agreed upon terms; and as soon as this arrangement was known to Mr John Atkinson, one of the acting partners in the firm of Borradale and Atkinson, who were of the firm of the 'New Lanark Twist Company,' and who knew all the particulars of the establishment, he, Mr John Atkinson, requested to be admitted into our new partnership, and his request was acceded to, and we commenced under the new firm of the 'New Lanark Company,' leaving out the word 'Twist,' to make the necessary distinction. We were also joined by Mr Colin Campbell,^e a partner of Mr Alexander Campbell in another firm.

Our late firm had continued for ten years, and on balancing the accounts it appeared that, after paying the capitalists five per cent. per annum for their capital, the profits to the firm amounted to sixty thousand pounds.

It was now a partnership of five, and divided into shares unequally, — Mr Colin Campbell^e having the least, and I the greatest share, and I retained the thousand a year for the management of the concern.^f We were proceeding successfully in our business operations at New Lanark for some time under the new firm, and I had commenced building the new schools for the formation of character, when I discovered a strong spirit of dissatisfaction in the two sons-in-law of Mr Campbell of Zura. They had learned, through Mr Atkinson, that their father-in-law had deposited the twenty thousand pounds with me in preference to them, and they became very jealous of me in consequence of this

^a Archibald Campbell (1744–1835): Scottish landowner and Justice of the Peace associated with David Dale; father-in-law of Robert Dennistoun and Alexander Campbell (b. 1753), Glasgow merchants.

^b On this episode, see Alex J. Robertson, 'Robert Owen and the Campbell Debt 1810–1822', *Business History*, 11 (1969), pp. 23–30.

^c Robert Dennistoun (1756–1815): a sugar-refiner and partner in the West India firm of George and Robert Dennistoun & Co.

^d Alexander Campbell of Hallyards (1768–1817).

^e Colin Campbell: probably (1762–1863), third son of John Campbell, a Glasgow merchant.

^f Of the twenty-six shares, Owen had ten; John Atkinson six; Robert Dennistoun four; Alexander Campbell of Hallyards, three; and Colin Campbell three.

preference. They appeared at once to have been filled with the spirit of undying revenge; for they commenced a system of annoyance from the day they made the discovery, to the day of their deaths, which happened in the same year. They objected to the building for the schools, and said they were cotton spinners and commercial men carrying on business for profit, and had nothing to do with educating children; nobody did it in manufactories; and they set their faces against it, and against all my measures for the improvement of the condition of the workpeople.

They objected to all the improvements I had in progress for the increased comforts of the villagers, to my scale of wages for the people, and of salaries to the clerks and superintendents, which upon principle, and also for ultimate profit, were what the public deemed liberal. I proceeded, however, in my own way, until they gave me formal notice not to proceed with the schools. I then said, – ‘As I see you do not like my mode of managing the people and the works, and as I can conduct the establishment successfully only in my own way, I resign the management as exclusive manager, and retain my interest as one of the partners, and I will relinquish the salary of a thousand a year rather than be obliged to proceed contrary to my own convictions.’ This did not satisfy their wounded feelings. They would dissolve the partnership.

I said – ‘If you desire to do so I will name a sum which I will give or take for it.’ No. They would not agree, either to buy or sell upon that condition, – but the works should be brought to sale by public auction.

However much I disliked such proceedings, finding that they were determined to carry matters to the utmost extremity I made no further attempt to oppose the course they intended to pursue. They kept the books of the concern, and had all its funds in their keeping. Mr Atkinson was ambitious and very desirous of power and profit. I soon found they were all leagued together, by their systematic proceedings, and were determined if possible to ruin me, in character as manager of such an establishment, and in my pecuniary means. After I resigned the management, they withheld all funds from me, and would not advance me sufficient for my house expences. Although having, as it soon afterwards appeared, more than seventy thousand pounds of mine invested in the establishment, they refused to give me any part of it until after the sale; and I was obliged to borrow for my domestic expenditure, and my family and myself were thus greatly annoyed during the last year of this partnership.

Previous to the sale they took measures to circulate reports to deteriorate the value of the New Lanark establishment, and to lower my character as manager of it. They stated that I had visionary and wild schemes for the education of the children and the improvement of the character of the people – schemes that no one except myself ever thought of or believed to be practicable. They said they had given eighty-four thousand pounds for the establishment, and they did not think it now worth forty thousand pounds, and should be too

happy to obtain that sum at the coming sale. Measures were adopted by them to circulate these opinions, not only in Glasgow and Scotland generally, but in London and in all the large towns over the kingdom. The object was to deter any parties with capital from joining me in partnership, and thus, at the public sale, to depreciate the property, that they might purchase it enormously below its value, and by so doing deprive me and my family of our means of future support.

They acknowledged, however, that they had no other objection to my management than what they called my visionary schemes for educating and improving the condition of the children and workpeople, and my giving too high wages and salaries. In fact, they knew nothing about the true principles of conducting such an establishment to make it permanently successful. They imagined an ignorant economy to be better than an enlightened and liberal treatment of the people and of our customers.

While they were thus endeavouring to obtain the establishment at very far less than they knew to be half its value, I went to London sometime before the sale, to see to the printing and publishing of four essays which I had written on the formation of character, and my partners supposed I was occupied only with such public measures, and with the parties who were engaged with myself in promoting means to forward Dr Bell's and Mr Lancaster's plans for educating the poor, and in other public matters which were then beginning to occupy the attention of benevolent men, for this was at the commencement of the new era for ameliorating the condition of the poor, and for educating their children, – and during this year (1813) I was thus much occupied.

I was however also engaged in forming a new partnership for carrying forward the establishment at New Lanark. I was completely tired of partners who were merely trained to buy cheap and sell dear. This occupation deteriorates, and often destroys, the finest and best faculties of our nature. From an experience of a long life, in which I passed through all the gradations of trade, manufactures, and commerce, I am thoroughly convinced that there can be no superior character formed under this thoroughly selfish system. Truth, honesty, virtue, will be mere names, as they are now, and as they have ever been. Under this system there can be no true civilisation; for by it all are trained civilly to oppose and often to destroy one another by their created opposition of interests. It is a low, vulgar, ignorant, and inferior mode of conducting the affairs of society; and no permanent, general, and substantial improvement can arise until it shall be superseded by a superior mode of forming character and creating wealth.

I at this time published a pamphlet for private circulation, stating the preparation which I had made to conduct the establishment at New Lanark on principles to ensure the improvement of the condition of the people, as well as to obtain a reasonable remuneration for capital and for its manage-

ment.^a These were circulated among the best circles of the wealthy benevolent, and of those who desired with sincerity to commence active measures for the improvement of the condition of the poor and working classes; with a view of obtaining among them partners who would assist, and not retard, my intended future operations, and who would not exact from those they employed too much labour for too little wages. Such partners I found, possessing these views to a greater extent than I had anticipated, in Mr John Walker,^b of Arno's Grove, – Jeremy Bentham,^c the philosopher, – Joseph Foster^d of Bromley, – William Allen^e of Plough Court, – Joseph Fox,^f dentist, – and Michael Gibbs,^g subsequently Alderman and Lord Mayor of London, – all of whom were willing to become partners with me if the establishment could be bought at a fair price at the sale.

During this period my partners in Glasgow supposed I was only attending to public business, and that I had abandoned all idea of resuming my post, and of purchasing the establishment, which had been advertised for several months to be sold by public sale in Glasgow, on a day named. As the time drew nigh, I returned to Glasgow, and Messrs Allen, Foster, and Gibbs returned with me, but remained in a hotel, unknown personally, or as to their object in visiting Glasgow.

My old partners had made themselves so sure of becoming the proprietors of New Lanark, that they had invited a large party of the principal merchants and persons of their circle to dine with them after the sale, to commemorate the purchase, and to rejoice with them on their new acquisition of this extended establishment. They thought they had, by the reports which they had so

^a See Robert Owen, *A Statement Regarding the New Lanark Establishment* (1812) (*infra*, vol. 1, pp. 13–21).

^b John Walker (1767–1824), whose father Isaac Walker (c. 1725–1804) had been a wholesale linen draper who turned to philanthropy in retirement. His mother was Elizabeth Hill (d. 1795).

^c Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832): utilitarian philosopher and legal and educational reformer; radical political reformer after 1809. Bentham's religious views were not far from Owen's, and though Bentham's principles on poor law reform are usually linked to the New Poor Law of 1834, which Owen strongly opposed, he was also interested in the regulation of morality by close supervision of possible offenders (e.g. in his scheme for a new 'Panopticon' model prison). He may thus have been sympathetic to many of Owen's experiments at New Lanark. The best account of Bentham and his circle remains Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (Faber & Faber, 1952).

^d Joseph Foster of Bromley (1761–1835): Middlesex calico printer.

^e William Allen (1770–1843): Quaker chemist and philanthropist. The son of a Quaker silk manufacturer, Allen was an anti-slavery reformer with Clarkson; a supporter of Joseph Lancaster's educational schemes, which led to the foundation of the British and Foreign School Society in 1814; and a trustee of the indebted estates of the Duke of Kent. He travelled widely on the Continent visiting schools, prisons and other social institutions. See his *The Life of William Allen* (3 vols, 1846).

^f Joseph Fox (1789–1832): Baptist dentist; active in the Jennerian Society; later (after 1829) an advocate of co-operation. Author of *A Comparative View of the Plans of Education of Dr. Bell and Mr. Lancaster* (1808).

^g Michael Gibbs (1781–1858): fishmonger and merchant; Lord Mayor of London 1844–5.

industriously circulated far and wide, sufficiently deteriorated its value, and had frightened all parties by calling the measures which I recommended, for educating the children and improving the condition of the workpeople, wild and visionary, and they expected no one would be found to bid for it, and that they should be then enabled to purchase it at forty thousand pounds, the price at which they intended to put it up for sale, and if no party bid that price for it, then they were to be the successful parties, and to become the owners of New Lanark.

I did not meet them until the morning of the sale, to decide upon what should be what is called the upset price, or the price at which, if any one bid that sum, and no competitors bid more, the property becomes sold to him. The first question which I asked them was – ‘what do you propose shall be the upset price?’ They said, as I expected, ‘forty thousand pounds.’ I said – ‘Will you now take sixty thousand pounds for the property?’ ‘No, – we will not,’ was their immediate reply. ‘Then it shall be put up at sixty thousand pounds.’ And they were under the necessity in consequence of their reply to admit of this decision.

My proposed new partners while we were all met in London asked me the price which I thought the property was now worth. I said we should not let it be purchased from us at less than one hundred and twenty thousand pounds. And it was concluded that I should be empowered to bid to that amount.

On the morning of the sale I instructed my solicitor in Glasgow, Mr Alexander Macgregor,^a whom I always found to be a most honourable man in his profession, and a sound adviser upon all difficult questions, to bid at this sale for me. One of the conditions of sale was that the lowest bidding at each time should be one hundred pounds. I requested him never to bid at any one time more than one hundred pounds, and to follow up the bidding to one hundred and twenty thousand pounds, and if the other parties should bid up to that sum then to come to me, as I should be in the room, for farther instructions.

The sale had excited great interest in Glasgow, for I had become very popular in Scotland, and a belief existed that I was to be oppressed and victimised that day, by the influence and capital of my opponents, who were very wealthy, – and many of my friends and theirs were present. I took my station at the end of the room in a position where I could quietly observe all that passed. My opponents, who had connected with them a junior but wealthy partner of Mr Alexander Campbell, were all there in person, to bid for themselves – and they came in with great confidence in their bearing, and full of excited hopes, – for they had not heard that I had any one to support me. It was a memorable day in many respects, both to me and to the public.

^a Alexander Macgrigor (1772–1839): of M'Grigor, Murray and M'Grigor.

The sale commenced, and the property was put up at sixty thousand pounds. Mr Macgregor bid one hundred pounds more. My opponents bid at each bidding, for sometime, one thousand pounds in advance, – Mr Macgregor one hundred only. This mode of bidding continued until the parties had advanced the price to eighty-four thousand. At this period my opponents seemed at fault, and retired into a private room to consult together. They returned, and bid five hundred at the next bidding, – Mr Macgregor always immediately following their bidding with his advance of one hundred pounds.

From this period until the bidding advanced to one hundred thousand pounds my opponents bid sometimes by five hundred and sometimes by one hundred at each bidding. But before they had attained this point, their appearance and manner gradually changed. They became pale and agitated, and again retired to consult. Returning to the sale after Mr Macgregor had bid one hundred upon their advance to one hundred thousand, they again resumed bidding one hundred each time, until they bid one hundred and ten thousand, – and Mr Macgregor bid one hundred and ten thousand one hundred. Their agitation now became excessive. Their lips became blue, and they seemed thoroughly crest-fallen.

I had never moved from my position, or appeared interested in the proceedings. But now one of the sons of Mr Campbell of Zura, brother-in-law to Mr Dennistown and Mr Alexander Campbell, came to advise me not to proceed higher, but to allow them to become the purchasers at so good a price. I requested him not to interfere, and to be silent, for my plans were decided, and I must watch the proceedings of the sale. My opponents returned into the room apparently more excited than ever. Mr Kirkman Finlay, who was the leading commercial man at the time in Glasgow, and was a friend of both parties, had been present for sometime, and he now left the room, saying sufficiently loud to be heard by all present – ‘The little one’ (meaning the one hundred bid,) ‘will get it.’ This saying appeared again to stimulate them, and they bid again in their former manner until they bid one hundred and fourteen thousand, – and Mr Macgregor immediately as before bid one hundred and fourteen thousand one hundred, and then my opponents finally stopped bidding, and the property was knocked down to me.

It seemed the old partners had not expected this opposition, and had not prepared the intended new partners for buying at such a price, and they left the room to induce him to agree to the advanced biddings. The old partners would have proceeded and possibly would have gone beyond my estimation, but they could not induce Mr Colin Campbell, their intended new partner, to advance one bid more.

Mr John Atkinson, who had been a partner with me in the establishment from the beginning, and who therefore best knew its value, went immediately from the sale room, while his feelings were highly excited, to Mr Finlay, (who had returned to his business before the sale had concluded,) and said, with

great emphasis – ‘Confound that Owen! He has bought it, and twenty thousand pounds too cheap!’ These were the partners who for so many months had been crying down the value of the establishment, and saying they would be glad to get forty thousand pounds for it!

But this was not the only disappointment my opponents experienced that day. Having previously, as has been stated, invited a large party to dine with them on that day, to rejoice with and to congratulate them on becoming the sole proprietors of New Lanark, – they could not countermand the dinner and their invitations. Their friends met accordingly. The dinner was sumptuous, and the wines were various and choice. But when the company met, the spirits of the principals were below zero, and, as I was afterwards informed by some who were present, the dinner passed almost in silence.

A Colonel Hunter,^a (a good, honest, frank, straightforward man, proprietor of one of the newspapers of Glasgow, and a talented person,) was one of the guests. He was very popular with the leading parties in the city, and by no means unfriendly to me. By the time the cloth was drawn, and the wine and the time for toasts had arrived, Colonel Hunter had acquired a knowledge of the result of the day’s sale, and of all its particulars. He saw at once the false position in which the parties had placed themselves. That they were baffled in their scheme which they had supposed so well laid, and had ruined their reputation by this want of success. Had they succeeded, they would, in the estimation of commercial men, had stood higher than ever. But, as I have said, the Colonel was a straightforward, bold, honest man, and feared no one; and he was determined to make these parties feel the new position in which they had placed themselves. He therefore asked permission to propose a toast, which was readily acceded to, and he gave ‘success to the parties who had that morning sold a property by public sale for one hundred and fourteen thousand one hundred pounds, which a little time ago they valued only at forty thousand pounds!’ adding, ‘fill the bumper to a success so wonderful and extraordinary!’ His toast, however, instead of arousing the spirits of my opponents, acted, I was told, as an additional damper. Seeing this, the Colonel followed it up by saying, ‘what an enormous good bargain they had made, and how happy they must think themselves to be freed from Robert Owen’s visionary schemes, and to get out of him such a large profit.’ And in this manner he kept all the evening before them the contrast between their former price, which they would have been too happy to receive, and the one hundred and fourteen thousand one hundred pounds which they had obtained. In this manner he continued to annoy them during the evening.

They had engaged Mr Humphreys to be their manager, and had brought him to the dinner, and thinking him to be my mainstay in the management of the

^a Col. Samuel Hunter (1769–1839): editor of *The Glasgow Herald*.

works at New Lanark, they tempted him that night to leave me, and promised to find him a superior and more profitable situation. This was in the spirit of revenge on the part of Mr Dennistown and Mr Alexander Campbell, because their father-in-law preferred to intrust his money with me, rather than with them.

They had married cousins of Mrs Owen, and were therefore relatives; and I now began to feel much for their new position, and I would willingly have served them if I could, and if they would have allowed me to do so. But their anger and revenge seemed to increase with every movement of my subsequent success, until their deaths, which took place within a year from the sale of the mills, and which I believe was occasioned by the disappointment and vexation arising from it and from the other circumstances which followed and proceeded from it. These were occurring continually to annoy them. Even the first morning after the sale, it appeared in the Glasgow newspapers that the inhabitants of New Lanark had arranged to have a party waiting in Glasgow to learn the result of the sale, and to proceed by express to inform them who had become the purchaser of the establishment, and that when the express announced to them that I had bought it, there was an immediate universal illumination,^a except in the house occupied by Mr Humphreys, who had been bribed by the other parties, and who was then dining with them in Glasgow, and who had gone down in the morning expecting to return the next day as sole manager of New Lanark, under the direction of the intended new firm of Messrs Dinnistown, Campbell, and Atkinson.

Mr Humphreys had great cause afterwards to regret this defection from one who had been his best friend for more than twenty years. He could serve under good direction, but could never succeed when left to his own resources.

The newspapers informed him and his new masters of this illumination, and of the great rejoicings of the workpeople on account of the works being again purchased by me.

But my opponents thought they had one chance yet left, and for one day they entertained the hope that the new parties who had associated with me would not be found sufficiently wealthy to give the security required to make good the purchase. In this hope also they were disappointed. For when I declared who were the purchasers, it was soon discovered that one of them, Mr John Walker, of Arno's Grove, Southgate, could himself purchase the whole establishment twice over.

The honourable simplicity of this gentleman's character was exemplified at our first meeting. I had previously published my four first essays entitled '*New Views of Society*.' The two first were published in 1812, and the two last early

^a Candles were customarily placed in windows to celebrate events of importance.

in 1813.^a He had read them, and had heard that I was about to form a new partnership, of persons willing to engage to carry forward the establishment on the principle of educating the children and improving the general condition of the workpeople. Mr Walker was a most disinterested benevolent man, highly educated, possessing great taste in the arts, himself a superior amateur artist, well versed in the sciences, and a perfect gentleman, in mind, manner, and conduct, throughout his life. He had never been in any business, and was untainted with any of its deteriorating effects. He was born of very wealthy parents, who were of the society of friends, who but under peculiar circumstances allowed him to go with and under the direction of a superior accomplished person, a friend of the family, to finish his education from the age of twelve at Rome, where he remained several years, and made the best possible use of his time. He had been the least injured by the present false system of forming character and constructing society, of all whom I have met through my long life in this or any other country. He possessed a good town house in Bedford Square, and a superior country house, called Arno's Grove, the former residence of Lord Newbery.^b He had greatly improved it, had accumulated a greater variety of exotics in his pleasure ground, and had in his museum probably one of the choicest collections of specimens of various objects of natural history, that any private gentleman possessed. He was considered to be a member of the society of friends; but in his language, habits, and external appearances in dress and carriage, he could not be distinguished from others of his standing in society, except for his correct taste in all his arrangements and appointments.

Our first interview was characteristic of this extraordinary, superior, and good man. He had heard that I was about to form a new partnership to forward measures in which I was engaged to improve the condition of the working classes, and thus gradually to open a new view of a very superior state of society to all classes. He therefore applied through some of his friends to have an interview with me respecting my intended new partnership at New Lanark. We met, and after being introduced, he said – 'I have been informed that you are about to commence a new partnership at New Lanark, with the view of showing how much our manufacturing population might be improved, beneficially for themselves, their employers, and the country. May I ask if my information is correct, and if it is, what are the arrangements which you propose?' I said – 'I propose to form a partnership of thirteen shares – each share to be ten thousand pounds; and I intend to hold five of those shares, and

^a It appears that Owen wrote the first two essays in 1812, but did not publish them until 1813, when the first notice of publication extant appeared.

^b Called 'Lord Newman' later. The previous owner of 'Arnolds' at Southgate was James Brown, who bought it from Lord Newhaven in 1776, and sold it to Isaac Walker. See J. Norris Brewer, *London and Middlesex* (1816), vol. 4, pp. 709–11, which includes an illustration of the house.

that over five per cent. for our capital and risk, the surplus gains shall be freely expended for the education of the children and the improvement of the workpeople at New Lanark, and for the general improvement of the condition of the persons employed in manufactures. He replied – ‘Will you allow me to take three shares?’ Having been informed of his character, respectability and responsibility, I immediately assented; and this was all that passed on his placing thirty thousand pounds at my disposal. He continued in the firm until his death, but never saw the establishment.

Another member of the society of friends who joined me in this good work was Joseph Foster of Bromley – a man without guile, possessed with the genuine spirit of charity and kindness, and who had one of the most expanded and liberal and well-informed minds, next to Mr John Walker, last named, that I ever met with among the society of friends. He was ever a universal peace maker, and, with the previous exception, less a sectarian than any of the society of friends known to me, although I was introduced to and made acquainted with the leading members of the society. He had one of the ten thousand pound shares.

A third partner was also of the society of friends – the well-known William Allen, of Plough Court, Lombard Street. He was active, bustling, ambitious, most desirous of doing good in his own way, (as a large majority of the quakers are,) and had kind feelings and high aspirations; but he was easily impressible, and was therefore much more unsteady in mind and feeling than the two preceding partners. He was however at this time popular, and a great favourite among his sect, and one of its chief leaders. He had one share allotted to him, – for his friend John Walker and Joseph Foster were very desirous that he should join our party.

The next who applied for a share in this unique undertaking was the celebrated Jeremy Bentham, who spent a long life in an endeavour to amend laws, all based on a fundamental error, without discovering this error; and therefore was his life, although a life of incessant well intended industry, occupied in showing and attempting to remedy the evils of individual laws, but never attempting to dive to the foundation of all laws, and thus ascertaining the cause of the errors and evils of them. He had little knowledge of the world, except through books, and a few deemed liberal-minded men and women, who were admitted to his friendship – such as James Mill,^a Dr Bowring,^b Mr and Mrs Austin,^c Francis Place,^d Lord Brougham, and a few others; – and these

^a James Mill (1773–1836): utilitarian philosopher, historian, political economist, friend of David Ricardo.

^b Dr John Bowring (1792–1872): linguist, writer, friend of Bentham.

^c John Austin (1790–1859): utilitarian and jurist; and Sarah Austin (1793–1867), translator.

^d Francis Place (1771–1854): tailor and radical politician, friend of Bentham and James Mill. Place assisted Owen with some of the latter’s early publications, possibly even helping to revise *A New View of Society*. But he remained implacably hostile to the idea of community of goods.

formed his world. It was most amusing to me to learn the difficulty, owing to his nervous temperament, that he had in making arrangements for our first interview after I had agreed to accept him as one of our associates in the New Lanark firm. After some preliminary communication with our mutual friend James Mill and Francis Place, his then two chief counsellors, and some correspondence between him and myself, it was at length arrived at that I was to come to his hermit-like retreat^a at a particular hour, and that I was, upon entering, to proceed up stairs, and we were to meet half way upon the stairs. I pursued these instructions, and he, in great trepidation, met me, and taking my hand, while his whole frame was agitated with the excitement, he hastily said – ‘Well! well! It is all over. We are introduced. Come into my study!’ And when I was fairly in, and he had requested me to be seated, he appeared to be relieved from an arduous and formidable undertaking. He had one share, and his friends have stated that it was the only successful enterprise in which he ever engaged. He, like Mr Walker, never saw the New Lanark establishment.^b

The next share was given to Joseph Fox, a dentist, a friend of William Allen’s, – a respectable well-intentioned dissenter, of some denomination, from the Church of England.

The last share was given, at the urgent request of the last named, (Joseph Fox,) to his relative Mr Michael Gibbs, subsequently the well-known Church-Warden, Alderman, and Lord Mayor, – a Church of England man, a conservative, and a man, as I believe, of good intentions, fair abilities, and business habits.

Three of these gentlemen – Joseph Foster, William Allen, and Michael Gibbs – were until after the sale, since my arrival in Glasgow, incognito. But the day after the sale they declared themselves my partners, and who the others were. This declaration put a termination to the last hopes of my former partners, who clung to the expectation that they might have some pretence to object to the parties who had united with me in the purchase at the sale.

The necessary writings to transfer the property from the one party to the other detained my new partners and myself some days in Glasgow before they were all ready and legally executed. In the meantime the inhabitants of New Lanark waited my return to them with impatience, and begged I would let them know when they might expect me. As soon as I could ascertain when our business would be completed, I informed them of the day appointed for my return. We went to Lanark in a coach with four horses – it being then two heavy stages, and the last a rise of nearly seven hundred feet, but through a

^a Bentham’s house at Queen’s Square Place, the Hermitage, was at the end of a blind alley. Its courtyard was surrounded with shrubbery. Bentham called himself ‘the hermit’.

^b On Allen’s 1818 visit to New Lanark with Joseph Foster and Michael Gibbs, see *The Life of William Allen* (3 vols, 1846), vol. 1, pp. 344–53.

beautiful district. The inhabitants of the old and new towns of Lanark had sent scouts to watch our progress, and to give information by signals how far we had advanced. It was a fine day, and we had the carriage opened in order that my new friends might see the country. When we arrived within a few miles of the Royal Burgh of the Old Town of Lanark, we heard a great shout at some distance, and we soon saw a great multitude running towards us, which at first much alarmed my Quaker friends. I did not know what to think of the number of people and the noise which they made on approaching us. They called out to the postillions to stop the horses, and before we were aware of their intentions they had untraced the horses from the carriage, had desired the postillions to take them on to Lanark, and, heedless of our urgent entreaties, they began to drag the carriage, and now it was up hill almost the whole distance to the Old Town through which we had to pass. But their numbers were such, and they relieved each other so continually, that they went forward quicker than our horses could have dragged us up those steep hills.

On looking at them I was surprised at seeing at first few faces that I knew, and therefore I could not well understand the movement. But I soon learned that the inhabitants of the Old Town had requested to be allowed to join the inhabitants of the village of New Lanark in the demonstration of kind feeling and of rejoicing on the return of the old manager and proprietor to his old residence and establishment, and had begged that they, the old Lanarkers, should have what they called the honour and pleasure of conveying the carriage and its inmates to their Royal Burgh, and that then the inhabitants of the village should take us from Old Lanark to the establishment. This arrangement accounted for the many faces new to me.

The hurraing of the people, and their joyous excitement along the road, aroused the attention of the whole country to discover the cause of such rejoicings and unusual proceedings. At length the procession arrived at Old Lanark, where our reception from all, the windows and doors being filled with women and children and old people, was most cordial. I was greatly amused with the perfect amazement and astonishment of my Quaker friends, who had never before been in the midst of such an exciting scene; but after their alarm had subsided they become more and more interested and pleased to see so much strong feeling exhibited for their new partner. But when the New Lanarkers took the direction of the carriage and procession from the Old Town to the New, and then taking us through all the streets of the village and back again through the grounds to my residence at Braxfield, about a quarter of a mile out of the village, — they were almost overcome with the gratitude, affection, and delight, which were expressed in the countenances of the parties from the windows and in the street, and with the varied means by which they endeavoured to greet and welcome our arrival among them. My new partners seemed to congratulate themselves that they had become connected with such people and such an establishment. It was a day and proceeding which I shall

never forget. It interested me deeply, and, if possible, increased my determination to do them and their children all the good in my power. I never was ambitious of popular applause. I generally sought to avoid it. But on this occasion, thus taken by surprise, and thus welcomed by parties whom I had directed for fourteen years, I was truly gratified, and also on account of my new partners witnessing the spontaneous feelings of the people. The unsophisticated expression of these strong feelings was the more unexpected from a Scotch population when the change was from a majority of Scotch proprietors to a firm exclusively English. But so it was, and my new partners, after remaining some days with me, returned home delighted with their mission, and they highly gratified the other London partners by their description of it.

But it was not so with my late partners. Some party had sent to the Glasgow newspapers a full account of our procession and extraordinary proceedings, and this was a new source of very great annoyance to them. And this annoyance was increased not a little, when upon balancing the accounts of our four years partnership, it was found, after allowing five per cent. for the capital employed, that the net profit was *one hundred and sixty thousand pounds*.

I had now a new field opening to me, and I prepared to make the most of it to forward the improvements which I contemplated. The most urgent were the arrangements I had so long contemplated to improve the conditions in which the youngest children of the workpeople were now placed, and to introduce another principle on which to form their character and conduct, their training and education.^a

I therefore commenced by hastening the building for the intended infant and other schools, and began to devise measures of relief for all engaged as workers in manufactories – seeing as I did how much, in many respects, they were injured and deteriorated by the change from the former more independent domestic mode of spinning and weaving at home, to being employed like slaves in large factories.

But I must now return to bring up other parts of my history to this period, at which my public life may be said to have fairly commenced.

I have said that Mr Dale left four daughters some years younger than Mrs Owen. Mrs Dale having died when her eldest daughter was only twelve years old,^b the latter had the care of the house and of her younger sisters from that period. Mr Dale being at the head of a numerous dissenting sect, and Mrs Dale from a religious family, the children had what is called a thorough good religious education, and had the kind and amiable disposition of their father – Mrs Dale having died six or seven years before I knew the family. But I always

^a Surplus gains from the investments, after a 5% return, were to go to the education and general improvement of the New Lanark workforce.

^b Jean Maxwell Dale, also known as Jane (b. 1785) would have been about fifteen at her mother's death in January 1791.

understood that she also was amiable and religious. Their general acquaintances and more intimate friends were therefore naturally professors of religion, and much time was occupied in what the family had been taught to think were their public and private religious duties. While other parts of education were deemed of far less importance, and had been therefore less attended to during Mr Dale's life. After his death, the four younger sisters lived with us for some years. Their names were Jane, Mary, Margaret, and Julia.^a

About a quarter of a mile from the New Lanark Mills was Braxfield House, the seat and birth-place of the late and then well known Lord of Session, until he received the title of Lord Braxfield.^b This judge of the Supreme Court of Scotland was dead but unburied when I took possession of the New Lanark establishment. He had been very friendly to Mr Dale, gave him great encouragement to establish his works near to him, and was to his death an excellent neighbour. He entailed the Braxfield property on his family; and his eldest son, Mr Macqueen,^c who had married Lady Lilius,^d the daughter of the late Earl of Eglinton,^e succeeded to his property, and had possessed it about eight years, when they offered to rent it to me; and as the house at the mills had become too small for my family, with the increase of Mrs Owen's sisters and the necessary increase of servants, I took it upon the longest lease Mr Macqueen could give by the clauses of the entail by which he held it.

We regretted the loss of this family; for they were always good and kind neighbours, especially Lady Lilius, who was more generally at home than Mr Macqueen.

It was a beautifully situated residence, and I improved the grounds immediately after I entered upon the house. This was now our summer residence, and in winter we occupied the house Mr Dale had built and had lived in many years and until his death. We kept our own carriage and horses, and also a carriage and horses and servants for my sisters-in-law. Our establishment therefore became an expensive one.

Discovering that a mere religious education was a very imperfect one for the general association of society, I determined that Mrs Owen's sisters, who after their father's death came naturally under our charge, should have also the advantages of a more extended secular education, such as was then given in the most select seminaries for young ladies in England. But first, that they might see and know their own country, I took them soon after their father's death a

^a Caroline Dale's sisters were Jean Maxwell or Jane (b. 1785); Mary (b. 1787); Margaret (1788–1814); and Julia Johnston Dale (b. 1789). Another of David Dale's daughters died in 1783.

^b Robert Macqueen, Lord Braxfield (1722–99): Scottish judge, famous for his intimidation of the jury at the treason trial of the political reformer Thomas Muir in 1794.

^c Robert Dundas Macqueen (d. 1816).

^d Lady Lilius (d. 1845) married Macqueen in 1796.

^e Archibald Montgomerie, 11th Earl of Eglinton (1726–96).

tour over Scotland and England, and visited in both countries every place deserving the attention of young travellers; and after they had remained three of four years with us, I sought for some time to find superior houses of instruction in London, in which they could finish their education, and I visited many educational establishments before I could satisfy myself that they were select and substantial for the purpose required, and were not mere pretences. That the four might make a more rapid progress, they were divided into pairs – the two eldest, Jane and Mary, were placed with Mrs Olier, Grosvenor Street, and Margaret and Julia with Miss Lane in ——. ^a In these more private and select seminaries the four remained for some years, and longer than was anticipated when they went. They put off their return quarter after quarter, finding their situations comfortable and improving; for both the establishments proved equal to the recommendations received of them, and to my expectations on previously visiting and inspecting them.

They returned home in the year ——, ^b and we had kept up their full establishment at Braxfield ready to receive them from a much earlier period than that at which they returned. The ladies with whom they were, advised them at the termination of each quarter to continue to proceed with and to finish their studies, and as they were now of sufficient age they were left to decide for themselves.

Mr Dale some years before his death had purchased a country residence called Rosebank, about four miles from Glasgow, on one of the roads leading to New Lanark, and which we occupied after his death. This estate afterwards, in the division of the property, was given to these young ladies. ^c After they returned home they were eagerly sought in marriage; but although several opportunities were given them to marry men of wealth and superior standing in the commercial world, they for some time rejected every offer made to them, and they seemed disinclined to engage themselves until they had seen more of the world. I then took them to France, Switzerland, and Germany, and they were introduced to some of the most eminent men and women of that day in those countries.

Previous to this tour on the continent, the third in age of the four, Margaret, died, ^d greatly lamented by us all, for there was a sincere and cordial affection between all the members of the family. There appeared to be but one heart and mind and interest among them, until they were separated by the marriage of the two eldest.

^a A Mrs Olier was resident in this period at 4 Gloucester Place, Portman Square, and a Miss Lane at 31 Gloucester Place, New Road.

^b Owen's reason for disguising this date (c. 1814) is unclear. Perhaps the blank is accidental.

^c Jean Maxwell Dale and Margaret Dale lived at Rosebank and Braxfield after their father's death. The Charlotte Street house was sold in 1827 to a merchant named Moses McCulloch.

^d Margaret Dale died in 1814, aged 24.

The Rev. James Haldane Stewart,^a a relative of Mrs Owen's family by the mother's side, was the first who successfully paid his addresses to Mary, the second unmarried. He was after some time accepted by her, and they were married while Mary and her two other sisters were living with us, and I gave her away on the day of her marriage, and we accompanied them on their marriage tour for some days.

The eldest of the four, Jane, was also, not long afterwards, married to a cousin, who also, with Mr Stewart, was an Evangelical clergyman of the Church of England, and was son of the late General Colin Campbell, formerly Governor Commandant of Gibraltar, under his Royal Highness the late Duke of Kent.^b

Julia, the youngest, was so strongly attached to her sister Jane, and Jane to her, that they would not be separated, and they have always lived together through their lives to the present time.

I had always, since I first knew these children of my own bringing up, until they were married, a great affection for them, and a strong interest in their welfare, but these marriages naturally altered our relative positions, and although a continued affection was kept up between all the families, – yet as my mission and the mission of Mr Stewart and Mr Campbell, who were as zealous and conscientious in their cause as I have been in mine, were so opposite to each other, our visits and intercourse were less frequent than they would have been had our views of human nature and society been similar.

They, I have no doubt, sincerely and affectionately lament my disbelief in the truth of any of the religions of the world. While I as sincerely and affectionately lament the imbecility of mind which instruction from birth in any of these religions inflicts on all who are thereby made conscientious believers in any one of them. These religions are the cause of creating less charity for opinions, and more repulsive feelings for mere imaginary notions, incomprehensible to every one, than all other causes united. I felt that the intercourse between us was one of continued forbearance on both sides. Each knew the other's conscientious convictions; each respected the feelings of the other; and each was in constant fear of unintentionally hurting the feelings of the other. Under these circumstances our visits became less and less frequent, although my affection for my sisters-in-law remains unabated.

It was long amusing and gratifying, at an earlier period, to receive letters from my dear and truly affectionate sister Mary, who, after her kind sayings in

^a Rev. James Haldane Stewart (1776–1854) was born in Boston and studied at Exeter College, Oxford. He married Mary Dale on 20 August 1816 at Rosebank, Dale's country house. Their son was David Dale Stewart. See David Dale Stewart, *Memoirs of the Reverend James Haldane Stewart* (1856).

^b Jane Dale married James Thomas Campbell (b. 1801–d. c. 1869), the fifth son of General Colin Campbell, and probably rector of Tilston from 1829–50.

the first portion of her letters, always concluded with the most earnest solicitude that I would believe in her faith; never suspecting that belief is in no one's power, and that therefore there can be no merit or demerit in any faith or belief whatever. I was always gratified by her extreme anxiety for my conversion, for I was sure she ever retained a sincere affection for me, as did her sisters, all of whom were most desirous I should think on religious matters as they did. There could not be more amiable, affectionate, well intentioned young persons than they always proved themselves to be; and yet after the marriages of the two elder to the church, our intercourse gradually diminished after the death of their eldest sister.

It is true that religions have been and to this day are the strongest causes of repulsive feelings between individuals and nations; and while any of these deranging systems of the human intellects shall be forced into the young mind by the insane contending sects over the world, the spirit of universal charity and love must remain unknown among all nations and peoples. Living for so many years as I did, owing to my marriage and my various partnerships, with religious persons of various sects, I became too conscious of the deteriorating influences upon the individuals, and upon the construction and practice of society. It made me glaringly aware that these religions materially injured the finest natural qualities, and that while any of them prevailed, they would be a permanent obstacle to the peace, progress in knowledge, charity, and love, and happiness of the human race. I vividly perceived and was made conscious of these effects through every day of my life, from the time I attained my tenth year. Religions are to-day the great repulsive powers of society; dividing husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters; and are ever-burning firebrands wherever they exist. For proof to demonstration of this – witness the present state of mind, feelings, and conduct, of all the religions in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. The being who shall devise the means to terminate these spiritual insanities will be the greatest friend to the human race that has yet lived.

From an early period of life, seeing the innumerable evils daily experienced from the error on which all religions have ever been based, knowing the immense and incalculable happiness that the human race could attain if freed from them, and being made ardently to desire the future progress in knowledge and rational enjoyment of my race, – there is no sacrifice at any period, which I could make, that would not have been willingly and joyously made to terminate the existence of religion on earth. Willingly and joyously – because I should have had far more happiness in sacrificing my life, knowing that my race should be thus placed in the right path to peace, progress, wisdom, and happiness, than I could have in living among my fellow men while made to become irrational by those religions. The religions of all sects have no charity or true affection for those they deem unbelievers. While unbelievers in their dogmas, who know the cause of the beliefs of all the religions and of all the

convictions over the world, have charity for them all; and seeing that these dogmas are opposed to facts, and are inconsistent with ascertained truths, pity those who believe in them in proportion to their ignorance of what constitutes truth. The religious over the world have less charity for the opinions of those who differ from them, than those who are irreligious from a true knowledge of human nature have for those persons whose instruction has made them to be of some one of these insane compounds of belief, which are all equally called religion.

Having been so many years in the midst of these so-called very pious proceedings, I was made but too conscious of their deteriorating and baneful effects upon the judgment or rational faculties of the kindest and best dispositions, and of the abject prostration of mind in the teachers of these absurdities.

One of the most generally learned, intelligent, and acute men I have met with, was Ramoun Roy,^a to whom for some time, while he was the guest of the Messrs Hare^b of Bedford Square, we were next door and very intimate neighbours; – and we were mutually much attached to each other. After our minds had been fully opened to each other, I asked him, (as he stated, that he knew accurately, having long studied them, all the religions of the east and west that had made any lasting progress in society,) if he knew one in which the priests did not say – ‘Believe as I tell you to believe, disbelieve what I tell you to disbelieve, reverence me, and pay me well, and you will go to heaven when you die. But if you do not these things, you will be everlastingly punished.’ He hesitated for some time, and then said, – ‘I have recurred to all the religions I know, and I must admit that that which you have stated is the essence of each of them.’ But more of Ramoun Roy hereafter.

In everything I attempted for the advance and permanent benefit of the human race, and in the very best objects, I was always checked and obstructed in my straightforward and honest progress by religion. I was always thus obliged to take a devious course, and to obtain thereby a less perfect result.

By this period of my life, (from 1810 to 1815,) my four ‘*Essays on the Formation of Character*,’ and my practice at New Lanark, had made me well known among the leading men of that period. Among these were the Archbishop of Canterbury,^c – the Bishop of London,^d afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, – Burgess,^e Bishop of St David’s, – Mr Wilberforce, – W.

^a Ram Mohun Roy (1772–1833): Indian religious leader.

^b John Hare, the brother of David Hare, who encouraged Bengali educational reform.

^c Charles Manners-Sutton (1755–1828): Archbishop of Canterbury 1805–28.

^d William Howley (1766–1848): Bishop of London 1813–28, Archbishop of Canterbury 1828–48.

^e Thomas Burgess (1756–1837): successively Bishop of St Davids and of Salisbury.

Godwin,^a – Thomas Clarkson,^b – Zachary Macaulay,^c – Mr Thornton,^d banker, – William Allen, – Joseph Foster, – Hoare, senr,^e banker, – the first Robert Peel,^f – Sir Thomas Bernard^g and his particular friend the Bishop of Durham, Barrington,^h – the Rev William Turnerⁱ of Newcastle, – Mr Wellbeloved,^j Principal of the Manchester College in York, – the Bishop of Peterborough,^k – and many others whose names have faded from society, and many whom I have forgotten. But I must not forget my friends of the political economists – Messrs Malthus,^l – James Mill, – Ricardo,^m – Sir James Macintosh,ⁿ – Colonel Torrens,^o – Francis Place, – etc, etc From these political economists, often in animated discussions, I always differed. But our discussions were maintained to the last with great good feeling and a cordial friendship. They were liberal men for their time; friends to the national

^a William Godwin (1756–1836): political philosopher, novelist and Owen's chief confidant in these years. Author of *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), whose central doctrines anticipated many of Owen's ideas, including philosophical necessity, voluntary community of goods, the independence of the poor, universal education, and the ending of a narrow division of labour. See generally Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries* (2 vols, 1876).

^b Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846): pioneering anti-slavery agitator; friend of Wilberforce.

^c Zachary Macaulay (1768–1838): philanthropist; Governor in 1793 of the Sierra Leone colony of freed slaves; later an African merchant, Clapham Sect publicist and anti-slavery activist.

^d Samuel Thornton (1755–1838): director of the Bank of England.

^e Samuel Hoare, Sr (1751–1825): evangelical banker of Quaker background.

^f Sir Robert Peel (1750–1830): cotton-spinner and MP for Tamworth from 1790; his father headed a Lancashire calico-printing firm and set up his first mill at Burton-on-Trent in 1780; engineered the first factory act, 'An Act for the Preservation of the Health and Morals of Apprentices and Others' (1802). Until 1796, like many cotton lords, his mills ran 24 hours per day.

^g Sir Thomas Bernard (1750–1818): Wilberforcean philanthropist; patron of the Foundling Hospital, London; promoted early efforts at both spade husbandry and retail co-operation. Bernard's work is best documented in *The Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor* (5 vols, 1798–1808). This includes an account of his visit to New Lanark (vol. 2, 1800, pp. 363–74).

^h Shute Barrington (1734–1826): successively Bishop of Llandaff, Salisbury and Durham; evangelical promoter of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, and founder of the 1794 Mongewell (Wallingford) co-operative shop.

ⁱ William Turner (1761–1859): Unitarian divine.

^j Charles Wellbeloved (1769–1858): divine and archaeologist.

^k John Parsons (1761–1819): Bishop of Peterborough 1813–19.

^l Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834): influential political economist whose *Essay on Population* (1798) argued that population growth always pressed upon the means of subsistence; the fifth edn (1817) attacked Owen. On his career, see Patricia James, *Population Malthus. His Life and Times* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

^m David Ricardo (1772–1823): liberal political economist and MP, who in 1819 was among only 16 MPs to vote for a committee to investigate Owen's plans (with 141 opposed), though he disagreed with many of Owen's views.

ⁿ Sir James Mackintosh (1765–1832): philosopher, radical Whig MP, penal reformer.

^o Colonel Robert Torrens (1780–1864): political economist. Torrens' own proposals for poor relief are detailed in *The Philanthropist*, vol. 10 (1817), pp. 509–30, of which pp. 514–18 are an attack on Owen.

education of the people, but opposed to national employment for the poor and unemployed, or the greatest creation of real wealth, – which surprised me in men who professed to desire the greatest amount of wealth to be produced, but which could only be effected by the well-directed industry at all times of all.

It was a singular circumstance that in my discussions with Mr Malthus, which were frequent, (and my own impression was that at last he became very doubtful of the truth of principles which he had so ingeniously maintained,) Mrs Malthus^a always took and defended my side of the argument.

So with Sir James Macintosh. He used to say that after Lady and Miss Macintosh^b had visited New Lanark they became my warm disciples, and that they always vindicated the principles and practices of human nature as I advocated them.

I was always at a loss to account for the tenacity with which these men of considerable natural powers held to the principle of not preparing national reproductive or beneficial occupation for all who required it; and I could account for it only on the knowledge that there was not one practical man among the party of modern political economists. Their views and false principles have governed the administrations of this country and have influenced public opinion for the whole of this century; and a more artificial and miserable existence, or more hypocrisy in general society, is not to be found, amid all its surface splendour, than in Great Britain and Ireland at this day. There is no heart or soul in the general intercourse of society; and instead of the open, direct, frank, and most beneficial and delightful language of truth – of mind speaking without reserve to mind; the common practice of the great majority of society in public and private is a mere conventional talk, meaning little or nothing, or else falsehood. The most important truths relative to the essential business and happiness of life, are tabooed in general society; and its talk is a confused mass of incongruous and most inconsistent ideas about morality and religion, respecting which none appear to have been taught one rational idea; because they have been precluded so long by the priesthoods of the world from investigating their own nature – an investigation to enable them to discover what manner of beings they have been created to be. And therefore nature has been and is outraged in all proceedings connected with the human race. At this day, all their proceedings over the world are grossly irrational for the attainment of the object which all have in view – namely, their own happiness. For the creation of happiness for the human race, two things have been always required.

1stly. – A really good character for all from birth to death.

^a The former Harriet Eckersall (1776–1864), whom Malthus married in 1804.

^b Mackintosh's second wife was the former Catherine Allen (d. 1830), whom he married in 1798. He had three daughters by his first marriage, Mary (b. 1789), Maitland (b. 1792), and Catherine (b. 1795).

2ndly. – A superfluity of real wealth at all times for all.

Because the arrangements or conditions, (or as some would say the ‘circumstances,’) which are necessary to produce and secure these results, would give in perpetuity to the human race all that they could desire as mortals upon our globe.

But all the authorities of the world, from the earliest known period, have been ignorant how to form the arrangements, or to create the conditions or circumstances by which these two results could be attained. And hence alone the present poverty, vice, and misery, of mankind over the world. All parties in all countries are now like hounds at fault in hunting for their game. They feel that the good and superior character is necessary for happiness. They feel that wealth is necessary for their happiness. They desire to attain both. They are anxiously in search of them. While the priesthood of the world, owing to their own mis-instruction, give a wrong direction to the human faculties, and thus prevent the possibility of the authorities of the world discovering where they are at fault, and how to attain the path which alone leads to the knowledge which they all seek.

The discovery which has been made of the sciences by which both these results are to be obtained, makes this the most glorious era in the life of man. For it will lead him direct to the road to that happiness which his nature has been made strongly to desire, and which to this day he has evidently sought in vain.

An imperfect development of the human faculties when humanity was in its infant state, created the necessity for a priesthood, with its good and evil consequences. As the development advanced, and as real knowledge grew from the accurate observation of facts, the error of one priesthood after another became too obvious to be maintained by the most advanced minds, and new religions were to be invented, less obviously erroneous. And as the certain or fixed sciences were discovered and progressed, the belief in, or the reliance upon, these latter inventions diminished, until now, in the minds of the most advanced in substantive knowledge derived from facts, religious feelings, of the old character of religion, have not only ceased altogether, but the evils now everywhere produced by the obstructions which they create to the formation of a good and superior character for all, are seen to be, as they are, the greatest of all existing evils. And until they shall be overcome, and the human mind shall be cleared from all religious fallacies and all dependence upon religious forms and ceremonies, it will be vain to expect to make the human race to think and act rationally, or to look for anything approaching to general permanent happiness.

The first consideration with the leading minds of the world should be, how to combine the conditions which can insure from birth the formation of a good and rational character for the human race, and to unite with these (for they cannot exist separately,) the conditions to create wealth at all times in

superfluity for all. This combination is unknown even to the most advanced in all countries, and has now to be taught to all, and it is by far the most important lesson that the human race has to acquire. When men can be taught to create and combine the conditions to properly cultivate all the faculties, propensities, and powers of human nature, and to train all in the habit of exercising all of them regularly to the point of temperance for each faculty and propensity, – then, and only then, will men know how to form a good, valuable, and superior character for all, or to train man to become a rational being. And when they shall be taught to create and combine with these conditions, others which will enable all to produce superior and intrinsically valuable wealth in abundance for all, at all times, then will mankind become rational, and make a greater progress in real knowledge and permanent happiness in one year, than under existing conditions they can make in a century, – or, indeed, as long as the present irrational conditions, emanating from a false fundamental principle, or rather imagination, shall be maintained by the erroneously instructed authorities of the world.

The great defect which exists in all countries is the false instruction given to those who have to govern, whether in churches or states; and this great evil has now to be overcome. But not to be overcome by force, or by abusive language. Reason and common sense are the true and only weapons which can ever succeed. All that have conscious life have been created to desire happiness. The authorities of the world in churches and states desire to attain happiness. It is impossible that the individual members of any church or state can acquire anything approaching to permanent happiness under the false and artificial conditions under which all of them are placed. While under other conditions, based on a true knowledge of the laws of human nature, each one may be made to become from birth rational and consistent in principle and practice, natural in all their proceedings and conduct, and permanently happy through life.

Knowing and feeling as I did the all-importance of education for the mass, as a preliminary to the ultimate true formation of character, I was so profuse or extravagant, as I have stated, in my encouragement of Joseph Lancaster and Dr Bell, in their measures to make a beginning in this country to give even the mite of instruction to the poor which their respective systems proposed to do, because I trusted that a beginning might be made to lead on gradually to something substantial and permanently beneficial to society.

My next move in this direction was to encourage Lancaster to come to Scotland, (where the new manufacturing system was involving the children of the working classes in new conditions, unfavorable to knowledge, to health, and to happiness,) to create a public opinion to assist to counteract these evils. He came to Glasgow in 1812, and a great public dinner was to be given to introduce him into Scotland, as a great friend to the instruction of the poor on a new invented economical plan, by which one man could instruct a thousand children.

Joseph Lancaster was now becoming well known and celebrated for this mechanical invention and instruction, and his arrival in Glasgow created much excitement among the friends to the education of the poor. Lancaster, knowing that I was acquainted with the peculiar customs and religious prejudices of the society of friends, of which he was a member, made it a special condition, before he could consent as a Quaker to attend a public dinner for his reception into Scotland, that I would consent to be its chairman. This office was quite new to me. I believed myself unequal to the task, and was unwilling to undertake it. But the meeting, owing to Mr Lancaster's obstinacy, could not be held on any other condition. I was therefore constrained to agree to his wishes,^a and the Rev Ralph Wardlaw,^b then the most popular preacher and friend to the education of the poor in Glasgow, was appointed croupier, or deputy-chairman.

At this period I was on the most friendly terms with many of the professors of the universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and on this occasion I was supported on the right and left by Professors Jardine^c and Mylne,^d two who at that time stood high in public estimation. It was on announcing the object of the meeting in my opening speech, that I first declared in public my sentiments on the true formation of character, and my principle that man was essentially the creature of the circumstances or conditions in which he was placed, and that I advocated the necessity for preparing measures to place the rising generation within good and superior circumstances. What I then said took the meeting by surprise, and it seemed electrified. The professors were highly delighted, and the whole assembly became far more enthusiastic in their continued applause when I concluded, than I have ever witnessed in a Scotch audience; and I afterwards received from Mr Kirkman Finlay, then the great man in Glasgow, who was at the time in London, a most flattering and encouraging letter.

This spontaneous approval by the numerous literary parties present, and the reception given to Joseph Lancaster, induced me to write my four first essays on 'A New View of Society,' and on the formation of character. The two first essays were published at the end of this year, (1812,) and the two last in the beginning of 1813.^e

In all my projected improvements for educating and improving the condition of the children and workpeople of New Lanark, I had no coadjutors in my near connexions, partners, or friends, until I formed my last partnership in

^a For the text of Owen's speech supporting Lancaster, see Owen, *Life*, vol. 1 (1857), pp. 249–52 (*infra*, vol. 1, pp. 7–10).

^b Rev. Ralph Wardlaw (1779–1853): Congregationalist minister.

^c George Jardine (1742–1827): Professor of Logic at Glasgow.

^d James Mylne (1756–1839): Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow from 1797–1839.

^e See *infra*, vol. 1, pp. 25–100.

1814. Previously one and all connected with and around me, except Mr Dale while he lived, opposed my views with all the arguments they could muster against them; and I lost two sets of partners by persevering in what they called my visionary plans. But when I published these four essays on the formation of character, explanatory of the principles and practices on which I had been acting, I was surprised at the manner in which they were received by the public, and especially by the higher members of the then administration and of the churches; for the heads of both were most anxious to see them previous to their publication. Lord Liverpool and his cabinet, with Mr Sutton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the English and Irish bishops of that day, were favourable to my views and friendly to myself. My chief communications at first were with the leading members both in church and state; for I wished them to see and know all I was doing and intended to do, being conscious that all parties from the highest to the lowest would be benefited by my views of society, whenever they should be carried fully and honestly into practice.

When I had written the first two essays on the new views, I gave them to read to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and when I had just finished in MS. the third and fourth, I met the Archbishop and told him of my progress. He expressed a great desire to see them, and asked me to bring them to Lambeth the next day, which I did, and read to him the third essay, and then thought that he would be too fatigued to hear the fourth also at one sitting. 'No,' he said, 'I am too anxious to hear it, and I request you will proceed.' I continued to its conclusion, and saw as I read how much the subject engaged his attention and interested his feelings. When I had finished, he said, with the greatest kindness in his manner, 'I am sure, Mr Owen, you will not desire me to express an opinion upon what you have now read. But I am deeply interested in the whole subject, as you have stated it, and I should be glad to learn from you from time to time how you succeed. Will you correspond with me?' I was then living in Scotland, either at New Lanark or at Rosebank near Glasgow. But at that period several individuals had been and were then being prosecuted for publishing sentiments and opinions less opposed to the existing order of things than those expressed in these essays, and I intended to pursue the subject until I could produce a public opinion to change the fundamental principle on which society was based, knowing that nothing short of that could effect any substantial and permanent good for the people of any country. I therefore hesitated for the moment; and the good and penetrating Archbishop saw my embarrassment, and divined its cause, and immediately added, 'perhaps you would not like to correspond with the "Archbishop of Canterbury", and would not object to communicate with Mr Sutton.' I said I was much obliged to his grace for his consideration of my position, for I could say things to Mr Sutton that I might hesitate to say to the Archbishop of Canterbury. His grace replied – 'Then Mr Sutton will have pleasure in corresponding with Mr Owen;' and from that day to his death the Archbishop was at all times most friendly to me,

and was perhaps the most liberal Archbishop of Canterbury that has ever filled the office.

I also sent copies of the 'Essays' to Lord Liverpool,^a the Prime Minister of that day, and afterwards requested an interview with him respecting them, which he immediately granted, fixing the next day for our meeting. It was in his private house, in the drawing-room, and I found Lady Liverpool with him, to whom he introduced me. He said – 'Mr Owen, Lady Liverpool has been so interested in reading your Essays, that she has requested to be present at our conversation, as she takes a warm interest in these subjects. I hope you have no objection to her being present.' I said – 'quite the reverse, my Lord; for I am very desirous to induce the ladies to take into their consideration the cause which I advocate, and especially the subject of education, now becoming so useful, and so important to be given to all of the female sex.' The conversation was continued with much interest for a long period, and Lady Liverpool, who appeared most amiable and intelligent, gave great attention to it, and entered into it with the spirit of a true philanthropist. She hoped that much would be now done to ameliorate the conditions of the working classes, and to raise their characters. Near the conclusion of our conversations, she said – 'We have a very promising young man just come to us, whom Lord Liverpool has made his private secretary, – he is the son of Sir Robert Peel,^b and is just come from the University, where he stood high at his examinations; and we have hope that he will attain distinction as he acquires experience.' This was the lamented late Sir Robert Peel, with whose father I was for many years afterwards intimate and in almost daily communication.

I now formally communicated the four Essays to the government before I would publish them. They had them examined and closely investigated, and their reply to me afterwards was – 'We see nothing to object to in them.'

Lord and Lady Liverpool^c had previously expressed their pleasure in reading and studying them, and their strong approbation of them.

The members of the government, represented by Lord Sidmouth,^d who was secretary for the home department, then said – 'What do you now propose to do with the Essays?' I replied, 'Being conscious that the views of society which I have advocated in them are much opposed to existing prejudices, and being very anxious not to mis-lead the public on subjects of such great permanent interest, and as to the changes they must lead to, I am most desirous not to be

^a Robert Banks Jenkinson, 2nd Earl of Liverpool (1770–1828): Prime Minister 1812–27.

^b Sir Robert Peel (1788–1850): eldest son of Robert Peel; 2nd Baronet; MP for Tamworth from 1833; Conservative Prime Minister 1834, 1841–6; best known for passing free trade legislation in 1846. Owen often stayed with his father, a cotton magnate, at Tamworth.

^c The former Theodosia Louisa Hervey (1767–1821), whom Liverpool married in 1795.

^d Henry Addington, 1st Viscount Sidmouth (1757–1844): Whig MP; Home Secretary 1811–21; especially known for his repressive measures against the radical parliamentary reformers, such as the suspension of habeas corpus and use of Home Office spies and informers.

mistaken in the principles on which the proposed changes are based. I therefore recommend that measures should be adopted the most likely to detect any error which they may contain, and for this purpose I will, if the government approves, have two hundred copies printed, and bound with alternate blank leaves, and these copies you can send to the leading governments of Europe, and America, – to the most learned Universities in Europe, – and to such individuals as you may deem best calculated to form a sound judgment upon them, – requesting these parties to make any objections which may occur to them on the blank leaves, and then to return them to you; and that they should be afterwards supplied with other copies when perfected.’ Lord Sidmouth said – ‘The proposal, Mr Owen, is fair and honest, and if you will send the two hundred copies printed and so bound, they shall be sent as you have desired.’ They were supplied accordingly, and Lord Sidmouth had them forwarded to the governments, universities, and learned individuals. After due time allowed, a considerable number of them were returned to the government, and I was sent for to examine what was written on the blank leaves. I went carefully over the remarks which had been written, but it was a matter of surprise to Lord Sidmouth and myself, that among all the observations returned, none of the writers directly objected to any of the facts, principles, or conclusions, but they only remarked that such other parties, naming them, would object to so and so.

As no objection of moment had been made directly by any parties, and as the Essays appeared to be generally much approved of, Lord Sidmouth then asked me what I proposed next to do with them. I replied – ‘To print and publish them, that they may undergo the ordeal of public opinion, – if the government has no objection.’ His Lordship said – ‘None whatever. And when they are ready, pray send me a sufficient number for our bishops, and I will forward one to each.’ They were sent to Lord Sidmouth, and he afterwards told me that he had supplied one to each English archbishop and bishop. The Archbishop of Armagh^a was in London, and Lord Sidmouth said he would be pleased if I would call upon him, which I did, and found with him Mr Edgeworth^b the author, the father of the celebrated Miss Edgeworth. Mr Edgeworth asked the Archbishop if he might remain with us, for, he said, ‘I have read that man’s works, and he has been in my brains and stolen all my ideas.’ We had much conversation and the parties appeared greatly interested with the further explanation of my new views of society. The interview ended by the Archbishop requesting me to send him a sufficient number of copies for each of the Irish bishops. And I conclude these paved the way for the warm and cordial reception I afterwards experienced from them, when in the year

^a William Stuart (1755–1822): Archbishop of Armagh 1800–22.

^b Richard Lovell Edgeworth (1744–1817): Irish landowner and sympathiser with consumer co-operation; father of Maria Edgeworth (1767–1849), Irish educationist and writer.

1822–23, I visited Ireland, and held my great public meetings there, in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Belfast, etc, etc.

At this period John Quincy Adams^a was the American Minister to our government, and when I was introduced to him, a short time before he left this country, he asked me for a sufficient number of copies of my Essays, which were now become very popular, for the governor of each state in the union, and he would undertake that they should be faithfully delivered, and with his recommendation. I sent them, and on my arrival some years afterwards in the United States, I ascertained that they had been received, and had prepared the way for the general good reception which I met with from the government and many of the leading men and statesmen of that country.

These Essays were so popular, that *all* the first publishers, both in the city and at the west end of the metropolis, were ambitious to have their names attached to them. Five superior editions were rapidly disposed of under the sanction of their united firms, – Richard Taylor and Company being the printers.

Finding the essays were much valued by the first class of minds, and wishing to place them in the highest quarters, I had forty of them bound in the best manner in which I could procure the first workman to bind them, and of these I prevailed on the government to send a copy to each of the sovereigns of Europe and to their chief minister, and thus they became generally known among the highest class and most advanced minds before 1817. It was in 1813–14 that the superiorly bound copies were sent to the Sovereigns and their Prime Ministers, while Napoleon Bonaparte^b was in Elba. At this period I was much engaged in London with these measures, and also in forming the new partnership with more liberal and benevolent parties than my former *commercial* men, – although many of these were good men, according to their notions of commercial goodness. While I was thus employed, one of my sisters-in-law, Margaret, was taken dangerously ill, and I was suddenly called home on her account, where I was detained until after her death and funeral.

I had left in London with Mr Francis Place the remainder of the superbly bound copies of my Essays, for him to take charge of until my return to town. While I was absent, a general officer called upon Mr Place, and said – ‘I learn that Mr Owen has sent copies of his work to the Sovereigns of Europe and to the authorities in America. I am on my way to Elba, and if you will intrust a copy with me for the Emperor Napoleon, I will undertake to put it into his own hands,’ Mr Place very judiciously gave him one of those copies, and there is no doubt it was safely conveyed to him; for I learned afterwards from Sir Niel Campbell, British agent at Elba, through the following circumstances, that Napoleon had received it.

^a John Quincy Adams (1767–1848): who became the 6th President of the United States.

^b Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821): French military leader and head of state exiled first to Elba, then after his escape and subsequent defeat at Waterloo, on the island of St Helena.

I was intimate with General Brown,^a who returned from India after being forty years there, and I was a frequent visitor and guest at his table. Of our party was Mrs Dyce,^b the wife of General Dyce, and sister to Sir Neil Campbell.^c Both this lady and General Brown took a warm interest in my 'New Views,' and when Sir Neil returned from Elba after Napoleon's escape, Mrs Dyce was desirous that I should meet her brother Sir Neil. For this purpose a dinner was given at No. 8, Curzon Street, by General Brown, that we might be introduced, and Mrs Dyce requested that I would bring a copy of my Essays for her brother, which I did, and presented the volume to him after dinner. He looked at it with some surprise, and said, 'I have certainly seen a copy of this before. Oh! I recollect! While I was at Elba, General Bertram^d came to me with a book in his hand, a copy of this work, and said he had been sent by Buonaparte, to ask me whether I knew the author, for he was much interested with its contents.' (There was much said about Napoleon in it.) 'I looked at the title page, and said I did not know the work or the author, and Bentram appeared disappointed.' I was subsequently informed that Buonaparte had read and studied this work with great attention, and had determined on his return to power, if the Sovereigns of Europe had allowed him to remain quietly on the throne of France, to do as much for peace and progress, as he had previously done for war, and that this was the cause of his letters to the Sovereigns of Europe on his return, containing proposals for peace instead of war. But they knew not, and did not believe, that he had changed his views and was sincere in his declaration. The result of their refusal to listen to him is now matter of history, and it is useless to speculate on what so extraordinary a character would have done, had he been permitted to reign over France in peace.

Having published and put into general circulation my four Essays on the formation of character, and having thus opened to the public my 'New Views of Society,' my attention was directed to measures of a public character, with a view to obtain some permanent substantial relief for the children, young persons, and adults, employed in the rising and rapidly increasing manufactories of wool, cotton, flax, hemp, and silk, in which it had become the practice to employ very young children, as well as those of every age above them. My experience now (1815,) had continued without ceasing for twenty-five years in the cotton manufacturing business, and having at an early period freely opened

^a Lieutenant General Thomas Brown, who became a cadet in 1779 and who in 1815 was on the staff of the Presidency of Fort St George. He was a member of Owen's British and Foreign Philanthropic Society, and was knighted in 1832.

^b Miss Frederick Meredith May Campbell, who married Dyce in 1797. On Owen and the Dyces, see *The Reminiscences of Alexander Dyce*, ed. R. Schrader (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1972), pp. 237-8.

^c Sir Neil Campbell (1776-1827).

^d General Antoine-Joseph Bertram (1767-1835), who fought with Napoleon. This anecdote has never been verified from other sources.

the mills in which I was interested to my brother cotton-spinners, and having been the first spinner of fine cotton, (that is, of thread from No. 120 to upwards of No. 300,) all the manufactories of the kingdom were as freely opened to me, and I visited most of them from north to south, to enable me to form a correct judgment of the condition of the children and workpeople employed in them. I thus saw the importance of the machinery employed in these manufactories and its rapid annual improvements. I also became vividly alive to the deteriorating condition of the young children and others who were made the slaves of these new mechanical powers. And whatever may be said to the contrary, bad and unwise as American slavery is and must continue to be, the white slavery in the manufactories of England was at this unrestricted period far worse than the house slaves whom I afterwards saw in the West Indies and in the United States, and in many respects, especially as regards health, food, and clothing, the latter were much better provided for than were these oppressed and degraded children and workpeople in the home manufactories of Great Britain.

As employer and master manufacturer in Lancashire and Lanarkshire, I had done all I could to lighten the evils of those whom I employed; yet with all I could do under our most irrational system for creating wealth, forming character, and conducting all human affairs, I could only to a limited extent alleviate the wretchedness of their condition, while I knew that society, even at this period, possessed the most ample means to educate, employ, place, and govern, the whole population of the British Empire, so as to make all into full-formed, highly intelligent, united, and permanently prosperous and happy men and women, superior in all physical and mental qualities. In my own experience I had at this time discovered the true principles of forming character, and how easy it would be to give a good, useful, and superior character to all of our race, by a consistent rational application of those principles to practice over the Empire. But the circumstances and means of adaptation were not then prepared for such a change, and it was evident that much more preparation must be made before governments and people could be sufficiently instructed and interested on this all-important subject, and before they could be prepared for this new view of society. Every step of my experience forced me more and more strongly to feel the necessity of preparing governments and people through a persevering system of new instruction, to fit both for the change which I had in view.

But so wedded were both to old superstitions, old associations of ideas, and old habits, that the time required to adapt them to receive the principles and to comprehend the practice greatly exceeded my early anticipations. I thought previous to experience, that the simple, plain, honest enunciation of truth, and of its beautiful application to all the real business of life, would attract the attention and engage the warm interest of all parties; and that the reformation of the population of the world would be comparatively an easy task. But,

promising as many things appeared at first, as I advanced I found superstitions and mistaken self-interest so deeply rooted and ramified throughout society, that they resisted the *coup de grace* which I now began to prepare to give them when matters could be adapted to promise success.

In 1814 I had formed a new partnership with men pledged to assist my views for the reformation of society in my way in practice. I therefore commenced measures accordingly. My first step was to call a meeting of the manufacturers of Scotland in 1815, to be held in the Tontine, Glasgow, to consider the necessity and policy of asking the government, then under Lord Liverpool's administration, to remit the heavy duty then paid on the importation of cotton, and to consider measures to improve the condition of the young children and others employed in the various textile manufactures now so rapidly extending over the kingdom. The meeting was presided over by the Lord Provost of Glasgow, and was very numerous attended by the leading manufacturers of that town. I stated to the meeting my objects in calling it, and first proposed that an application should be made to government to remit the tax upon the raw material of the cotton manufacture. This was carried unanimously by acclamation. I then proposed a string of resolutions to give relief to the children and others employed in cotton, wool, flax, and silk mills. They contained the same conditions which I afterwards embodied in a bill, which I induced the first Sir Robert Peel to propose for me to the House of Commons.

The propositions were read by me to the meeting; but although all were enthusiastically in favour of asking for the remission of the tax, not one would second my motion for the relief of those whom they employed. I then declined to proceed with them in the business of the meeting, and it therefore came to nothing. But I told them I should take my own course in both measures, independently of them.

New Lanark was now becoming the most celebrated establishment of the kind at home or abroad, and was visited by strangers from all parts of the world, averaging yearly, from that period until I left it to go to the United States, ten years later, not less than two thousand.

On returning from the Glasgow meeting to this establishment, I immediately sent to the Lord Provost of Glasgow, as chairman of the meeting, a copy of the address which I had read, and sent copies of it also to the government and to every member of both Houses of Parliament. I also had it published in the London and provincial press.^a

This address made me yet better known to the government, and was afterwards a passport for me to all the members of both Houses of Parliament,

^a For a report of this meeting, see *The Times*, no. 9437 (6 February 1815), p. 2. Owen's speech was published as 'Observations on the Cotton Trade' (1815) (see *Life*, vol. 1A, 1858, pp. 12–19) (*infra*, vol. 1, pp. 101–8).

and it created a considerable sensation among the upper classes and the manufacturing interest over the kingdom.

As soon as I had made this address thus public, I proceeded to London to communicate with the government, and to learn what it would do on both subjects. I found the impressions made by my address were favourable to my views. I was referred to Mr Nicholas Vansittart,^a afterwards Lord Bexley, respecting the remission of the tax. I was well received by him, and in our conversation he asked me some question which I cannot now remember, – but my prompt decided reply made him blush like a sensitive maiden on account of his previous want of knowledge on the subject. The tax was fourpence per pound, and he said he would remit the whole, except to the amount of a small portion of a penny, which he said would be retained for some government object or arrangement.

The government was also favourable to my views for the relief of the children and others employed in the growing manufactures of the kingdom, if I could induce the members of both Houses to pass a bill for the purpose. This was a formidable task to attempt to effect; for by this time the manufacturing interest had become strong in the House of Commons, and yet stronger in its out of door influence with the members, whose election was much under its control. But I made up my mind to try what truth and perseverance could effect.

I waited personally on the leading members of both Houses, and explained to them my object, which was to give some relief to a most deserving yet much oppressed part of our population. I was in general well received, and had much promise of support, especially from the leaders of various sections into which parties were then divided. Lord Lascelles,^b member for Yorkshire, afterwards Earl of Harewood, and at that period the most influential member of the House of Commons, offered me his full assistance, and requested me to use his name with mine in calling meetings of the members of both Houses to promote my proposed bill when introduced into Parliament.

When by these means the leading members of both Houses had become interested and were desirous the bill which I had prepared should be introduced, a final meeting was conjointly called by Lord Lascelles and myself, of the members of both Houses who had taken with us the greatest interest at former meetings to forward the measure, now to consider, as I was not a member, who should be requested to take charge of the bill and to introduce it into the House of Commons. The first Sir Robert Peel was now a member of

^a Nicholas Vansittart (1766–1851): lawyer and Whig MP; 1st Baron Bexley (1823), Chancellor of the Exchequer 1812–22.

^b Lord Henry Lascelles, 2nd Earl of Harewood (1767–1841): moderate Tory MP for Yorkshire 1796–1806, then Westbury 1807–12, Pontefract 1812, Northallerton 1818. Moved the Woollen Manufactures Bill in 1804; a moderate reformer in 1831.

the House of Commons, was an extensive manufacturer, and stood well with the government and the House generally. But I had never applied to him or to any other manufacturer in the House, and it was not known to the meeting how he might view my proposals. The members present at this meeting (which, with the previous ones, was held at the King's Arms Hotel, New Palace Yard, Westminster, and was numerously attended,) suggested that if Sir Robert Peel would introduce the bill, he would be a very fit person to carry it through the House of Commons. The meeting wished to know whether I had any objection to Sir Robert Peel's taking charge of the bill, if he would undertake it. He had never been present at any of our meetings, and I did not know how, as a manufacturer, he was inclined to act, and I believed that so far he was altogether unacquainted with our proceedings. But I could have no objection to him if he was willing to accept the charge. The meeting asked me if I would endeavour to ascertain his views upon the subject, and I consented to do so. My calling upon him for this purpose was the first intimation that Sir Robert Peel had of these proceedings.

When I informed him of the support which I was offered from the leading members in both houses, he very willingly accepted the office, and agreed to attend the next meeting of the favouring members, that he might learn their wishes as to the best mode of proceeding. He did so; and at that meeting all the arrangements were concluded for introducing the bill into the House of Commons with all the clauses as I had prepared them.

Had Sir Robert Peel been so inclined, he might have speedily carried this bill, as it was, through the House of Commons, during the first session, in time for it to have passed triumphantly through the Lords. But it appeared afterwards that he was too much under the influence of his brother manufacturers; and he allowed this bill, of so much real importance to the country, the master manufacturers, and the working classes, to be dragged through the House of Commons for four sessions before it was passed, and when passed it had been so mutilated in all its valuable clauses, that it became valueless for the objects I had intended.

At the commencement of these proceedings I was an utter novice in the manner of conducting the business of this country in parliament. But my intimate acquaintance with these proceedings for the four years during which this bill was under the consideration of both houses, opened my eyes to the conduct of public men, and to the ignorant vulgar self-interest, regardless of means to accomplish their object, of trading and mercantile men, even of high standing in the commercial world. No means were left untried by these men to defeat the object of the bill, in the first session of its introduction, and through four years in which, under one futile pretence and another, it was kept in the House of Commons.

Children at this time were admitted into the cotton, wool, flax, and silk mills, at six, and sometimes even at five years of age. The time of working,

winter and summer, was unlimited by law, but usually it was fourteen hours per day, – in some fifteen, and even, by the most inhuman and avaricious, sixteen hours, – and in many cases the mills were artificially heated to a high state most unfavorable to health.

The first plea of the objectors to my bill was, that masters ought not to be interfered with by the legislature in any way in the management of their business.

After long useless discussions, kept up to prolong time, this was at length overruled.

The next attempt was to prove that it was not injurious to employ these young children fourteen or fifteen hours per day in over-heated close rooms, filled often with the fine flying fibre of the material used, particularly in cotton and flax spinning mills. Sir Robert Peel most unwisely consented to a committee being appointed to investigate this question, and this committee was continued for two sessions of parliament before these wise and honest men, legislating for the nation, could decide that such practices were detrimental to the health of these infants.

The bill as I prepared it was assented to by all the leading members of both houses, except the trading and manufacturing interests, including cotton, wool, flax, and silk mill-owners. Sir Robert Peel, yielding to the clamour of the manufacturers, first gave up wool, flax, and silk, and they were struck out at the commencement, although at that time flax spinning was the most unhealthy of the four manufactures.

During the two first sessions occupied by the committee to enquire whether the health of young children employed in over-heated cotton mills for fourteen, fifteen, and sometimes sixteen hours per day, was deteriorated, I sat with the committee, the only uninfluenced advocate of the cause of these children, whose minds and bodies I knew from considerable experience were materially and cruelly injured. But my evidence, being that of a master manufacturer, and of one conducting in connection with these manufactures a population, young and old, of two thousand five hundred, was deemed by the active manufacturers opposed to the various clauses of my proposed bill, to be too strong to be overcome, especially as my practice in the extensive mills which I conducted was in accordance with the several clauses of the bill, as I proposed it first to the house through Sir Robert Peel.

The manufacturers who attended to oppose these measures clause by clause therefore consulted among themselves how they could diminish the influence of my evidence with the government and the members of both houses. They said – ‘Surely we can find out by going to Lanark something that he has done or is doing, that will diminish the great influence which he now possesses with these members and with the government;’ – a happy suggestion as it was deemed by this strong party of rich and influential men as master manufacturers.

Mr Houldsworth,^a a great cotton spinner from Glasgow, and another, whose name I do not recollect, were dispatched to my neighbourhood on a mission of scandal hunting. They soon learned that the parish clergyman of Old Lanark was an enemy to my proceedings at New Lanark. He resided about a mile distant from the former, and was well informed of everything done at New Lanark since I undertook its direction, now about sixteen years. This, they thought would be the very man for their purpose. The Rev. Mr Menzies^b had preached in and presided over the town of Lanark for twenty years, and there was no perceptible change for the better among his parishioners; while in sixteen years there had been at New Lanark a change from a very low state of morals, to a general conduct which was so superior as to attract the attention of the most distinguished in rank, station, and character, both at home and from all countries. This progress at New Lanark had aroused the jealousy and enmity of Mr Menzies, whom, however, I had always treated as a neighbouring clergyman, and had often invited to dine at my house, and when some of the first noblemen and gentlemen of the county were dining with me.

'This,' thought Mr Houldsworth and his master manufacturing companion in official search of scandal, 'is the man for our purpose.' And away they posted to his house. They said – 'The manufacturers of the kingdom have appointed a committee to watch the progress of a very injurious bill which your neighbour, Mr Owen, has had influence sufficient to introduce into parliament, which bill pretends to direct us how to conduct our business. We want therefore to diminish the influence of his evidence, for he is the only master manufacturer who advocates the bill. But his evidence has great weight with the members of parliament and with many of the members of government. Do you know anything of Mr Owen's proceedings, by which, if made known to these parties, his influence would be diminished or destroyed?' 'Yes,' replied Mr Menzies, – 'I do. On the first of January this year, (1816,) on opening what he calls his "New Institution for the Formation of Character," he delivered an address to all his workpeople, and he invited the noblemen and gentry of the county and the clergymen of every denomination to be present, and this address was of the most treasonable character against church and state.' 'That is the very thing for

^a Henry Houldsworth (1774–1853): the son of a Nottinghamshire farmer and brother of the cotton-spinner Thomas Houldsworth (1771–1852); first apprenticed to a grocer, later one of the largest cotton-spinners in Glasgow c. 1792, he went to Manchester in 1792 and began spinning on his own account in 1793. He returned to Glasgow in 1799 to manage the North Woodside mill (which he bought in 1801) and the Anderston mills. Still later he renounced spinning to become an iron-master. Thomas remained in Manchester and was later MP for Pontefract. On the family, see W. H. Macleod, *The Beginnings of the Houldsworths of Coltrass* (Glasgow, Jackson, 1937).

^b Rev. William Menzies (1769–1848): ordained on 27 December 1793, obtained his Lanark post on the strength of an evangelical reputation and through the patronage of Lady Mary Ross of Bonnington; continued minister of the parish until 1848. He often opposed Owen's views on religion. See Hugh Davidson, *Lanark* (Edinburgh, 1910), pp. 211–43.

our purpose. Do you know anything else against him?" "No. But he gives as much encouragement to the dissenting ministers of this place, as to me; and he invites them as much to his village, – which, considering I am the authorised minister of his parish, he ought not to do. And he encourages some dissenting meeting houses in New Lanark, and these being opened on the Sabbath, they keep many away who would otherwise attend the parish church and my ministry.' "And you attended to hear this treasonable address from Mr Owen on opening his Institution?" "No. He invited me, but I was obliged to be absent on some parish business. But Mrs Menzies and my family were all there. It was a great meeting, and many of our highest gentry were present.' "How many persons do you suppose?" "The largest school-room, with its galleries, was filled, so that no room was left for more; and they say there were twelve hundred present. And there was music, vocal and instrumental; but no one saw the performers or knew where it came from.' "Did Mrs Menzies on her return home immediately relate to you what she had heard and seen?" "Yes. And being so much accustomed to hear my sermons, and to give a true account of them to me afterwards, she is quite competent to carry away the substance of any public discourse which she may hear, and at this meeting she was assisted by my children who were with her.'

The manufacturers were delighted with this intelligence, and asked if he knew anything else against me. He could not say he did. 'Well – this will be sufficient, if you will return with us to London, and will state these facts to the government. And we will pay you for your time and trouble, and will pay all your expenses.' 'I will go with you willingly, – for this is a dangerous man in our neighbourhood, where, by his pretended philanthropy, he has great influence, and especially by directing the extensive operations of so large an establishment, and employing more than two thousand people.'

The party, thus agreed, hastily posted up to London, and immediately asked the Secretary of State, Lord Sidmouth, for an audience on most important business. An interview was granted them. The manufacturers, with Mr Menzies, who were all primed by the committee of manufacturers how to act and what to say, went in full feather to the appointment made by the Secretary of State, whom for nearly two years I had been in the habit of frequently visiting in his office, and, at his request, without asking for any formal appointment. When these gentlemen had been severally formally introduced to his lordship, he asked them the nature of their important business. 'We have come to make a charge against Mr Owen, Lord Sidmouth.' 'Ah! what is it? I know Mr Owen very well.' 'This gentleman is Mr Menzies, who is minister of the parish church in the county town of Lanark, in the near neighbourhood of New Lanark.' I should have said previously that it so happened that, as I was going to attend the committee of the House of Commons on the Factory Bill, I met this party on their way to Lord Sidmouth; when Mr Houldsworth said on passing, for we were all on speaking terms, and apparently friendly – 'I would not be in your

shoes to-day for a trifle' – looking at the same time significantly important. I knew not then what he could mean, and passed on to the committee, which sat day by day, taking the most extraordinary evidence in favour of the health of cotton mills, and to prove that the health of young children and youth was not injured by working in them fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen hours per day!

But to return to the party with Lord Sidmouth. 'Well, Mr Menzies,' said his lordship, 'what is your charge against Mr Owen?' 'I have to state that on the first of January last, at the opening of what he calls a New Institution for the Formation of Character, to which all his people and the neighbouring gentry were invited, he delivered one of the most extraordinary, treasonable, and inflammatory discourses that has ever been heard in Scotland.' 'Indeed!' said Lord Sidmouth. 'And you were present and listened attentively to the whole of what he said?' 'No, my lord, – I was not present; but my wife and family were, and several ministers living in the neighbourhood, and the gentry near.' 'And you know all the address contained?' 'I know from the report of my wife and others that it was most treasonable and inflammatory.' 'Is this all the charge you have to make against Mr Owen?' 'Yes, my Lord.' Lord Sidmouth then asked the deputation (and he appeared fully conscious of the animus of this proceeding,) whether they had any further accusation to make. 'No, my lord, we have no other charge to make.' 'Then I dismiss your complaint as most frivolous and uncalled for. The government has been six months in possession of a copy of that discourse, which it would do any of you credit to have delivered, if you had the power to conceive it.' And he bowed them out.

They returned, first to their committee, and gave an accurate account of their reception and the result. The whole of which, and the previous proceedings at Lanark with Mr Menzies, were the same day graphically communicated to me by one of their own committee, who had become so disgusted with these and other of their doings, that he would no longer act with them. The next day I saw Mr Houldsworth, who looked most dejected, and had not a word to say for himself.

I sat with this Factory Committee of the House of Commons every day for two sessions, and was on one occasion examined by it as a witness in favour of the bill in its original state, limiting the time of working the mills to ten hours per day, – the age of admission for children to work in them for that time, to twelve, – for the boys and girls to be taught to read and write previously to their admission, – and the girls in addition to be taught to sew and cook, and to do the general domestic duties of a poor man's house, – and the factory to be kept clean and frequently whitewashed.^a

My evidence, as an extensive mill owner, who had in his own practice adopted these regulations in his establishment, which at this time employed

^a See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 23–6.

upwards of two thousand, the great majority children and young persons, had an influence not to be overcome by any ordinary or fair means. Therefore the manufacturing members of the house, who were in strength upon this committee, resorted to the most unfair means in their examination, – especially Sir George Philips, of the cotton spinning firm of Philips and Lee, of Salford, who, taking advantage of the position he held, took upon himself to question me at great length on my religious belief, and on various other matters, so unjustifiable and irrelevant to the business before the committee, that at the end of this long examination of me by this rival cotton spinner, or (as many of his class were now called, from their great wealth and their tyranny over their workpeople,) cotton lord, he was called to order by Henry, afterwards Lord Brougham, who also moved that the whole examination of Sir George Philips, so totally unconnected with the business of the committee, should be expunged, and it was so decided without one dissident.

I was so disgusted at the delays created by these interested members, and at the concessions made to them by Sir Robert Peel during the progress of the bill through the House of Commons, that after attending the committee every day of its sitting during two long sessions, I took less interest in a measure now so mutilated, and so unlike the bill when introduced from me; and I seldom attended the committee, or took any active part in its further progress. My place during the third and fourth year of its being kept before the committees of both houses of parliament was occupied chiefly by Mr Nathaniel Gould,^a of Manchester, and Mr Richard Oastler,^b of Yorkshire, known as the ‘king’ of the Yorkshire operatives. And both made much popular character by their well intended efforts.

It may be remarked here, that this bill has since been almost continually before Parliament for improvement after improvement, and yet it has not been suffered by the master cotton-spinners to attain the full benefits contained in the bill when first introduced from me by Sir Robert Peel, although the clauses as they then stood would have been, if carried, as beneficial for the masters as for the workpeople, and greatly more advantageous to the general interests of the country. But in this and in all other cases between the tyranny of the masters and the sufferings of their white slaves, the error is in reality in the system of society, which creates the necessity for tyrants and slaves, neither of which could exist in a true and rational state of society.

^a Nathaniel Gould (?1756–1820): fustian manufacturer and importer of Irish linens located (in 1788) at Bayley’s Court, Manchester (12 Peel Street in 1815), and living at 8 Piccadilly in 1794 (he moved to 37 Crescent, Salford, by 1797). He led support for Peel’s Factory Reform Bill from 1816–19, spending £15,000 in the process. See his *Information Concerning the Children Employed in Cotton Factories* (1818).

^b Richard Oastler (1789–1861): factory reformer, and an ally of Owen’s whose father in 1819 joined a deputation from Leeds to inspect New Lanark. (See *Life*, vol. 1A, 1858, pp. 251–61.) See generally Cecil Driver, *Tory Radical. The Life of Richard Oastler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946).

While these proceedings were in progress, what was called the revulsion from war to peace^a had created universal distress among the producers in the British Islands. Barns and farm yards were full, and warehouses were weighed down with all manner of productions, and prices fell much below the cost at which the articles could be produced. Farm servants were dismissed, and no employment could be found for them, the manufacturers being in the same situation as the farmers, and obliged to discharge their hands by hundreds, and in many cases to stop their works altogether. The distress among all work-people became so great, that the upper and wealthy classes became alarmed, foreseeing that the support of the hundreds of thousands unemployed, if this state of things continued, must ultimately fall upon them. This was in 1816, the first year after the conclusion of peace.

A great meeting was called by the upper classes to consider the cause of and remedy for this distress, which puzzled all our political economists, and confounded our most experienced statesmen. The meeting was held in the City of London Tavern, presided over by the Duke of York,^b and attended by all the great people and prominent men of the day. At this time I was on friendly terms with several of the English bench of bishops, particularly the Archbishop of Canterbury, (Sutton,) – the learned Bishop of St Davids, (Burgess,) – the benevolent and liberal Bishop of Durham, (Barrington,) – and the good honest Bishop of Norwich, (Bathurst.)^c Upon the morning of this great meeting, at which all the high official personages were expected to attend, and to subscribe for the immediate support of the suffering workpeople, I was engaged to breakfast with the Bishop of Norwich. After breakfast the Bishop said to me – ‘Mr Owen, I shall be expected to be present at this meeting and to subscribe my mite, and as I cannot to-day conveniently attend, will you have the kindness to offer an apology to the meeting for my absence, and to subscribe ten pounds for me?’ – giving me that sum. I did what he requested, and I perceived that many were surprised that the Bishop had given his permission to me in preference to any other.

All at the meeting appeared to be at a loss to account for such severe distress at the termination of a war so successful and the commencement of a peace so advantageous, as it was thought, to this country. But all that was done was to appoint a committee of the leading statesmen and political economists and practical men of business to investigate this difficult subject. Such committee was then named, and the Archbishop of Canterbury was appointed its chairman, and a large subscription to give immediate relief was entered into.^d

^a Peace between Britain and France was declared in 1815, after twenty-two years of war.

^b Frederick (1763–1827).

^c Henry Bathurst (1744–1837): Bishop of Norwich.

^d See *The Times*, no. 9900 (30 July 1816), p. 3. This meeting gave birth to the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor, which issued two reports. The chief aim of the Association seems to have been to make fish more widely available. See ‘Second Report of the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor’, *The Philanthropist*, vol. 6, 1815, pp. 514–49.

Among the committee were the leading political economists and Malthusians,^a who at this period were making great pretensions to superior knowledge, and whose opinions governed British home politics for many years after, and have continued to do so almost to the present time.

Not long ago their real leader, and that of the Whig party, Francis Place, a most energetic and well intentioned man, about a year before his death, confessed to me that he was mistaken in all his expectations, and was no longer able to see his way in national affairs. He had always agreed with me on the necessity of educating the people; but was opposed to me on the necessity of giving national employment to the unemployed who desired to work. He was a conscientious, firm, hard Whig and modern political economist, mistaken in all his political views, except upon education, and of that he had only Whig knowledge. His opinion was, that the poor should work out their own way as he had done, – and he had been successful.

Upon this committee my name appeared – by whom proposed and seconded I never knew; and I was much surprised to find it there. My friend Mr Mortlock's^b name was also upon the committee, – which was appointed to meet the next day.

Mr Mortlock was a true liberal philanthropist, most active in the cause of the poor and working classes, and well-known among the leading men of the day. We agreed that I should breakfast with him, and that we should go together to the first meeting of this intended-to-be important committee.

At breakfast Mr Mortlock (who was the head of the Firm at 250, Oxford Street, London, the great China warehouse,) enquired of me whether I knew the cause of this new and most extraordinary general distress among the producers of wealth, at the commencement of a peace so satisfactory and honourable to the nation. I explained to him my views on the subject, but said, 'No doubt the leading men, especially some of the prominent political economists, who I see are upon the committee, will give a much fuller and better explanation of this subject, as they are in possession of all the knowledge of the government derived from every national source, and I expect we shall obtain much valuable new information from a committee appointed as this has been.'

We attended the meeting, and sat together, not far from the chairman, who, as I have said, was the Archbishop of Canterbury (Sutton).

^a Most of the political economists, including David Ricardo, James Mill, Francis Place, and Robert Torrens, accepted the gist of Malthus' argument that population always tended to increase up to the limit of the means of subsistence, and the corollary that this always tended to diminish wages among the working classes.

^b John Mortlock's china and glass warehouse at 250 Oxford Street was one of the most important in the country, and lasted from c. 1746–c. 1930. Both he and his father William, from whom he probably took over the family business in 1810, were active in the Fish Association. The elder Mortlock lived at 46 Edgware Road in 1807.

I had anticipated a great addition to my knowledge from attending this committee of the supposed most experienced public men of the day that could be nominated to assist the Archbishop. I listened with the most fixed attention to speech after speech, from those who took upon themselves the task of enlightening the committee upon this extraordinary new state of the country at the commencement of so gratifying a peace. I was confounded, amazed and greatly disappointed, with the verbiage uttered first by one leading public man and then by another and another, until the most prominent and forward had expressed all they had to say. But the meeting was not satisfied with any of these attempts to explain the cause of this unusual general distress, and my friend Mr Mortlock was quite uneasy in his seat, while attending to speech after speech, amounting as he said to nothing relevant to the subject before them, and he repeatedly urged me to tell the meeting what I had explained to him at our breakfast.

Uneducated as I was, and then inexperienced in public speaking, I had the greatest dislike and even horror of standing up and formally attempting to address such a meeting. But my friend had become so urgent with me that I should speak, that at length he attracted the notice of the chairman, who, hearing what he was saying to me, said, – ‘Mr Owen, – we know you have had great experience among workpeople, and have given, as evidenced by your lately published Essays, which I have read and studied, much thought to these matters. I therefore request you will favour the meeting with your sentiments upon this subject, which appears to be so much a mystery to every one.’ I could not now escape rising. But explanations at a breakfast table, and formally addressing such a meeting, were to me at that period two very different things. I had to force myself to overcome my diffidence and mistrust of my own powers.

I said the cause of this apparently unaccountable distress seemed to me to be the new extraordinary changes which had occurred during so long a war, when men and materials had been for a quarter of a century in such urgent demand, to support the waste of our armies and navies upon so extensive a scale for so long a period. All things had attained to war prices, and these had been so long maintained, that they had appeared to the present generation the natural state of business and public affairs. The want of hands and materials, with this lavish expenditure, created a demand for and gave great encouragement to new mechanical inventions and chemical discoveries, to supersede manual labour in supplying the materials required for warlike purposes, and these, direct and indirect, were innumerable. The war was a great and most extravagant customer to farmers, manufacturers, and other producers of wealth, and many during this period became very wealthy. The expenditure of the last year of the war for this country alone was one hundred and thirty millions sterling, or an excess of eighty millions of pounds sterling over the peace expenditure. And on the day on which peace was signed, this great customer of the producers

died, and prices fell as the demand diminished, until the *prime cost* of the articles required for war could not be obtained. The barns and farm yards were full, warehouses loaded, and such was our artificial state of society, that this very superabundance of wealth was the sole cause of the existing distress. Burn the stock in the farm yards and warehouses, and prosperity would immediately recommence in the same manner as if the war had continued. This want of demand at remunerating prices compelled the master producers to consider what they could do to diminish the amount of their productions and the cost of producing, until these surplus stocks could be taken out of the market. To effect these results, every economy in producing was resorted to, and men being more expensive machines for producing than mechanical and chemical inventions and discoveries, so extensively brought into action during the war, the men were discharged, and the machines were made to supersede them, – while the numbers unemployed were increased by the discharge of men from the army and navy. Hence the great distress for want of work among all classes whose labour was so much in demand while the war continued. This increase of mechanical and chemical power was continually diminishing the demand for and value of manual labour, and would continue to do so, and would effect great changes throughout society. For the new power created by these new inventions and discoveries was already enormous, and was superseding manual power.

Here I was asked by Mr Colquhoun,^a the celebrated city magistrate and political economist, who had lately published his *Resources of the British Empire*^b – how much I thought this new mechanical and chemical power now superseded manual labour. I replied that I had not the data from which I could make an exact statement of the amount to the committee; but from observing these new powers in action over the kingdom, I knew the amount must be very considerable. Mr Colquhoun said – ‘But give the committee some idea of what you suppose it to be.’ ‘I do not like to express myself on so important a subject without some fixed data beyond general observations.’ Several voices from various members of the committee exclaimed – ‘Do, Mr Owen, give us some notion of your impressions on this subject.’ I said – ‘Imperfectly informed as I am, I am most unwilling, on a subject so new and yet so important to society, to state a crude opinion merely from general observation.’ The committee now appeared to be much agitated and excited, and became most urgent that I should name some amount as the extent to which this new power superseded manual labour.

The population of the British Isles was at this period (1816,) in round

^a Patrick Colquhoun (1745–1820): magistrate and reformer, much interested in poor relief and education in London.

^b Patrick Colquhoun, *Treatise On the Population, Wealth, Power, and Resources of the British Empire* (1814).

numbers about *seventeen millions*. Political economists estimated *one fifth* of the population to be producers. But as women and young children had latterly been made to attend machinery, it would be more safe to say *one fourth* were producers – or that the wealth of Great Britain and Ireland was annually produced by the manual labour of *four millions and a quarter*, assisted by mechanical and chemical power. Knowing this, I said – ‘It now must exceed the whole amount of manual “producing power”.’ ‘What! Mr Owen!’ exclaimed Mr Colquhoun and many others – ‘exceed the labour of more than five millions! *Five millions!* It is utterly impossible.’ I assured the committee that I knew it must very far exceed five millions, and that this was the cause why manual labour was so little in demand. I said that at this time I was directing in my establishment at New Lanark in Scotland, mechanical powers and operations superintended by about two thousand young persons and adults, which operations now completed as much work as sixty years before would have required the entire working population of all Scotland. This statement more and more surprised the leading members of the committee. The Archbishop said – ‘The statements you have made are very interesting and important. But what is the remedy for the existing distress?’ I said – ‘To find the remedy for this new artificial state of society, is not an easy task. But a remedy can be found for every artificial evil, and I think I perceive the remedy for this evil.’ ‘Can you now state this remedy?’ ‘No – I am not prepared, – not expecting to be thus called upon. I came only to hear the remedies of those much more experienced in public affairs than myself.’ The Archbishop said – ‘Would you object to make a report on this subject to an adjourned meeting of this committee?’ ‘If your Grace and the committee desire it, I will do the best I can to prepare such report.’

The Archbishop asked the committee if it was their wish that I should prepare a report, giving my views of the remedy. They unanimously expressed a desire that I should do so. I consented, and the meeting was immediately afterwards adjourned.

I was at this time in regular daily attendance upon the committee of the House of Commons on ‘*Sir Robert Peel’s Factory Bill*,’ as it was now called; and the master manufacturers were continually in search of evidence to support their cause against their workpeople, and among other of their doings, they had been at considerable expense to collect the number of spindles at work in all the cotton mills over the kingdom. This to me valuable document they presented to the Factory Committee of the House of Commons the day after the meeting of the committee which I had attended to consider the cause of and remedy for the new and extraordinary distress among the farm labourers and manufacturing operatives. This document was brought to the committee by the masters, to show the magnitude and importance of their cotton spinning operations as a national branch of business, and that therefore the legislature should not in any way interfere to interrupt its progress and prosperity. It would

have been a just proceeding on their part to have shown also the enormous profits that had been made by them in this branch during the previous years, and how well they could afford to give the relief asked for by the bill, as first presented from me to Sir Robert Peel to be introduced into the house. This document, however, served an important purpose, which the master cotton spinners never anticipated. It enabled me to estimate with considerable accuracy the amount of manual labour which was superseded by the machinery employed in cotton spinning alone. I found this amount at that time to exceed and supersede the manual labour of a population of *eighty millions*, and it will be seen by official documents how much this manufacture has increased since 1816.

As soon as I had obtained this document, and had made my calculations, I took them to Mr Colquhoun, the most advanced political economist in a knowledge of facts of any British subject. While he was preparing his elaborate work 'On the Resources of the British Empire,' to enable him to do it justice, all the national documents and records bearing upon the subject had been submitted to his inspection. When I explained to him these calculations, which made certain the results which I stated, I have seldom seen any one more surprised. After a little reflection he said – 'A mystery to me while I wrote my late work is now explained. During the late expensive, and I may say most lavish and extravagant war expenditure, I found the real wealth of the nation, although also borrowing large sums, to be year by year considerably on the increase, and I could not account for or divine the cause of such extraordinary and apparently contradictory results. I would have given much for this information when I was writing my book; for I could then have made the work of much more interest and value to the public and to the government. But,' he continued, 'if *one* branch of *one* manufacture supersedes the manual labour of a population of *eighty millions* – what must be the amount superseded by *all* the new mechanical and chemical powers which have been introduced into the operations of industry in the British Islands since the inventions of Arkwright and Watt? Can you form any estimate of this amount?' I replied – 'I have no correct data to guide me, except the document I have now brought, and which the master manufacturers have made out. From this document, however, I can plainly perceive that, with the remaining branches in the wool, flax, and silk manufactures, the new powers will much exceed the manual labour of *two hundred millions* of population. But including all other branches of business over the kingdom, it must be at present beyond all means to estimate with any pretensions to accuracy. And it must be far beyond any conceptions of our statesmen or of any class.' 'Yes,' he said, – 'it would be unwise to make any other statement yet, than that of the two hundred millions, as within your data of calculation. But the information which you have now given to me I esteem of important value – indeed I know not how it can be overrated by public men.'

It being mentioned in public by Mr Colquhoun that it was ascertained from documents which were trustworthy, that the new mechanical and chemical powers within this kingdom superseded the manual labour of population of upwards of *two hundred millions*, that amount became regularly stated afterwards in the writings and public speeches of all the modern political economists, – none of them knowing whence their new information proceeded.

I now turned my attention to consider the report which I had engaged to make to the Archbishop's Committee to enquire into the cause of and remedy for the existing distress among all classes of workpeople, exclusive of domestic servants. While I was thus occupied, the government, but especially the Whig interest and the political economists, who were now becoming one party, became alarmed by the number of workpeople now out of employment and claiming their natural and legal right for support from the nation. It was at this time, when the sufferings of the unemployed were extreme, that the political economists conspired against the just natural and legal rights of those who could not find employment, and who had no other means of living except from national support, stealing, and prostitution. They did not take into account that the wealth of the nation had increased in a much greater ratio than the poor's-rate. The political economists, by reasoning from a false principle, knowing little of human nature, and less of the powers of society when rightly directed, had hardened their hearts against the natural feelings of humanity, and were determined, aided by their disciples the Whigs, to starve out the poor from the land. And their measures did starve millions in Great Britain and Ireland, without attaining economy for the nation, or diminishing the number of the poor. The plans which they induced the nation to adopt, starved the weakest and best of the poor, and drove others to theft, murder, and the poor females to prostitution. And these measures were adopted while there was abundance of uncultivated land, and an enormous accumulation of wealth squandered in useless wars which a little common sense could easily have avoided, and in as ignorant foreign speculations in mines, loans, and all manner of wild schemes, which promised, however fallaciously, a high interest for capital.

The rapid accumulation of wealth, from the rapid increase of mechanical and chemical power, created capitalists who were among the most ignorant and injurious of the population. The wealth created by the industry of the people, now made abject slaves to these new artificial powers, accumulated in the hands of what are called the monied class, who created none of it, and who mis-used all they had acquired. Their proceedings proved by their results how ignorant and totally unequal to their position these men were. Many of them singly (had they possessed a knowledge of their own nature and of the powers of that nature when united and combined into a rational system of society, based on common sense, derived from common every-day facts,) could, by the proper use of their funds, have set an example, without diminishing those funds, which, from its success and superior good results, all others must have followed.

At this period I was unconscious of the gross ignorance which a false fundamental principle, or rather notion of a crude undeveloped imagination, had inflicted on the entire population of the world, thus making their reasoning faculties, until the sciences were far in advance of imaginary unbased notions, far worse than useless. For this mis-direction of the rational faculties of humanity has led all nations and peoples through all manner of insane absurdities. And to a very great extent these remain in full activity at this day.

In considering the report which I had been so unexpectedly called upon to make to the committee for taking into their consideration the cause of and remedy for the great existing distress among the poor and working classes in the British Islands, I reasoned according to the most obvious principles of plain common sense.

The war had continued so long, (nearly a quarter of a century,) that the British population had adopted a war state of society, and with Bank of England notes being made a legal tender, this state of warfare might have continued without intermission, and the country would have proceeded year by year, as it had done during the years of the war, to increase rapidly in wealth. The great war consumer of wealth having suddenly ceased, the demand for the consumption of war on so magnificent a scale at home and abroad at once terminated, and this produced what was then called the revulsion from war to peace. This new state of national affairs (for it was new in the history of nations,) alarmed and confounded the statesmen of that period, and they looked around for help from some quarter.

There were at this time a few naturally strong-minded active men, including Malthus, Mill, Ricardo, Colonel Torrens, Hume,^a and Place. The last, possessing more energy and practical knowledge, having risen from the working class, was the soul of the party. They with some others formed the new school of modern political economists, as they were then called. These were all well-intentioned, clever, acute men, close reasoners, and great talkers upon a false principle – and this reminds me to add to their number Dr Bowring and Jeremy Bentham, who were prominent members of this new school.

With all these I was intimate and upon friendly terms, Jeremy Bentham being one of my New Lanark partners, – and this his friend and agent Dr Bowring said was his only successful pecuniary speculation. With all these really clever, and as I have said undoubtedly well-intentioned men, I had day by day much discussion, but carried on by each of them in the most friendly manner, and most frequently when breakfasting with them, and before their business of the day commenced.

I was most desirous to convince them that national education and employment could alone create a permanent rational, intelligent, wealthy, and

^a Joseph Hume (1777–1855): radical MP who helped repeal the Combination Acts.

superior population, and that these results could be attained only by a scientific arrangement of the people, united in properly constructed villages of unity and co-operation as I then called them. While they, on the contrary, strongly desired to convert me to their views of instructing the people without finding them their national united employment, and of a thorough system of individual competition. The one may be called the system of universal attraction, – the other, that of universal repulsion.

I was now too much a man of business, and too experienced in knowledge of human nature, not to perceive strongly the utter impossibility of succeeding in permanently improving the condition of any population by any half measures. No people or population can be made good, intelligent, and happy, except by a rational and natural education and useful employment or occupation, giving equal exercise to body and mind under healthy conditions.

These pushing, busy, and ever active political economists advocated the contention of individualism, with education according to the then notions of national education for the poor, and with the full extent of individual responsibility for their conduct through life. And what were then called the liberal and advanced minds of the public were decidedly in their favour, aided also by the prejudices of all past ages. And they succeeded in converting the government and the public to their notions and practices.

I knew the utter weakness and fallacy of the notions and practices which they were inducing all parties to adopt. And were it not that these changes would of necessity lead the public onward to higher and better principles and practices, I should have very much preferred the old Conservative system of governing with more ignorance, but with greatly more humanity to the poor, their dependents, and the working classes, – all of whom were better provided for and less worked, in more healthy situations.^a The old aristocracy of birth, as I recollect them in my early days, were in many respects superior to the money-making and money-seeking aristocracy of modern times.

And now the government, inoculated with all the inexperienced notions of the modern political economists, commenced the most stringent measures in making laws against the natural rights of the poor and working classes, and in favour of the wealthy and powerful. Laws which were sure to increase poverty, crime, discontent, and misery, and ultimately to render a change in practice as well as in principle unavoidable. That change is now before us, and will be the revolution of revolutions, and will secure the permanent well-doing and happiness of the human race.

By the experience which I had now had, (first for ten years in Manchester, with a population of five hundred, and now for upwards of sixteen years at New

^a Clearly Owen means less a partisan approach to government than a more paternalistic attitude generally, though this was often identified more with conservative than liberal attitudes towards the poor.

Lanark in Scotland, with a population of two thousand five hundred solely under my direction and advice, socially as well as in their employments,) I had ascertained to a great extent practically how populations should be trained, educated, and occupied, to make them good, intelligent, and happy. I had discovered that by acting on an obvious principle respecting human nature, it was practicable, with the certainty of a law of nature, ultimately to make the human race good, wise, and happy. And having this knowledge deeply impressed on my mind, I was induced against the prejudices and educated errors of the population of the world, to determine not to cease but with life any efforts which I could make with my means, to effect this great change in the principle and practice of the human race.

By my own experience and reflection I had ascertained that human nature is radically good, and is capable of being trained, educated, and placed from birth in such manner, that all ultimately, (that is, as soon as the gross errors and corruptions of the present false and wicked system are overcome and destroyed,) must become united, good, wise, wealthy, and happy. And I felt that to attain this glorious result, the sacrifice of the character, fortune, and life of an individual, was not deserving a moment's consideration. And my decision was made to overcome all opposition and to succeed, or to die in the attempt.

By my experiment at New Lanark, continually opened to the public, – by the publication of my four Essays on the formation of character and a new view of society, which had been widely circulated among all classes at home and had been sent by our government to all foreign governments, to the most learned universities at home and abroad, and had been presented by our government to the bench of bishops, – by the advocacy of the cause of the workpeople, – and by the introduction of my bill into the House of Commons for their relief, – with my announcement, previously unthought of, declaring the large amount of new artificial power to supersede manual power, – my name had become well-known, and my influence at this period with the government, Parliament, and people, was considerable and on the increase.

But in proportion as my name and proceedings became public, the opposition from the most bigoted and professedly religious of all sects began to show itself. And from that period it was active and was daily on the increase. Before the day which was named for the next meeting of the Archbishop's committee, I had the report prepared for it. But previous to this meeting, the government, with the political economists to support them, had decided upon carrying into practice their stringent laws against the poor and working classes, and for this purpose a committee of the House of Commons called '*Sturges Bourne's*^a *committee on the Poor Laws*,' was appointed, composed of the leading members

^a William Sturges-Bourne (1769–1845): lawyer, MP 1798–1812, 1815–31, first for Hastings; poor law reformer who, as chairman of a select committee on the poor laws, proposed two bills on the subject in 1818–19.

of both parties.^a It was deemed by far the most important committee of the session, and consisted of forty members, and had commenced its sittings when I presented my report to the Archbishop's committee.

When in my place I had presented the report and had explained the outline of the remedy which I proposed, the Archbishop and the committee appeared to be taken by surprise, and appeared at a loss what to say or do. After some private communication between the leading government party in the committee and the Archbishop, the latter addressed me, and said – 'Mr Owen, – this committee is not prepared to take into its consideration a report so extensive in its recommendations, so new in principle and practice, and involving great national changes. It is better adapted for the consideration of Mr Sturges Bourne's Poor Law Committee of the House of Commons, and which is now sitting. We therefore recommend you to present it to that committee.' I said – 'If that is the wish of your Grace and of this committee, I will do so.'

Mr Brougham, afterwards Lord Chancellor Brougham, was a member of this Poor Law Committee, and through him I gave notice to the committee that I had such a report to present to it, and that I was willing to be examined as a witness upon their bill. A day was appointed for my examination.

At this period I was little aware of the deep laid conspiracy which had been entered into by the upper classes against the natural and to this period legal rights of the poor and working classes. It was now beginning to be developed through this committee.

I attended the committee on the day appointed in the morning, as I was to be the first examined. When I entered the committee room I found the forty members present, and most formally arranged. I had the report and plans for explanation with me. I placed and arranged them in order, and then waited the commencement of my examination. The members more immediately connected with and under the influence of the government, had been made acquainted by the Archbishop's committee with the outline of the report which I now intended to present and more fully to explain by my examination. I now perceived that the leading members were in private and apparently very interesting conversation in an under tone, which prevented my hearing what was said by any speaker. After I had thus waited for some time, they appeared to come to some conclusion. I was personally known to all the members, and was upon friendly terms with some of them; but I was prepared for a severe and most scrutinising examination, as the conservative members knew that my views respecting the poor and working classes differed materially from theirs.

After I had thus waited for some time with all my documents and plans opened out on the table, making I had no doubt a display formidable to the leading members of the committee, the chairman, Mr Sturges Bourne, formally

^a See *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 35 (1817), pp. 506–29.

addressed me, and said – ‘Will you, Mr Owen, have the kindness to withdraw for a short period into the next room? The members of the committee desire to have some private discussion, – after which we will send for you to be examined.’

I withdrew into the adjoining apartment, where, being well supplied with paper, pens, and ink, I immediately occupied myself with writing, as it was my custom never to be unoccupied. The committee met early, and no other witness was summoned on that day. I was thus busily engaged the whole day, expecting every moment to be sent for, until the bell rang to call the members to the House, and then Mr, now Lord Brougham came to me and said, – ‘Owen, – we have been discussing all day whether you should be examined or not, and we have come to no decision yet. The debate is adjourned until tomorrow morning at ten, when you must again attend the call of the committee.’

I thought this a strange proceeding, and could not then divine the cause.

In the morning I attended in the waiting room at ten o’clock, and occupied myself as on the previous day, – no other witness having been called. The whole day passed as before. The discussion continued with closed doors until the bell rang for the attendance of the committee in the House, – when Mr Brougham, who was known then to be friendly to me, as he has been through our lives, came and said – ‘Well, Owen, this is an extraordinary business. The committee has been in close discussion for these two whole days, and only just now has come to a decision, when, by a small majority, it has been decided that you shall not be examined by the committee.’ I said – ‘It is indeed strange and most extraordinary, as the members know how much I have studied these subjects, and how much extensive experience I have had with the working classes. But it is of little consequence. I will find means to enable the public to learn my views on this subject.’

In a day or two I published in the daily newspapers an examination of myself, such as I imagined the best informed of the committee would have made, and thus were the views of those members of the committee who were opposed to my being examined completely frustrated.^a I should have liked very much to hear what was contended for by both parties during those two days’ discussions. Those debates would now be a valuable document to prove the conspiracy of the upper against the natural and legal rights of the lower classes.

My name was now still more known to the public as a friend to the poor and working classes, and as a general reformer of existing evils. I considered what step I should next take to promote these views, yet so new to many. I decided to call a public meeting in the City of London Tavern ‘to consider a plan to relieve the country from its present distress, to re-moralise the lower orders,

^a See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 65–83.

reduce the poor's rate, and gradually abolish pauperism with all its degrading consequences.'

But previous to these meetings several of the Foreign Ambassadors in London, to whom my four Essays on the New Views of Society had been presented, requested to be introduced and known to me, and among these especially was Baron Jacobi,^a the Prussian Ambassador, who had communicated my Essays to the then Sovereign of Prussia,^b who so much approved of them as to write an autograph letter to me, expressing his high approbation of my sentiments on national education and on government, and stating that he had in consequence given instruction to his minister of the interior, to adopt my views on national education to the extent that the political condition and locality of Prussia would admit. And the next year (1817,) this measure was commenced, and it has been carried out to the present time.^c Baron Jacobi warmly advocated my views, and being known to be on friendly terms with me, was requested by Prince Esterhazy,^d the then Austrian Ambassador in London, to introduce him to me, that he might hear the explanation of my 'New Views' from myself. They came to me together, and the Baron introduced the Prince to me; but as I did not hear very well, I did not catch the title or name, and I received the Prince as one of the ordinary members of the Foreign Aristocracy, and had a long, free, and interesting conversation with him.

I had then in my apartment the model of the first or preliminary community for the poor. He inspected this very closely, and I gave him a full explanation of its intended working in practice. He took a deep interest in the subject, was very frank and familiar, and at parting expressed himself in very friendly terms. I remained ignorant of the title and character of my very inquisitive and intelligent visitor, until I next met Baron Jacobi, who explained who and what he was.

I had conversed with him as man to man. Not knowing that he had any title, I gave him none, and when he asked me what character I intended to form in my 'New Views,' I replied – 'Full-formed men and women, physically and mentally, who would always think and act consistently and rationally.' This reply seemed to make a strong impression upon him, and the Baron informed me that he had expressed himself well-pleased and much interested with this our first interview. The Prince was ever afterwards my friend, and upon subsequent occasions was most useful to me.

I had been and was making great and substantial progress with my New Lanark experiment, and it was now becoming widely known, and attracted the

^a Baron von Jacobi Kloest (d. 1817).

^b Frederick William III (1770–1840): King of Prussia 1797–1840.

^c A reorganisation of Prussian primary and secondary education took place in 1819, though Owen's direct influence upon these reforms cannot be verified.

^d Prince Pal Antal Esterhazy (1786–1866).

attention of those in advanced stations at home and abroad. I had now completed, and furnished according to my new mode of instruction by sensible signs and familiar conversation, the first institution for the formation of the infant and child character – the infants being received into it at one year old, or as soon as they could walk.

The parents at first could not understand what I was going to do with their little children at *two* years of age, but seeing the results produced, they became eager to send their infants at one year old, and enquired if I could not take them yet younger.

I charged the parents, that it might not be considered a pauper school, threepence a month, or three shillings a year, for each child, and of course they paid this most willingly. The expense of this establishment of three gradations of schools, was about two pounds per year for each child. But the difference between the three shillings and two pounds was amply made up by the improved character of the whole population, upon whom the school had a powerful influence for good.

The children were trained and educated without punishment or any fear of it, and were while in school by far the happiest human beings I have ever seen.

The infants and young children, besides being instructed by sensible signs, – the things themselves, – or models or paintings, – and by familiar conversation, were from two years and upwards daily taught dancing and singing, and the parents were encouraged to come and see their children at any of their lessons or physical exercises.

But in addition there were day schools for all under twelve years old, after which age they might, if their parents wished, enter the works, either as mechanics, manufacturers, or in any branch – for we had iron and brass founders, forgers, turners in wood and iron, machine makers, and builders in all branches, having continually buildings to repair and erect and machinery on a large scale to repair and renew. The annual repairs alone of the establishment cost at this period upwards of eight thousand pounds.

I also organised arrangements to supply all the wants of the population, buying every thing for money on a large scale in the first markets, and supplying them at first cost and charges. They had previously been necessitated to buy inferior articles, highly adulterated, at enormous prices, making their purchases at small grocery and grog shops, chiefly on credit; and their butcher's meat was generally little better than skin and bone. By the time the arrangements to provide for the whole circle of their wants in food, clothing, etc, etc, were completed, some of the larger families were earning two pounds per week, and the heads of these families told me that my new arrangements to supply their wants saved them in price ten shillings weekly, besides the great difference between deteriorated and the most inferior qualities, and the best unadulterated articles. The grocery and grog shops speedily disappeared, and the population soon relieved themselves from the debts previously contracted to them.

All the houses in the village, with one hundred and fifty acres of land around it, formed parts of the establishment, all united, and working together as one machine, proceeding day by day with the regularity of clockwork. The order of the whole was such, that Mr Henry Hase,^a the well-known cashier for so many years of the Bank of England, and who re-organised the arrangements of the bank, when on his first visit to me, after he had examined the whole with great minuteness and continually increasing interest as he advanced in his task, said – ‘Mr Owen, this must be the work of some generations. How long has it been in progress to attain this high perfection of systematic order?’ I informed him it had been entirely conceived by me and constructed under my immediate direction in sixteen years, no one knowing the results which I had in view while proceeding with the several parts to dovetail one with the other to form an entire whole. He was so much gratified by the extended systematic order, that as long as he lived he came every year with Mrs Hase^a to visit me at Braxfield, my place of residence, which was at a convenient distance from the establishment, so as not to be annoyed by it, while the house was situated in the midst of beautiful scenery.

I have already mentioned the measures which I adopted for the detection and prevention of theft, and for registering the conduct of the workpeople, and the beneficial effects which resulted. The poor workpeople were exposed to the strongest temptations and their thefts were encouraged by the cotton weavers who were numerous in the neighbourhood of the establishment. The detection of the parties purloining was misery to them and most annoying to me, who knew how their characters had been ill-formed, and the unfavourable surroundings in which they were placed in this particular. My object was to prevent, not to punish crime; and by the plan which I adopted, I could detect the loss of a single bobbin in any one of the four sets of hands through which they had daily to pass. Thus was theft effectually *prevented*, and while this change was in progress I never had one punished, although many were detected.

There were four large mills filled with machinery old and ill-arranged. This was replaced and the whole newly arranged. Under the old arrangements the stairs were continually crowded with carriers with baskets, conveying the produce of the lower into the higher rooms, and with others meeting them with the empty skips and baskets. I therefore devised means, until then unpractised, to take all up and bring all down without the use of stairs.

I was greatly adverse to punishments, and much preferred as far as possible

^a Henry Hase (1763–1829): Chief Cashier 1807–29; member of Owen’s British and Foreign Philanthropic Society. Hase began with the Bank in 1793 at £50 p.a., and as Chief Cashier rose to £1000 p.a. Probably a Dissenter, he was a close friend of Dr Abraham Rees, pastor of the Old Jewry meeting house from 1783 until 1825.

^b Mary Hase, née Griffiths, who married Hase in 1793, died at Reading on 19 April 1840.

simple means to render punishment unnecessary as it is always unjust to the individual. To prevent punishment by the overlookers and masters of departments who had been accustomed to whip and strap the children and young people, and who often from ignorance abused their authority, I invented what the people soon called a telegraph, which I have already described. This was the preventor of punishment. There was no beating, – no abusive language. I passed daily through all the rooms, and the workers observed me always to look at these telegraphs, – and when black I merely looked at the person and then at the colour, – but never said a word to one of them by way of blame. And if any one thought the inferior colour was not deserved by him as given, it was desired that complaint should be made to me. But this seldom occurred. Now this simple device and silent monitor soon began to show its effects upon the character of the workers. At first a large proportion daily were black and blue, few yellow, and scarcely any white. Gradually the blacks were changed for blue, the blues for yellow, and the yellows for white. And for many years the permanent daily conduct of a very large majority of those who were employed, deserved and had No. 1 placed as their character on the books of the establishment. Soon after the adoption of this telegraph I could at once see by the expression of countenance what was the colour which was shown. As there were four colours there were four different expressions of countenance most evident to me as I passed along the rooms.

Never perhaps in the history of the human race has so simple a device created in so short a period so much order, virtue, goodness, and happiness, out of so much ignorance, error, and misery. How lamentable is it that the priesthood of the world and the governments of nations are yet ignorant of the immense happiness and goodness which they could so easily create by adopting simple and obvious means to *prevent* ignorance, poverty, crime, disunion, and misery; instead of encouraging by their unwise conduct and proceedings the increase of poverty, crime, disunion, and wretched destitution, and then adopting the most unjust and cruel laws to punish in the helpless those evils to society which their unwise teaching and governing have previously created.

Whenever the trial shall be honestly made and persevered in, to govern the population of the world on its true principle, and by practical measures to prevent ignorance, poverty, disunion, crime, and misery, it will be found to be an easy task and most economical to make all nations and peoples good, wise, and continually increasing in happiness.

The simple expedient of the little coloured telegraphs did me another essential service. I had promised my new partners, who generally were men of truly benevolent dispositions, and who desired to improve the condition of the working classes in their way, that I would buy the business in which we were about to unite our interests, give them five per cent per annum for the capital which they thus entrusted to my direction, while I continued my plans and views for the general amelioration of all classes at home and abroad. In this

pursuit, as I had to visit London often during the sittings of parliament, and thus to be absent in person from New Lanark for weeks and sometimes months, it was necessary for me to make my arrangements to prevent the establishment suffering by my absence so long from it. The arrangements made for this purpose were such, that I had an accurate daily return sent to me of the detailed results in every department of the manufacturing process, by which I knew the real results of our daily progress by an almost instant inspection of figures on half a sheet of paper, more readily than I could have known them without such daily report by the most close daily personal attention; and as the daily report of each coloured telegraph was entered in the character books every night, all knew that on my return to the establishment I should inspect these books and see how every one had behaved on each day of my absence.

I had divided the establishment into four general departments, and had taken great pains and had given much attention to train the four persons whom I placed at the head of each of these departments to understand my views respecting them and the mode of governing those placed under their immediate direction. Upon leaving the establishment when I expected to be absent for a long period, it was my practice to call these four together, and to explain fully what I wished to have done in each department during my absence. And on my return I uniformly found my wishes fulfilled, and my instructions faithfully followed.

I also adopted the same practice with the teachers in the three gradations of the schools, and with as much success as I could expect from young persons of both sexes, inexperienced in a correct knowledge of human nature, and therefore not always capable of making the due allowance for the varied natural character of each child.

I had before this period acquired the most sincere affections of all the children. I say of all – because every child above one year old was daily sent to the schools. I had also the hearts of all their parents, who were highly delighted with the improved conduct, extraordinary progress, and continually increasing happiness of their children, and with the substantial improvements by which I gradually surrounded them. But the great attraction to myself and the numerous strangers who now continually visited the establishment, was the new infant school; the progress of which from its opening I daily watched and superintended, until I could prepare the mind of the master whom I had selected for this, in my estimation, most important charge, – knowing that if the foundation was not truly laid, it would be in vain to expect a satisfactory structure.

It was in vain to look to any old teachers upon the old system of instruction by books. In the previous old school room I had tried to induce the master to adopt my views; but he could not and would not attempt to adopt what he deemed to be such a fanciful ‘new-fangled’ mode of teaching, and he was

completely under the influence of the minister of the parish, who was himself also opposed to any change of system in teaching children, and who considered that the attempt to educate and teach infants was altogether a senseless and vain proceeding. I had therefore, although he was a good obstinate 'dominie'^a of the old school, reluctantly to part with him, and I had to seek among the population for two persons who had a great love for and unlimited patience with infants, and who were thoroughly tractable and willing unreservedly to follow my instructions. The best to my mind in these respects that I could find in the population of the village, was a poor simple-hearted weaver, named James Buchanan,^b who had been previously trained by his wife to perfect submission to her will, and who could gain but a scanty living by his now oppressed trade of weaving common plain cotton goods by hand. But he loved children strongly by nature, and his patience with them was inexhaustible. These with his willingness to be instructed, were the qualities which I required in the master for the first rational infant school that had ever been imagined by any party in any country; for it was the first practical step of a system new to the world; – and yet with all my teaching of all classes of the public, it is still little understood in principle, and not at all yet conceived in practice, although the high permanent happiness through futurity of our race depends upon the principle and practice in all their purity being correctly carried into execution by all nations and people.

Thus the simple-minded kind-hearted James Buchanan, who at first could scarcely read, write, or spell, became the first master in a rational infant school. But infants so young, also required a female nurse, to assist the master, and one also who possessed the same natural qualifications. Such an one I found among the numerous young females employed in the cotton mills, and I was fortunate in finding for this task a young woman, about seventeen years of age, known familiarly among the villagers as 'Molly Young,'^c who of the two, in natural powers of mind, had the advantage over her new companion in an office perfectly new to both.

The first instruction which I gave them was, that they were on no account ever to beat any one of the children, or to threaten them in any manner in word or action, or to use abusive terms; but were always to speak to them with a pleasant countenance, and in a kind manner and tone of voice. That they should tell the infants and children (for they had all from one to six years old under their charge,) that they must on all occasions do all they could to make their playfellows happy, – and that the older ones, from four to six years of age,

^a Pedagogue or schoolmaster, sometimes used disparagingly.

^b James Buchanan (1784–1857) came to New Lanark in 1814, and stayed until 1819, when he set up the Westminster Infant School; active in infant education for the rest of his life. Other accounts give a more favourable view of his character and intelligence (e.g., 'Origin of Infant Schools', *The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review*, vol. 47, 1847, pp. 484–6).

^c Molly or Mary Young.

should take especial care of younger ones, and should assist to teach them to make each other happy.^a

These instructions were readily received by James Buchanan and Molly Young, and were faithfully adhered to by them as long as they remained in their respective situations.

The children were not to be annoyed with books; but were to be taught the uses and nature of qualities of the common things around them, by familiar conversation when the children's curiosity was excited so as to induce them to ask questions respecting them.

The room for their play in bad weather was sixteen feet by twenty, and sixteen feet high.

The school room for the infant instruction was of the same dimensions, and was furnished with paintings, chiefly of animals, with maps, and often supplied with natural objects from the gardens, fields, and woods, – the examination and explanation of which always excited their curiosity and created an animated conversation between the children and their instructors, now themselves acquiring new knowledge by attempting to instruct their young friends, as I always taught them to think their pupils were, and to treat them as such.

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

It was most encouraging and delightful to see the progress which these infants and children made in real knowledge, without the use of books. And when the best means of instruction or forming character shall be known, I doubt whether books will be ever used before children attain their tenth year. And yet without books they will have a superior character formed for them at ten, as rational beings, knowing themselves and society in principle and practice, far better than the best informed now know these subjects at their majority, or the mass of the population of the world know them at any age.

Human nature, its capacities and powers, is yet to be learned by the world. Its faculties are unknown, unappreciated, and therefore misdirected, and wasted lamentably in all manner of ways, to the grievous injury of all our race through every succeeding generation.

When the beautiful and most wonderful organs, faculties, propensities, powers, and qualities of humanity, for the attainment of high excellence and happiness, shall be understood, and shall be rationally taught by one generation to its successor, truth will be the only language among men, and the pure

^a On Owen's school at New Lanark, see *infra*, vol. 1, p. xix.

spirit of enlightened charity and love will pervade the entire of the human race. And how simple is truth and real knowledge, when unmixed with the errors and prejudices of ignorance, and with a want of knowing how to apply practical measures to bring truth and knowledge into the common affairs of life! Here, with the most simple means as agents, two untaught persons, not having one idea of the office in which they were placed, or of the objects intended to be attained, accomplished, unknown to themselves, results which surprised, astonished, and confounded the most learned and wise, and the greatest men of their generation. James Buchanan and Molly Young, by being for some time daily instructed how to treat the infants and children committed to their charge within the surroundings which had been previously created and arranged for them, produced results, unconsciously to themselves, which attracted the attention of the advanced minds of the civilised world – results which puzzled the most experienced of them, to divine the power which could mould humanity into the beings they came to see.

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

But to teach dancing, music, and military discipline to these infants and children, was an abomination to the society of Friends, and I now had three partners who were Friends, and who were among the most distinguished in their society – John Walker, of Arno's Grove, – Joseph Foster, of Brownley – both men of high, liberal, and superior minds, with the kindest dispositions, – and William Allen, a man of great pretensions in his sect, a very busy, bustling, meddling character, making great professions of friendship to me, yet underhandedly doing all in his power to undermine my views and authority in conducting the new forming of the character of the children and of the population at New Lanark.^a Yet such were the extraordinary good effects produced by these un-quaker-like proceedings, that not a word was said by any of them for some years after our partnership commenced, and it was only after a lapse of some years that William Allen made objections, saying that his society did not approve of them.

Now, as I had anticipated, dancing, music, and military discipline, conducted on the principles of charity and kindness to all of humankind, were among the best and most powerful surroundings for forming a good and happy character, that could be introduced. As a proof of these results, – when Joseph

^a On Allen's objections, see *infra*, vol. 1, p. xx.

Foster and William Allen came from London, as they did occasionally, to visit me at the establishment at New Lanark, I often found them in the dancing and singing rooms when the exercises were going on, and enjoying the new scenes of happiness, which, as Quakers from birth, they had never previously witnessed. Dancing, music, and the military discipline, will always be prominent surroundings in a rational system for forming characters. They give health, unaffected grace to the body, teach obedience and order in the most imperceptible and pleasant manner, and create peace and happiness to the mind, preparing it in the best manner to make progress in all mental acquisitions.

From this rational infant school have arisen all the unsuccessful attempts to form a second with similar results.

The second attempt to form one was made by the Marquis of Lansdowne,^a – Lord Brougham, – John Smith, Banker, MP,^b – Benjamin Smith, MP,^c – Henry Hase, Esq., cashier of the Bank of England, – and, I believe, James Mill, afterwards of the India House. Lord Brougham, John Smith, and Henry Hase, had frequently visited New Lanark and enjoyed the goodness, happiness, and intelligence of the children in these rational surroundings, constituting the institution for the formation of this new character; and being benevolent men, they naturally desired that so much goodness and happiness should be if possible extended to all other poor children. They asked me whether, if they could form a party to establish one in London, I would give them James Buchanan to be the master of their school. I replied – ‘Most willingly – for I have pupils who can take his place without any injury to my school.’^d

I had thought, from the daily instruction which when at the establishment I had as it were drilled into him for years, that he could now act from himself in a practice which under my direction, with the aid he received from Molly Young, appeared so easy to execute. But I found he could proceed no further in the practice than he had done for sometime.

The gentlemen named formed a party to carry the proposed scheme into practice, and a school was erected and furnished, and James Buchanan and his family went to London, and he was appointed master, with full powers over the school.

I now had to appoint and instruct a successor to James Buchanan, and soon one of the new trained pupils, who had passed through our schools, and who was therefore much in advance of his former master as a scholar and in habits,

^a Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 3rd Marquis of Lansdowne (1780–1863): leading Whig, free trader, liberal reformer; friend of Bentham.

^b John Abel Smith (1801–71): banker and Whig MP 1830–59, 1863–8; campaigned for Jewish emancipation; also a member of the British and Foreign Philanthropic Society, and aided the Orbiston community.

^c Benjamin Smith (1783–1860): MP for Norwich and leading Unitarian.

^d Buchanan moved to ‘The Westminster Free Day Infant Asylum’ at 23 Brewer’s Green, which opened on 14 February 1819. He remained here twenty years before going to Cape Town.

became greatly his superior, and by his youth and vigour, aided by a fine enthusiasm in the cause, which I had been enabled to create in him, a rapid advance and improvement were made in the first year after James Buchanan had left the school, and he, James Buchanan, never afterwards saw it.^a

Now I expected he would have had his new school in Westminster equal to the one he had been so much accustomed to for so long a period. But though he was a willing servant, to attend to the instructions given to him, as far as his good-natured limited powers would admit, it proved that he had neither mind nor enegy to act from himself. It was sometime after this second school was established and in full action, before I could leave New Lanark, having to train my new young master to direct the infant school in my absence. This young man had been systematically trained through our three schools in the institution for forming character, and his character had been well-formed. He had imbibed the true spirit of the system, and was eager to be taught the means to carry the improvements which I wished into practice. He was full of faculty for the employment, and at sixteen years of age was the best instructor of infants I have ever seen in any part of the world.

While these matters were in progress at New Lanark, the fame of its infant school and of the institution for the formation of character was noised abroad and created much excitement, and travellers of distinction, home and foreign, came increasingly year by year, to see what they called the wonders of New Lanark.

Knowing that inspection alone could give any adequate impression of the results produced here, I freely opened the whole establishment to the full investigation of all comers. I said to the public – ‘Come and see, and judge for yourselves.’ And the public came – not by hundreds, but by thousands annually. I have seen as many at once as seventy strangers attending the early morning exercises of the children in the school. At this period the dancing, music, military discipline, and geographical exercises, were especially attractive to all except ‘very pious’ Christians. Yet even these last could not refrain from expressing their wonder and admiration at the unaffected joyous happiness of these young ones, – children of the common working cotton spinners.

Being always treated with kindness and confidence, and altogether without fear, even of a harsh word from any of their numerous teachers, they exhibited an unaffected grace and natural politeness, which surprised and fascinated strangers, and which new character and conduct were to most of them so unaccountable, that they knew not how to express themselves, or how to hide their wonder and amazement.

These children, standing up, seventy couples at a time, in the dancing room, and often surrounded with many strangers, would with the utmost ease

^a Walter Stark was appointed on Buchanan’s departure.

and natural grace go through all the dances of Europe, with so little direction from their master, that the strangers would be unconscious that there was a dancing master in the room.

In their singing lessons, one hundred and fifty would sing at the same time, – their voices being trained to harmonise; and it was delightful to hear them sing the old popular Scotch songs, which were great favourites with most strangers, from the unaffected simplicity and heart feeling with which these songs were sung by these children, whose natures had been naturally and rationally cultivated.

In their military exercises they went through their evolutions with precision equal, as many officers of the army stated, to some regiments of the line; and at their head in their marchings were six and sometimes eight young fifers, playing various marches. The girls were thus disciplined, as well as the boys, and their numbers were generally nearly equal. And it may be here remarked, that being daily brought up together, they appeared to feel for and to treat each other as brothers and sisters of the same family; and so they continued until they left the day schools at the age of twelve.

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

This room was also their class reading apartment. It was forty feet by twenty, and twenty-two feet in height, – with a gallery at one end to accommodate strangers. At these lessons from six to eight masters and mistresses were usually present, who were quite tenacious enough about their reading according to rule.

From this room strangers were taken to the adjoining apartment, (the great writing, accounting, and lecture room,) in which were 250 or 300 children busily engaged at their respective desks, writing or accounting; and, like the reading, according to the best modern arrangements. This apartment was ninety feet long, forty wide, twenty-two high, with a gallery on three sides, and with a pulpit, from which to lecture, at one end.

It was from this pulpit that I addressed an audience of about 1,200 when I opened the institution. When I had delivered about one-half of my address, I sat down, and immediately a chorus of music was heard, but no one saw whence it proceeded, and all were greatly surprised. Musicians and singers had been placed in the adjoining apartment, from which a door opened in the gallery; and the music thus softened, appeared, as many of the audience expressed themselves, like divine music, they not knowing how or whence it came.

This institution for the formation of character, with the establishment of New Lanark generally, while I kept its immediate direction, was considered by the more advanced minds of the world one of the greatest modern wonders. Its results after I had united all its various parts as one whole, working day by day, year after year, for a quarter of a century, with the regularity of a well-constructed time-piece, attracted the attention of the governments and priest-hoods of the world, and all of them were sorely puzzled to discover the cause and means by which those results were created and maintained.

Among the more distinguished of the thousands who came to see, examine, and criticise these previously unheard-of proceedings, were the late Emperor of Russia,^a with nine or ten of his nobles and attendants, and among them his favorite friend and physician, Sir Alexander Crichton.^b They remained my visitors for two nights. The Emperor was much pleased with my two youngest sons, who were then at home.^c At his meals he always would have one on his right hand and the other on his left, and he had one at each hand while going through the establishment, and while viewing the various beautiful natural scenes immediately around the establishment, including the now celebrated falls of the Clyde.

The Emperor (at this time the Grand Duke Nicholas,) was, as I was informed, recommended to visit the establishment by his mother, the reigning

^a Nicholas I (1796–1855): Emperor 1825–55.

^b Sir Alexander Crichton (1763–1856).

^c David Dale Owen and Richard Owen.

Empress,^a who had been much interested with the results produced in it, having had an account of them from the Duke of Holstein Oldenburgh,^b a near relative of the imperial family, and who, with his brother, had some time before spent several days with me, taking a great interest, day by day, while they remained my guests, in thoroughly examining for themselves every part of this complicated, but to all observers easy-working machine, of a scholastic and manufacturing society, of a population of 2,500 souls, provided in a superior manner with all they required at prime cost, without any trouble or loss of time to one family in the village.

Before the Grand Duke left me he kindly inquired what I intended to do with my two sons. Not being aware of the intention of the Grand Duke to offer to take them under his patronage and protection, I simply replied – ‘To train them as cotton manufacturers’ – in consequence of which answer they were retained to be made useful independent practical scientific men, instead of being made dependent on court favour, and subjected to all the evils of courtly favour or disfavour, as might have happened to them.

At that time there was an outcry and great alarm created by the Malthusians, who asserted that Great Britain was over-peopled, and that the sufferings of the poor and the want of employment for so many of the working classes arose from an excess of population. The modern political economists were daily forcing these notions prominently on the public. In a two hours’ conversation with the Grand Duke before he left me, he said, ‘As your country is over-peopled, I will take you, and two millions of population with you, and will provide for you all in similar manufacturing communities.’ I thanked his Imperial Highness for this most liberal offer; – but being then independent in pecuniary matters, and much attached to New Lanark and its population, both now so much of my own creation, I also declined this most liberal imperial offer. The rejection of his intended kindness to my two sons, and my thus declining this magnificent offer, I have no doubt left an unpleasant feeling of independence of courtly favour. And in two other instances, with members of this highly talented imperial family, I unintentionally, from ignorance of courtly etiquette, must have appeared to act rudely to them.

At an earlier period the Grand Duchess of Oldenburgh,^c afterwards Queen of Wirtemberg, visited London. She had heard from the Duke of Holstein Oldenburg the full particulars respecting the New Lanark Establishment, and that I was then in London on a visit with my partner, Mr Walker, of Arno’s Grove, Southgate; but as I then had much public business to transact in London, I was resident at his town house, 49 Bedford Square. The Grand

^a Maria Feodorovna (1798–1860), the former Dorothea of Württemberg, wife of Emperor Paul I.

^b Presumably Peter, regent at the Duchy of Oldenburg during Duke William’s reign.

^c Catherina (1788–1819): wife of William I (1781–1864), King of Württemberg 1816–64.

Duchess having learned I was in town, sent her chief attendant to invite me to visit her, and appointed an early hour the following morning for my visit. I went accordingly, and was not only politely, but kindly and frankly received. She requested me to sit on the sofa on which she was sitting, and our conversation was continued without interruption for full two hours. This was at the period when the allied powers and their armies were in Paris. Her brother, the Emperor Alexander,^a was, with the Sovereigns of Austria and Prussia, engaged there in preparing the treaty of peace,^b to establish permanent harmony in Europe, and he was considered to be liberal in his views, and friendly to all kinds of improvements. I was desirous to explain to the Duchess my *New Views of Society*, which she appeared readily to accept; and I wished her to interest her relative the Emperor in these views for the general improvement of society. She said the Emperor was very desirous to promote liberal views generally throughout society, as far as his position would admit; but that he could not do altogether as he wished. He could go only so far with improvements in Russia, as he could carry the leading nobles with him; but his success in the termination of this long war would give him more power to act according to his wishes. She would explain my views to him on her return home. She then began to talk of the great pleasure expressed by the Duke of Holstein Oldenburgh with their visit to me while they were my guests, and she entered freely into conversation respecting family matters and domestic interests, gradually becoming easy and familiar in her manner, as with an equal. I was at this time a mere cotton-spinning manufacturer, unacquainted yet with the etiquette of courts, and especially with that of imperial families, and not then knowing that in such interviews the move to terminate the visit should always come from the imperial personage. Ignorantly and innocently supposing I had trespassed too long on the time and patience of her Imperial Highness, I concluded the interview by rising and taking my leave of her, – on which I perceived too late the error I had committed, seeing the mixed surprise and disappointment expressed in the countenance of the Grand Duchess.

After the late Emperor of Russia's visit with his nobles, came Princes John and Maximilian of Austria,^c – Foreign Ambassadors, – many bishops, – and clergy innumerable, – almost all our own nobility, – learned men of all professions from all countries, – and wealthy travellers for pleasure or knowledge of every description. But the establishment was at all times as freely open

^a Alexander I (1777–1825): Emperor of Russia 1802–25. The rivalry between Owen and William Allen worsened when Allen was introduced to Alexander as a model Quaker entrepreneur.

^b The allied powers signed the Treaty of Paris on 30 May 1814. The Congress of Vienna began in the autumn.

^c Probably Prince Johann (1782–1859), son of Leopold II (1747–92). 'Maximilian' was perhaps Karl Theodor Maximilian August of Bavaria (1795–1838), as there seem to have been no Austrian princes of this name at this time.

to the inspection and close examination of the merely inquisitive seeker for some fault to publish it, or to the intelligent traveller on foot who sought for knowledge to promote its practice, as to those of high rank and distinction.

These visits of inspection were valuable lessons to me of human nature in all its varieties of manners, habits, prejudices, and knowledge; the latter of which I endeavoured to collect from each, according to their measure of it. It was a matter of deep interest to me to observe the effects which these to all new measures in practice made upon each visitor. Some of these effects made a stronger impression on my mind than others, and as I have occasionally related them, they have not yet escaped my memory. And as a few of them may interest a portion of the public, I will now relate them.

A very intelligent and evidently well-disposed clergyman came to visit the schools especially, having heard so many extraordinary reports of them, to which he could not give credit. After a calm, patient, and evidently deeply interested attention to all he saw, and a full examination of all the proceedings in the three schools, and then through the whole establishment, – he said to me, with great feeling in his manner – ‘Mr Owen – what I have seen here has interested me most deeply. I came here a sceptic to your views of humanity. But what I have witnessed to-day is altogether a new human nature to me. It is so strange and incomprehensible to me, how you have obtained such results, that if my brother, in whose honest integrity I have not the slightest doubt, had told me on his personal knowledge that they existed, I could not have believed him. Nothing short of my own full inspection, examination, and ocular demonstration, could have removed my scepticism, and have left the delightful impression which I have received.’

On another occasion, of a visit from a lady of the highest rank of our own nobility, who with her party came to see what were now called the far-famed wonders of New Lanark, – after inspecting the dancing, music, and all the other lessons and exercises out of doors of the infants and children in their play-ground, while attentively witnessing their kindness of manner to each other, their unaffected, unrestrained, joyous happiness, and remembering their proficiency in their indoor exercises, this lady said to me, with tears in her eyes – ‘Mr Owen, I would give any money if my children could be made like these.’ And truly those who were trained from infancy through these schools were by far the most attractive, and the best and happiest human beings I have ever seen. Their manner was unaffectedly graceful, and, when spoken to by strangers, naturally polite, with great innocent simplicity. The total absence of all fear, and full confidence in and affection for their teachers, with the never ceasing expression of perfect happiness, gave these children of working cotton-spinners a character for their age superior to any I have yet seen, – but yet not nearly equal to that which will be *universally* produced, when the surroundings before and after birth shall be made rational for the formation of character and the conducting of society.

My own children – seven of whom grew to manhood and womanhood knowing nothing of punishment through their lives – were, and those living are, such as few parents have ever been blessed with. Yet were they in some respects without the peculiar advantages which I was enabled to give to what I called my great family of associated children.

My good and kind-hearted wife, in consequence of knowing how much time I spent among this great family, and seeing the great mutual affection which existed between them and myself, would jokingly say – ‘Why you love those children better than your own!’ And no one who was with them as much as I was, could avoid having a great affection for them. And although some were of course more affectionate and attractive in their natural character than others, my instructions to their teachers were, that they should never show partiality for any, – for it would be doing injustice to the others. This, as I felt by myself, was not a very easy task for the teachers to learn and practice; but after some time it was pretty well adhered to.

Let society adopt common sense surroundings and measures to form a good and superior character for all children from their birth, and none will be able to refrain from loving them; and this is the only mode under heaven by which man can be made to love his neighbour as himself, and only under the practice of the federated family commonwealths and federated nationalities.

The other incident vividly on my memory was the visit of the late Lord Stowell^a and his daughter – afterwards Lady Sidmouth.^b They came one day late in the afternoon, and the gate keeper of the entrance into the working part of the establishment came to me while I was engaged in the superintendance of some of the operations, and said that ‘Lord Stewart’ and his daughter wished to see the establishment. Not knowing who Lord Stewart was, I said – ‘Request them to come, and conduct them here.’ They came, and I commenced to show them the machinery, and while thus engaged, a servant came from Braxfield, which was about a quarter of a mile from the centre of these multitudinous operations, to announce dinner, and I said – ‘My Lord, will you take a family dinner with me, and afterwards we can see more of the works and the evening proceedings of the adults in the schools?’ His Lordship, turning to his daughter, said – ‘What do you say? Shall we accept Mr Owen’s invitation?’ ‘Yes, by all means,’ was her reply.

After dinner, over our wine, the conversation turned to politics and the state of the country, – when I observed that it was much to be regretted that there was not one superior statesman living, to do justice to the enormous means which the country possessed to secure its permanent prosperity and the happiness of its population. ‘What!’ said his Lordship, – ‘Do you not think

^a Sir William Scott, Lord Stowell (1745–1836): judge and MP.

^b Mary Ann Scott (1783–1842) married Sidmouth in 1823.

there is *one* superior statesman, equal to this task?’ laying great emphasis on the word *one*. ‘No, my Lord, – there does not appear to me *one* competent to this task.’ The conversation continued animated for sometime, the ladies being absent.

We then returned to the works, to see the evening instruction and amusements of the adult part of the population, after the business of the day had terminated. Some were at reading, – some at writing lessons, – others, more advanced, were reading for their pleasure. Some were in the dancing, and some attending the music rooms, – all busily engaged according to their inclinations. All this amused and interested his Lordship and his daughter, and when these visits had terminated, they returned to their hotel at Old Lanark.

While his Lordship was dining with me, his servant was dining with my servants in the hall; and on my return home after the departure of my guests I learned, to my surprise, that it was not Lord Stewart but Lord Stowell, who had but lately been Sir William Scott. In the morning I went to Old Lanark to call to ask my last night’s visitors to come to see the infant and the other day schools, which I said were in reality the most interesting parts of the establishment; and also to apologise to his Lordship for calling him Lord Stewart. Their time, he said, would not permit them to return to New Lanark to see the infant and other schools, of which they had heard so much; for their engagements compelled them to proceed on their journey immediately after they had concluded breakfast. His Lordship added jocularly – ‘We members of the government are very like highwaymen; for we change our names so often that it’s no wonder we are not known, or that one is often mistaken for another.’

It would however be endless here to enumerate the persons of distinction, for birth, talent, or wealth, who visited the establishment; and the numbers coming continually increased while I remained to conduct it. Some who were more connected with particular events I must enumerate.

Dr Hammel,^a the Russian collector of knowledge for his court, was often a visitor with me, and his visits were always acceptable, and instructive on many subjects.

The present Baron Goldsmid,^b then a young married man, hearing of the success in teaching children, and especially infants, asked to come and stay sometime with me, to see and learn the principles and practices, that he might apply them in the education of his young family as they came and as they grew

^a Dr Joseph von Hamel (1786–1861): a medical doctor who came to England with Alexander I in 1814 to study the history of Anglo-Russian relations. Hamel was close to William Allen, and was also very critical of Owen’s religious views. See *The Life of William Allen* (3 vols, 1846), vol. 1, p. 222. He also knew Henry Macnab.

^b Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid (1778–1859): financier and philanthropist; later joint treasurer of the British and Foreign Philanthropic Society; still later registered as a member of Branch A1 of Owen’s Rational Society, and leased his lands for the use of the Queenwood community. His son, Francis Goldsmid, founded the first Jewish Infant School in 1841.

up. He applied himself with great industry to his task, and his success was equal to his industry. After remaining sometime, he returned, and communicated the knowledge which he had seen in practice to Mrs now Lady Goldsmid,^a one of the best of wives and mothers; and together they trained and educated a family of eight, as nearly according to the system of New Lanark, as a conscientious adherence to the Jewish religion would admit. Often have I been an inmate on the most friendly terms in this family – many times for weeks together; but on no one occasion did I ever hear an unpleasant expression between the young persons composing the family, or between parents and children, – and this through a period of nearly, if not quite, half a century.

Among the many foreign Ambassadors who came was the *good* Baron Just,^b the Ambassador for so many years of the late King of Saxony^c to this and other countries. He was now about to terminate his official duties at our court, and to retire into private life, for which he told me he had at length obtained his sovereign's consent. Baron Just was a very interesting character, and a truly good and most unassuming philanthropist. He came to visit me, staid sometime, and took a deep interest in the investigation of my views and of their application to the population of New Lanark. He expressed his hearty approbation of all he witnessed, and said he should never forget what he had heard and seen. This was an expression which I so often heard from my visitors, that I received it as their impression for the time, and I remembered it only as the expression of the natural feelings of the parties at the moment. But not long after the Baron left me, he returned to Dresden, and to my great surprise I received from the King, with complimentary letters from the government, through the Prime Minister^d and Baron Just, a large gold medal of merit, with the impress of his Majesty; and for which I have always felt that I made a very inadequate reply. I was engaged in working with long foresight for the emancipation of the population of the world, and especially of the ill-directed and ill-placed working classes. I was jealous and fearful of too much courtly favour, as it might impede my future progress. I therefore never until long after made this royal gift public; knowing that my so doing would retard my progress in gaining the confidence of the men whom I intended to instruct and direct to their good at a future period.

My public proceedings had now attracted the attention of several members of our royal family. The Duke of York sent a messenger to request I would visit him. But I could never discover the object which his Royal Highness had in view; for our communication was very common place, and without interest to

^a Isobel Goldsmid (1788–1860), his cousin, whom he married in 1804, was the first daughter of Abraham Goldsmid. Their daughter, Anna Maria Goldsmid (1805–89), was also a philanthropist and friend of Owen's.

^b Wilhelm August Freiherr von Just (1752–1824): envoy 1815–23.

^c Frederick Augustus I (1750–1827): King of Saxony 1763–1827.

^d Count Detlev von Einsiedel (1773–1861).

me. Their Royal Highnesses the Duke of Kent and Sussex^a sometimes came to me while residing in Bedford Square, and once especially they came to see the cubes which I had invented to exhibit to the eye the proportionate amount of the different classes of society according to Mr Colquhoun's division of them in his 'Resources of the British Empire.'^b On this particular occasion the Royal Dukes brought some of their friends among the nobility to see these cubes, which, simple as they were, the public deemed a useful curiosity. I placed these cubes on the table in the order of their bulk, to explain them to the royal personages and the noblemen present. The cube representing the working class was put the lowest, and the series gradually ascended to the cube representing the Royal Family and Lords Spiritual and Temporal, with their families; and when I placed this last cube on the top, it appeared so strikingly insignificant, compared with all below, and especially when compared with the cubes representing the working and the pauper classes, that the Duke of Sussex impulsively pushed the elbow of his royal brother, saying – 'Edward, do you see that?' And the whole party for the moment seemed confused, feeling and seeing the real weakness of their class as to numbers, compared with all the others.

From that period I was often with one or other of these Royal Dukes, or more frequently with both together, at Kensington Palace. But more of these liberal royal brothers in my subsequent proceedings. I must now return to narrate other events connected with the infant school.

When James Buchanan went to London to organise and take charge of the first infant school, intended to be after the model of the original school at New Lanark, which had attracted and was attracting so much attention at home and abroad, I had to remain at the establishment much longer than usual, to instruct my young new infant-school-master in the advanced measures which I wished him to adopt, finding him to possess the right spirit, and much good talent for the task. He so rapidly took up my views, that in a short period the school and children were greatly improved and in advance of the state in which they were when James Buchanan left his situation.

But simple and weak-minded as poor Buchanan was, I had taken so much time and trouble to instruct him, and had so endeavoured continually to arouse his energies to perceive the importance of the task committed to him, that I fully expected he would in his new position organise and establish his new school after the model of the first, with which he had been made so familiar in its practice. But great were my surprise and horror when I first visited the second infant school, which was situated in Westminster, and was under the

^a Augustus, Duke of Sussex (1773–1843): a Whig, scholar, and Grand-Master of Freemasons in England.

^b Patrick Colquhoun, *Treatise on the Wealth, Power, and Resources of the British Empire* (1814), pp. 106–7.

auspices of great names and good men, but who themselves knew nothing of the requisite practice, and could not therefore give poor Buchanan the aid and support which he required, and without which it was now evident to me he could do little or nothing that was efficient. On entering the school, the first object which I saw was Mrs Buchanan,^a whom I had never seen in the New Lanark school, brandishing a whip, and terrifying the children with it! Buchanan I saw in another part of the room, apparently without authority or influence, and as much subject to his wife as the children. Upon my unexpected appearance an attempt was made to hide the whip, but the countenances of the children were so different from the open, frank, and happy expression of my children at New Lanark, that they at once told me their position, and the extent of ignorant management to which they had to submit. The room was something of the form of one of the New Lanark infant rooms, but the school was governed in the spirit and manner of the old irrational schools, with the difference only that the children were younger than those received in the old schools.

While this school was thus so grossly mis-managed by Mrs Buchanan and her husband, (though said to be after the model of New Lanark, to which it had no resemblance,) a person, afterwards well known as William Wilderspin,^b came frequently to see James Buchanan and his wife, and to see their operations in the school.

The Society of Friends, hearing so much of the New Lanark infant school from the public press, confirmed by their respected and known members, John Walker, Joseph Foster, and William Allen, – because desirous of having one under their own immediate patronage; and they erected a school in Spitalfields, and appointed William Wilderspin to be the master of it. Being informed of this third school, I went to see it, and on conversing with Wilderspin, I learned he had been often to see the Westminster school. I told him that was a very inferior model to copy; and finding him very desirous and willing to learn, and much more teachable than my first master, having much more talent and tact for the business, I gave him general and minute instruction how to act with the children, and to govern them without punishment, by affection and undeviating kindness. He seemed fully to appreciate this attention to him, and requested I would come as often as I could to instruct him and give him the benefit of my experience. I did so, and had great pleasure in thus teaching him, finding that no part of my instruction was disregarded, but that what I recommended was faithfully followed. And he became an apt disciple of the spirit and practice of the system, so far as the outward and material mode was concerned. But as a first step towards forming a rational character for a

^a The former Isabella Anderson (d. c. 1855).

^b Samuel Wilderspin (1792–1866): opened an infant school at Spitalfields in 1820; lectured on infant education at Edinburgh and Glasgow.

rational system of society, he had no powers of mind to comprehend it. And I did not attempt to advance his knowledge so as to unfit him to act under the patronage of his then supporters.

When Wilderspin had attained such proficiency in managing the infants as his imperfect acquirements admitted, he published a work explanatory of what he had accomplished, and recommended the system to the attention of the public.^a And in the first edition (for he afterwards published several editions,) he acknowledged his great obligation to me for my attention and the trouble I had taken to instruct him in a knowledge of the spirit and practice of the system. So far Wilderspin was honest and sincere; and had it not been for the so-called pious and the would-be over-righteous, he most likely would have continued so; for as long as I visited him there was no appearance to the contrary. Subsequent events, as we shall see, proved that he could not resist the temptations held out to him by the religious or those who professed to be so.

I have dwelt so long on the infant school established at New Lanark, because it was the first rational step ever carried into practice towards forming a rational character for the human race; and because of the many important subsequent measures to which it gave rise, and which will be narrated in their order of time. These which have been stated were but preliminary measures of little importance in comparison with those which succeeded; but they will serve to make the events which followed better understood.

I have now to narrate the public proceedings which by my means were set in action in 1817, and which aroused the attention of the civilised world, alarmed the governments, astounded the religious sects of every denomination, and created an excitement in all classes, such as seldom occurs, except in cases of revolution. It was the public announcement of a new and strange system of society, by an ordinarily educated cotton spinning manufacturer. It was a proceeding unprecedented in the annals of history, and its consequences have been fermenting to this day, and are continuing to ferment, throughout society, and will now advance without retrogression until they shall so regenerate the human mind, that it shall be 'born again,' and will entirely change society over the world, in spirit, principle, and practice, giving new surroundings to all nations, until not one stone of the present surroundings of society shall be left upon another. For in consequence of this change 'old things will entirely pass away and all will become new.'^b

The proceedings which first publicly announced to the world the rational and only true system of society for the human race, occupied the excited attention of the civilised world especially during the summer and autumn of

^a See Samuel Wilderspin, *The Importance of Educating the Infant Poor* (1824).

^b See 2 Corinthians 5:17.

1817, and to a considerable extent afterwards, until I left this country in 1824, to go to the United States to sow the seeds of it in that new fertile soil – new for material and mental growth, – the cradle of the future liberty of the human race – a liberty yet so little understood by the present population of the United States, as well as by that of *all the old states*. *Liberty* is a word continually used, but nowhere yet understood. For true liberty can exist only in a society based on a true knowledge of humanity, and constructed to be consistent with that foundation, in all its parts and as a whole. This will constitute the rational system of society, which is to give practically the greatest individual liberty that human nature can enjoy. Because it will of necessity make each one good, wise, and happy; and such only can ever be trusted with the full amount of individual liberty.

This was the announcement of that new state of existence upon earth, which, when understood and applied rationally to practice, will cordially unite all as one good and enlightened family, – will enable all rapidly to progress in knowledge and wisdom, and to enjoy without interruption the highest earthly happiness to which man can attain.

The proceedings connected with these first public meetings, which I held in the City of London Tavern, were minutely and accurately narrated in all the London morning and evening newspapers, published for general news at that period. And in this work the *Times* took the leading interest. And until the meeting at which I emphatically and solemnly, at the risk of all that men hold dear, even to life itself, denounced in the strongest terms all the religions as they were taught to the world, the *Times* was the warmest in my praise and in praise of the measures which I recommended, – often giving columns in the same paper to the development of the system as I gave it to the public – as may be seen by referring to its pages from the 30th July to the 10th September, 1817.^a

The attention of the public was first called to these extraordinary proceedings by the publication of my report to the committee for the relief of the manufacturing and labouring poor, his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury (Sutton) in the chair.^b This report being considered by that committee to be too large and important in a national view for their consideration, requested me to present it to the Committee of the House of Commons on the Poor Laws, then sitting with the foregone determination to rob the poor of their just and until then their legal rights, – that is the right to efficient relief when unable to work or to find employment, and that that relief should be given in accordance with the dictates of humanity for suffering poverty, and not in the cruel manner in which it is now scantily doled out to them in the present practice at many workhouses.

^a See *infra*, vol. 1, pp. 156–236.

^b For Owen's report, see Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 53–64.

The animus of this Committee of the House of Commons on the Poor Law might be deduced from the fact that I was known by all the members of the committee to possess at least as much practical knowledge of the working classes and of the causes of poverty among them, as any witness which they examined, and was now considered an authority on the subject. Yet, as I have already stated, this committee debated for two whole days, with closed doors, whether or not I should be examined by them; and at the end of the second day's debate it was decided by a small majority, after I had been invited to attend the committee for examination, that I should *not* be examined. The cause of this was evident. The majority of the members (who had made up their minds, influenced by the Malthusian irrational notions of over-population, to depress the poor out of existence, instead of finding them employment at decent living wages,) knew that my evidence would go far to defeat their object, by recommending my own remedy for poverty and crime, – namely, ‘a rational education, and reproductive employment by the nation for those who were unable to have themselves so instructed, or to find employment, and that they should be treated like human beings, and not as the outcasts of society.’

The proceedings connected with this announcement of a new system for governing the affairs of men, excited so much interest in the public mind, that in addition to their publication *in extenso* in every London morning and evening newspaper, I generally purchased *thirty thousand* additional copies, and had one copy sent to the minister of every parish in the kingdom, – one to every member of both houses of parliament, – one to each of the chief magistrates and bankers in each city and town, – and one to each of the leading persons in all classes.

But these were not sufficient to satisfy the general public with the proceedings connected with my public meetings, and with my announcement of a new system in principle, spirit, and practice, for the government of the human race. To meet this extraordinary excitement in the general public, I published three broad sheets, numbered one, two, and three, containing the details of these public proceedings, as published in the *Times* and in the other London morning and evening papers.^a Of these I published forty thousand copies; and such was the eagerness to procure them, that the forty thousand were called for in three days, and I was then constrained to stop so expensive a process, – for I found that these meetings, and giving them the extra publicity necessary for the great ultimate object which I had in contemplation, had already in two months required from me four thousand pounds – newspapers then costing 7d. and 8d. each.

Intending to pave the way to supersede the present false and wicked system,

^a See *New State of Society* (1817), nos 1–3.

as I had discovered it to be, by the true and good system for governing the human race and new-forming the character of all humanity, I knew it was useless to wage a little or a covert war against a system established through the proceedings of all past times in the minds and habits of the present generation, and that ultimate success could be anticipated only from an open front attack, taking the bull by the horns, and fairly pitting truth, so far denounced by all parties, against falsehood supported by the powers of this world – rightly declared to be the ‘powers of darkness’^a – for the populations of all nations had been, and even now are, governed by thick mental darkness.

I well knew that the man who should have the temerity to openly denounce this system of thick mental darkness, must anticipate the opposition of that power, by and through all its darkest means of acting. My mind, however, was made up for the contest, whatever might be its consequences.

I must now refer for particulars to these printed papers – one, two, and three, which are given in the appendix.^b Numbers one and two contain the documents which prepared the public for the first of these meetings, and which were published, as will be seen on reference, on the 30th of July and on the 9th and 10th of August, 1817, while they announced the meeting to be held on the 14th of the same month. These explanatory notices were widely published by the London newspapers, and created universal excitement; for before the hour of meeting on the 14th, the large room of the ‘City of London Tavern,’ in which all great public meetings were then held, was crammed to its utmost, the wide stairs crowded to excess, and hundreds waiting outside to gain admittance. And during the meeting many thousands came who were obliged to return, there being no chance of entrance for them. The meeting created the deepest interest, and was conducted with calm order. While I delivered the address there was a silence of riveted attention. But towards the conclusion of the meeting, the violent and most ignorant of the democracy, so-called, endeavoured to excite a tumult, and did create disorder. But those who came with a view to investigate and to attend a business rationally, soon put an end to it by moving an adjournment.

The next day the public were surprised to see the meeting reported in every London morning and evening newspaper, and my address accurately given in each. This was one of the occasions when I purchased upwards of thirty thousand newspapers in the day, and forwarded them, with my name printed on the corner of the wrapper. Each paper was also franked by some member of parliament; and these were franked by Lord Lascelles,^c the then most influential member of the House of Commons, who had previously so much assisted me in the preliminary measures to introduce my bill for the relief of children

^a See Colossians 1:13.

^b See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 65–92 (*infra*, vol. 1, pp. 156–82).

^c This was then a common abuse of parliamentary privilege.

and others employed in manufactories, mills, etc, and who was afterwards Earl of Harewood.

On this occasion I sent more extra newspapers than usual, and had the addresses previously prepared, so that they went in such numbers to the post office, that the secretary had to send an official minute to the Treasury, saying that Mr Owen had sent so many extra newspapers, that all the mail coaches of the kingdom had to be delayed twenty minutes beyond their regular time of leaving London. I was informed that the stoppage of the mails, and the publication of my address *in extenso* in every morning and evening paper of the day, (I believe of sixteen papers,) had seriously alarmed the government, which I by no means intended to do; for the government had been on all occasions most friendly to me, and I afterwards learned from the Dean of Westminster, who had been private secretary to Lord Liverpool for some time,^a that his lordship and many of his cabinet were converts to the New Views which I advocated.

On being informed of this alarm of the government, which was heightened by all the London and many of the provincial newspapers being loud in praising my measures, and giving great aid to the circulation of them among all classes, making me decidedly the most popular man of the day, – I asked Lord Liverpool for an interview, two days before the second meeting, which had been adjourned to the 21st of August to give all parties sufficient time to take their measures in opposition to it. The interview was immediately appointed for twelve o'clock the next day at his Lordship's private house. The door was opened before I had time to ring the bell, and I was shown at once into the apartment of the private secretary, who was then Mr Peel, afterwards the talented and celebrated prime minister, – the second Sir Robert Peel, – who on my entering arose, and said with great deference in his manner, 'My Lord Liverpool will see you immediately,' – and then remained standing while I was seated for two or three minutes, when Lord Liverpool came hastily from his private room adjoining, to request me to walk in.

I mention these particulars here to show the effect which my extraordinary popularity produced on the government; and it was equally paramount with the population of all classes.

Lord Liverpool gave me a seat, and with considerable diffidence and agitation in his manner, said – 'Mr Owen, what is your wish?' – in a tone of voice and with an expression of countenance as much as to say, – 'your wishes shall be gratified.' And I believe the government would have given me any place or station, or almost anything I should ask; for it was evident that they felt they were at my mercy. Such had been the influence of surrounding circumstances, one succeeding another, and over which I had had but little control; and I was

^a Presumably John Ireland (1761–1842), who was chaplain to Liverpool from about 1793. Robert Willimott (1784–1834) was Liverpool's private secretary.

as much surprised by these new and strange events and proceedings as the government and the people. But this popularity produced a different effect upon me than to cause me to think of any private advantage or worldly consideration. I had pondered well after the first meeting, what course to pursue to gain ultimately the great object which it was indelibly impressed on my mind that I must endeavour against all hazards to attain, – that is, the change of a false, wicked, and most cruel system of society, creating misery to all, – for the true, just, merciful, and good system of society, that will ultimately secure the permanent progress in knowledge and wisdom and the unceasing happiness and rational enjoyment of all.

I knew that the population of the world, in spirit, principle, and practice, was unprepared for the change which I foresaw must be the ultimate destiny of the human race. I had calmly considered the obstacles to be overcome, to give a new mind and new habits to all of human kind. I had discovered that the great obstacle to all substantial and lasting progress and improvement among men, was the Religions of the nations of the earth, and that unless this difficulty could be overcome, mankind must remain in perpetual bondage to the most gross and childish ignorance – an ignorance destructive of all the rational faculties of humanity.

I knew the deep-seated prejudices of all people in favour of their respective religions, and that millions were prepared to die rather than to abandon them. But I knew also that until they could be made to abandon them, for a consistent practical religion, based on different ideas of the Great Creating Power of the Universe, – man could not be made to attain to the rank of a reasonable, rational, and happy being.

After the first meeting, several of the religious papers were loud in calling upon me to declare my views of religion, and in their demands to know what religion I professed. Under all these considerations I communed with myself what course I should pursue at the adjourned meeting, and I had decided upon that course before this interview with the prime minister. I therefore replied to his Lordship's question, that all I desired was, that his Lordship and his cabinet would allow their names to be upon the committee of investigation which I should propose at the meeting the next day, with an equal number of the leading members of the opposition in both houses, if my proposed resolutions should be carried.

On my saying this, I never saw any one so immediately relieved from an apparent great anxiety, – and his Lordship replied in the most confiding manner, 'Mr Owen, you have full liberty to make any use of our names you desire and which you may think useful to your views, short of implicating us as a government,' I thanked his Lordship, who came with me into the private secretary's apartment, when Mr Peel again rose and stood until I left Lord Liverpool, who at my departure was a very different man from what he appeared when the interview commenced.

But what was the course which I had determined to pursue at the adjourned meeting, which now excited the greatest interest throughout the metropolis and the country? What I intended to say was too important to be left to the inaccuracy of reporters at a public meeting; and all the conductors of the daily morning and evening papers had applied to me for copies of what I intended to say in my address the next day. In order that no one might have a preference over the others, I told them that if they would come to me when my address should be about half delivered, they should be supplied with copies of the whole address. I had therefore sixteen copies made of the address as I intended to deliver it, having a blank space left in them by the copiers, for me afterwards to fill up before I gave them to the parties applying for them at the meeting, and these I filled in the morning before going to the meeting. I gave no one the least idea of what my intentions were, because I knew that no one was then prepared to comprehend my motives, views, and conduct, and that every one would, with their mind and feelings, have strongly advised a different mode of proceedings.

Knowing that what I should say at the meeting would be published the next day in every London morning and evening newspaper, that the public mind was highly excited upon the subject, and that what should be said by me would be widely circulated over the civilised world; – and knowing also that unless a death-blow could be given to all the existing false religions of the world, there could be no hope for man's liberation from the bondage of ignorance, disunion, and misery; – and feeling that in my then position I was the only individual living who had the slightest chance to accomplish such a task, – I resolved to dare the deed, knowing that it was at that period at the hazard of life only that it could be done; and my determination was, at a particular part of my address, to denounce and reject all the religions of the world.

When I went to this meeting, ever-to-be remembered in the annals of history, no one except myself had any notion of what I intended to do and to say in the part of the address alluded to. The public mind of the metropolis on the morning previous to the commencement of the meeting was in a most excited state. The then friends of my views, so far as I had disclosed them, came in continually increasing numbers, – the great majority of these being of the best disposed among the upper classes in church and state, and of the upper portion of the middle classes, who were sincerely desirous to improve the condition of the poor and working classes, if it could be done in order, in peace, and without a revolution of violence.

At this period I had had no public intercourse with the operatives and working classes in any part of the two Islands, – not even in the metropolis. They were at this time strangers to me and to all my views and future intentions. I was at all periods of my progress, from my earliest knowledge and employment of them, their true friend. While their democratic and much mistaken leaders taught them that I was their enemy, a friend to all in

authority, and that I desired to make slaves of them in these villages of unity and mutual co-operation.^a

On the other hand, my opponents had been most industrious in marshaling their forces, and they were led to the meeting by the popular orators of the day, and these were encouraged in their opposition by the leading active members of the then popular school of modern political economy.^b

This meeting was densely crowded, although held at noon, and again hundreds and thousands had to be disappointed who could not gain admittance, and many waited until five o'clock before any moved to allow of their entrance, and even afterwards, until its dismissal at seven, it remained crowded; for as soon as any retired, others who were waiting immediately occupied their places.

Knowing what I intended to do, I went alone, that no one might be implicated in my proceedings. When I went to this meeting I was on the morning of that day by far the most popular individual in the civilised world, and possessed the most influence with a majority of the leading members of the British cabinet and government. I went to the meeting with the determination by one sentence to destroy that popularity, but by its destruction to lay the axe to the root of all false religions, and thus to prepare the population of the world for the reign of charity in accordance with the natural laws of humanity, – or, in other words, in accordance with all facts and common sense or consistent reason.

I commenced my address, and continued amidst much applause and cheering from the friends of the cause which I advocated, until I approached that part in which I denounced all the religions of the world as now taught; when by my manner I prepared the audience for some extraordinary proceeding. And when in a firm voice I said – ‘A more important question has never been put to the sons of men – Who can answer it? Who dares answer it? but with his life in his hand – a ready and willing victim of truth, and to the emancipation of the world from its long bondage of error, crime and misery? Behold that victim! On this day! in this hour! even now! shall those bonds be burst asunder, never more to re-unite while the world lasts! What the consequences of this daring deed shall be to myself I am as indifferent about, as whether it shall rain or be fair to-morrow! Whatever may be the consequences, I will now perform my duty to you and to the world. And should it be the last act of my life, I shall be well content, and shall know that I have lived for an important purpose. Then, my friends! I tell you, that hitherto you have been prevented from knowing what happiness really is, solely in consequence of the errors – gross errors. –’

^a Leading the attack on Owen here were Henry Hunt, W. T. Sherwin, Robert Wedderburn and William Cobbett.

^b The leading political economist to oppose Owen at the 1817 meetings was Major Robert Torrens.

‘The meeting here became excited to the highest pitch of expectation as to what was to follow; and a breathless silence prevailed, so that not the slightest sound could be heard. I made a slight pause, and, as my friends afterwards told me, added a great increase of strength of feeling and dignity to my manner, of which at the time I was wholly unconscious, and in that state of mind I finished the sentence, as stated in paper No. 3, (see report of this address, in the appendix,)^a and I then again paused for some seconds, to observe the effects of this unexpected and unheard-of declaration and denouncement of all existing religions, in one of the most numerous public meetings of all classes ever held in the British metropolis under cover and at mid-day.

My own expectations were, that such a daring denouncement in opposition to the deepest prejudices of every creed, would call down upon me the vengeance of the bigot and superstitious, and that I should be torn to pieces in the meeting. But great was my astonishment at what followed. A pause ensued, of the most profound silence, but of noiseless agitation in the minds of all, – none apparently knowing what to do or how to express themselves. All seemed thunderstruck and confounded. My friends were taken by surprise, and were shocked at my temerity, and feared for the result. Those who came with the strongest determination to oppose me, had, as they afterwards stated to me, their minds changed as it were by some electric shock, and the utmost mental confusion seemed to pervade the meeting, none venturing to express their feelings; and had I not purposely paused and waited some demonstration from the audience, I might have continued my address in the astonished silence which I had produced. But when I did not proceed, and while I evidently waited for some expression of the feeling of the audience, after the long pause in silence, about half-a-dozen clergymen, who had attentively listened to all I had said, deemed it incumbent upon them on account of their profession to attempt to lead the meeting by a few low hisses. But these, to my great astonishment, were instantly rebutted by the most heartfelt applause from the whole of the meeting, with the exception stated, that I ever witnessed, before or since, as a public demonstration of feeling.

I then said to the friends near me – ‘the victory is gained. Truth openly stated is omnipotent.’^b

I then proceeded, and finished my address, which was again loudly cheered.

^a See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 108–18 (*infra*, vol. 1, pp. 201–10).

^b Thomas Rowcroft (d. 1824), Tory candidate for Parliament in the 1818 elections, a provision merchant of Lombard Street (resident in Doughty Street) was involved in a variety of London philanthropic enterprises, such as the Fish Association, established in 1813 to promote the consumption of fish among the poor. He was accidentally killed by Bolivar’s army while British consul in Peru. ‘Carter’ was the solicitor William George Carter (1787–1861), of Clement’s Inn, also active in this organisation. He had an interest in Biblical controversy, and later published a pamphlet on the Flood (*Remarks on Dr. Buckland’s View of the Mosaic Creation*, 1837). Both men were later members of the British and Foreign Philanthropic Society.

A long debate followed, by those who desired to defeat my proposed resolution; but it was evident that the great majority of the meeting who had been present from its commencement desired the resolution to be carried, for the appointment of a committee to investigate my plans for the relief of the poor.

My opponents seeing this, now sent out their emissaries to bring in numbers to fill the places of those gradually retiring, and the political economists, whose leaders were there, determined to speak against time, and to keep the meeting open until the workpeople could be brought, when coming from their work at seven o'clock, to vote without knowledge of what had been said or done. By this time the respectable part of the audience had been tired out, or had left and gone to their dinner. I had accomplished my object, and was now indifferent what became of the resolution, knowing that for a considerable time I had destroyed my popularity with those who had been taught to believe and not to *think*, and these were legion. When the vote was taken, there was great confusion, for much excitement had been created by those who were opposed to giving real and permanent relief to the poor and working classes. Even at the conclusion the majority were decidedly in my favour; – but, to terminate the meeting peaceably, I decided that the resolution was negatived, and then terminated the meeting.^a

I have from that day to this considered that day the most important of my life for the public: – the day on which bigotry, superstition, and all false religions, received their death blow. For from that day to this they have been gradually losing their strength and power, and dying their natural death in all advanced minds over the world, and soon they will cease to make the human race irrational, divided, and wicked, and to retain them in ignorance of God or nature, of themselves, and of the road to wisdom and happiness.

The deed was done. Truth had escaped, as it were by a miracle, from the hitherto never unfixed grasp of the false religions of the nations of the earth. And it was sent on the wings of the press to the people of all lands, in such manner as ultimately to destroy all falsehood, bigotry, superstition, disunion, ignorance, crime, and misery, and to insure a continued progress without retrogression of knowledge, union, wisdom, and happiness.

Few, if any, had the slightest idea of the effects which these proceedings were to produce over the public mind of the world. Their influence commenced immediately, has continually increased from that day to this, and will continue to increase until the old system of the world shall cease from the earth, and truth, charity, and wisdom, shall govern the human race to the end of time.

In all my travels subsequently into foreign countries, these meetings had prepared for me a kind and reverential reception among the highest and most advanced minds with whom I came into communication. In Jamaica, – St

^a Nonetheless Owen's proposals were in fact rejected by a vote at the end of the meeting.

Domingo, – Mexico, – the United States, – and the Continent of Europe, – they were a perpetual passport of introduction to the most distinguished for talent and station, and prepared a reception for me everywhere, which I had not anticipated, being unconscious at the time of the effects of their influence upon these parties whom I had been trained and educated by my previous antecedents to think so very much my superiors. It was only after a long experience of this kind of reception from the highest in rank, station, and elevation of mind, that I became fully conscious of the undying effects which they had produced. These continued results tended to confirm me in the irresistible power of truth, when unmixed with error and declared openly without fear of man. But at home the old adage was confirmed, that ‘a prophet has no honour in his own country.’^a

From this eventful day to the world, the religious, and party underlings were set to work to counteract by all their usual means these daring proceedings on the part of a mere manufacturer of cotton. It was true that I was deemed, and was often styled about this period, the prince of cotton-spinners. But what of that? I was a mere cotton-spinner; – a man of trade; – one whose business was to endeavour to buy cheap and sell dear, and to take, according to mercantile notions, every ‘fair’ advantage of the ignorance and weakness of my fellow-traders. The machinations, secret and open, of the religious sects in our country, now commenced, and they continued to increase until these parties found they had done all they could against my name and influence. And now they are surprised that all they have said and done has had so little permanent effect upon the reflecting and superior members of society.

My political opponents were also not idle in their opposition. But their proceedings were frank and open, and never unkind or unpleasantly hostile. They were however numerous and powerful, for they included all who thought the union of the human race in family commonwealths impracticable, and who preferred the individual system, whether the social was or was not practicable.

But my friends were also alarmed, and many of them terrified, at what they called my daring temerity, in direct opposition to the deepest impressions made on the minds and habits of so large a portion of the population of all countries; and some were ever afterwards afraid of my society, because of the religious prejudices which were arising against me.

As a proof of the impression which my declaration at the last meeting against all the religions of the world had made on the British public, my friend Henry Brougham, since known as Lord Brougham, and Lord Chancellor of England, saw me the day after the meeting walking in the streets of the metropolis, and came to me, saying – ‘How the devil, Owen, could you say what you did yesterday at your public meeting! If any of us’ (meaning the then

^a See for example Mark 6:4.

so-called Liberal party in the House of Commons,) 'had said half as much, we should have been burned alive, – and here are you quietly walking as if nothing had occurred!'

It is true that at that time no other individual could have ventured upon this open attack upon all that most men hold so dear, except at the risk of character, fortune, and life; and when I went to the meeting I felt uncertain whether I should return alive. It was my antecedents alone which saved me, and my enthusiasm in the cause which I had espoused alone sustained me through the trying crisis, and gave me the victory over the prejudices of the human race. But I never felt more strongly than at this period, that none of the power which carried me through these measures with the success which attended them was of my own creating, and that not the least merit was in any way due to me.

On calmly recurring to these three addresses, it is now evident to me, through the experience which time has given, that the knowledge of the good and superior Spirit which directed and controlled all my public proceedings, was at the period when they occurred far in advance of the age; but that these proceedings were then necessary to arouse society from its then lethargic state of insanity, inflicted upon all by the repulsive and absurd religions of the world, and to prepare its population gradually to overcome the sevenfold bandage of prejudice, with which the antecedents of man's existence upon the earth had enveloped his rational faculties and reasoning powers. My public proceedings at this period (1817,) were considered to be several hundreds, some said thousands of years in advance of that period; and they were at least fifty years in advance; for it is only now, with all my incessant public teaching, that these inexpressibly important truths to the human race begin to be understood by the most advanced minds in any part of the world. How little even yet do the unreflecting portion of our race (and this is more than ninety-nine in every hundred,) know of the immense – of the incalculable difference for human progress and happiness between the repulsive or individual system for governing the affairs of men and forming their character, and the attractive or united system! It is the difference between heaven and hell upon the earth. The one has amply succeeded in producing the latter; – the other, when adopted in practice in its entirety and full purity, will in high perfection produce the former; and heaven will universally reign over the earth to the end of time. But it was necessary that all the various sufferings of hell should be experienced in time, and narrated for eternity, in order that the succeeding everlasting joys of heaven might be increased and heightened by the contrast. And thus recorded, will hell, or the sufferings of the past period of our race, be held in eternal memory, to give the highest practical enjoyment to all possessing immortal life. And this is the everlasting good which evil has been destined to produce; for without this hell, heaven could not be comprehended. And thus will arise the greatest good out of the greatest evil; and the Supreme Power of

Creation will be justified to the universe. My earliest thoughtful impressions were, and they have been published in some of my early writings, that the evils experienced on earth were to serve as a foil or contrast to increase the happiness of heaven.

The impression made on the foreign mind by the wide circulation of the new world of ideas for practice, so openly advocated by me in these ever-to-be-remembered meetings, was such as to bring many foreigners to see me and the now far-famed New Lanark schools and establishment. Among the first was Julian de Paris,^a at that period well known in France; and remembered by me from his attentions whenever I afterwards visited Paris, and also from a little incident which occurred on his first coming into the village. On that occasion he enquired for me at the entrance of the works, in which I was engaged, explaining the system and showing the practice to several distinguished strangers; and when we were passing from one part of the works to another, he came to me and requested to know where he could find my father, as he was told in the lodge he was in the mills or schools. I suppose I must then have appeared in his eyes young for my years; for when I jocularly told him that I and my father were one, he seemed lost for a moment, and much confused. But he said – ‘Are you indeed the Mr Owen who held those extraordinary public meetings in London?’ I assured him it was none other; and it was some time before he recovered from his surprise and regained his self-possession.

Soon after this, came Professor Pictet,^b the celebrated *savant* of Geneva, one of the best and most learned men of his age, and who for his many superior qualities will be long remembered in Switzerland, especially at Geneva, and also in Paris, in which city he was a prominent official character for many years. He came to invite me to Paris, and to Switzerland and the continent generally; assuring me of a kind and warm reception from the first men of the day in France, Switzerland, and Germany. He said that his particular friend Cuvier,^c the celebrated French naturalist, and Secretary to the French Academy in Paris, would come over and meet us in London, and we could return with him to Paris. He remained some time with me, and I was greatly pleased with him, and he appeared to be, as he said he was, highly gratified with his visit; taking deep interest in the school and in the establishment generally; but especially in the school; for he had been for four years one of the four Commissioners of Education for France, as well as having been ten years a Tribune of the same country.

^a Marc-Antoine Jullien (1775–1848), whose *nom de plume* was Jullien de Paris, was a Babouvist and French communitarian social reformer active into the 1840s, and leading French Owenite. See *The Crisis*, vol. 3, no. 8 (19 October 1833), p. 62, and *New Moral World*, vol. 8, no. 10 (5 September 1840), p. 155. He visited New Lanark in 1822, and wrote the ‘Notice Sur La Colonie Industrielle de New-Lanark en Écosse, fondé par M. Robert Owen’, *Revue Encyclopédique*, 18 (1823), pp. 5–23. (He edited the journal at the time.)

^b Marc-Auguste Pictet-Turretini (1752–1825): physician and naturalist.

^c Georges Cuvier (1769–1832): French zoologist and statesman.

We went together to London, where I transacted much business with my professed disciples, previous to my intended visit to the continent, that they might promote my 'New Views' in my absence.

I had informed him that I knew nothing of the French or of any other language than my own. He said that would make no difference. He would be my constant companion and interpreter on my journey. And he knew personally almost all the leading and distinguished men on the continent.

I however took letters of introduction from the French and other foreign ministers, and from leading personages; and his Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, on being informed by me that I was going to Paris, said he would give me an introduction to his friend the Duke of Orleans, (afterwards King Louis Philippe,)^a if I desired to see and converse with him, and which letter I received with pleasure. At the time appointed M. Cuvier arrived, with Madame Cuvier and her daughter, – for Madame had been previously married, and was a widow with this one daughter when she was married to M. Cuvier.^b

At this period it was intended to make this now most celebrated *savant* a minister of state, and he came to England with a view to make himself acquainted with our laws and mode of governing. He appeared to be soon satisfied, for he did not remain long in England. A French frigate was sent to bring him and his party to France. M. Cuvier, his lady and daughter, with Professor Pictet and myself, made up the whole of the party, and after landing at Calais, we travelled in the same carriage to Paris, where we arrived and settled ourselves to remain some weeks.

I was now immediately introduced into the midst of the highest learned political men and women of France and other countries then in Paris.

My first visit was to the Duke of Orleans, to whom the Duke of Kent's letter gave me a ready and welcome introduction. The Duke received me more as a friend than as a stranger, commencing by expressing his high regard and friendship for his Royal Highness of Kent and Strathern, and then entering familiarly into a narrative, confidential at that period, of the delicate position which he held in relation to the other and then reigning branch of the Bourbon family.

At this period the political state of parties in France was peculiar. The Bourbons reigned by the external powers of Europe, but France was Buonapartist, and a truce appeared to have taken place between the parties, for at the time of my visit the leading men of both were upon friendly terms.^c But the Duke said – 'The reigning family are jealous of me. They are afraid of my liberal

^a Louis-Philippe, Duc d'Orléans (1773–1850): King of France 1830–48.

^b Mme de Bracq, née Farina, had a daughter from a previous marriage when Cuvier married her in 1803.

^c The reigning monarch was Louis XVIII (1755–1824), King of France 1814–24. For his sympathy with the liberal opposition, Louis-Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, went into exile at Twickenham from 1815–17.

principles. I am watched, and I feel it necessary to be guarded in my private and public conduct. I therefore live very quietly, and take no active part in any of the movements of the day. But I observe all that takes place, and the day may come when I may have more liberty to act according to my views of the necessities of the times.' He was at this time a thoughtful and watchful character, and rather timid than otherwise. My views were too well known, he said, to allow him openly to appear to countenance me; and all my movements would be known whilst in France. My friend and companion Professor Pictet was not then with me, for the Duke spoke English well and most fluently, and our interview was most private. It continued for upwards of an hour; but afterwards I had no personal communication with him during my then stay in Paris.

The next day the Professor proposed that we should visit the Prime Minister,^a to whom I was introduced by the Professor, and I presented my letter from the French Ambassador in London.^b We were cordially received, and had a long and by degrees a frank and friendly interview, – the Minister expressing his high admiration of my practical measures at New Lanark, of which he had heard many accounts from several parties who had witnessed them, all of whom were lavish in their praises of what they had seen. And he said he was deeply interested as a statesman in my late public proceedings in London, which, he added, were he was sure too profound and too advanced for immediate adoption. But he said they were true, and would be, after many conflicts, ultimately universally adopted and would become the practice of the world. The Minister seemed much disinclined to terminate the interview, which continued an unusual length of time, and when we departed he came with us through three apartments *en suite* connected with his own most private reception room. Not being yet initiated in the customs and forms of courts and courtiers, I thought nothing of this, but supposed it to be of common occurrence; but upon leaving the house, the Professor said 'I have never seen that done before. I have been, during fourteen years residence in France, very often with the chief Minister, and frequently with persons of distinction. On leaving, the Ministers come to their own door, and take leave. When they deem it necessary to pay more than usual attention, they come through the first room and then take leave. If they intend to the visitor much respect, they come through the two rooms, and then take formal leave. But I never before saw the Minister accompany his visitors through the three apartments, and attend to them as he did to us on this occasion.' And in this manner was the inexperienced cotton-spinner initiated into the so-called great ways of the great world.

I was next introduced by my friends Cuvier and Pictet to La Place,^c the wide

^a Jean Dessalles (1767–1828).

^b René-Eustache, the Marquis d'Osmond (1751–1838): Ambassador 1815–19.

^c Pierre-Simon La Place (1749–1827): French mathematician, astronomer and physicist.

world known astronomer. And then to Alexander Von Humboldt, who then was in Paris pursuing his scientific investigations. And we four – La Place, Cuvier, Pictet, and myself, afterwards often met at the house of one or other of the two first, to converse freely upon public affairs interesting to the population of all countries. La Place and Cuvier were at the head of their respective sciences. Professor Pictet was at the head of the *savants* of Europe. And I was now considered by these men as the advanced mind in a practical knowledge of human nature and the science of society. It was to me at first most surprising to discover, in La Place and Cuvier especially, but less so in Pictet, their childish simplicity on all subjects relative to human nature and to the science of society. They sought my society eagerly, to question me on these subjects, apparently quite new to their study, they having so long had their minds fixed on their own respective sciences, that they had never entered the field of investigation on these subjects, so familiar to me. While I had been as far behind in a knowledge of their subjects, so familiar to them, and which they themselves have extended, to the gratification of the learned world. They seemed to have lived to this period in worlds of their own. For they appeared to be devoid, out of their own made world, of a knowledge of the common every day world. It was a common report at this time that Professor Cuvier had been on his return from London immediately made one of the ministers of state; but that from some cause or other he remained minister for one day only.^a Probably, if this was true, it was because governing, especially at that period, was so foreign and opposed to his own studies and associations of ideas. M. Alexander Humboldt was less frequently one of our *coterie*; but I never met him without a strong liking and attraction for the quiet unobtrusive simplicity of his manner, and his willingness to impart the valuable knowledge which he possessed without any appearance of ostentation, a knowledge which he had with so much industry so well acquired. He always seemed to me to be a full true man, without any of the ordinary failings of humanity. And I have never met him since without these impressions of his character being more strongly confirmed.

Professor Pictet seemed to be much respected by all parties, and he was on friendly terms with the leaders of the more liberal views, and especially with those men who had survived and had passed with credit through the revolution, and who were generally respected and esteemed among the liberal statesmen of the day.

Some of these names I especially remember. One was Count de Boissy d'Anglas,^b who, upon my being introduced to him, received me, to my no little surprise, with open arms and a salute on each cheek, from a rougher chin

^a Pictet was briefly made minister at the restoration of the republic of Geneva, on 31 December 1813.

^b Françoise Antoine, Count de Boissy d'Anglas (1756–1826): politician and writer.

than I had ever so encountered, – for he was the first man from whom I received such a salute. I found he was a warm and ardent disciple of mine, – open, frank, and honest in the avowal of his principles, and in his adherence to rational liberty.

Another was Camille Jourdain,^a so well known through all stages of the revolution. He appeared (agreeing with Professor Pictet's statement of him, and they had been long known to each other,) to have been one of the superior men engaged in that extraordinary struggle for liberty, a thing so little understood by all the contending parties, and less practised by them when in power. There were, throughout this dreadful contest, no indications of a knowledge of human nature, of charity for humanity, or of wisdom in conduct. It was severe general suffering, to produce small results.

A third on my memory was the Duke de la Rochefoucault,^b who had from patriotic motives established on his estate in the country, what at that time in France was considered a large cotton spinning manufactory. He wished me to see it, and took me with him into the country. I examined the whole business as then carried on at the Duke's risk and with his capital. I found by this investigation, that I was manufacturing the same numbers or fineness of yarn or thread, but of much better quality, at the New Lanark establishment in Scotland, at fourpence per pound cheaper than the Duke's. One penny per pound upon the annual produce at that time in New Lanark, was £8,000 sterling – which sum multiplied by four, gives a gain upon the same quantity, over the Duke's, of thirty-two thousand pounds per year. Evidently therefore the Duke required a high duty on English (British,) cottons to enable him, and all similarly situated, to proceed. But it was equally evident that the French people had to pay this duty to their own manufacturers, to enable them to continue their works.

I had what was then called the honour of a sitting in the celebrated French Academy, of which my constant friend, Cuvier, was secretary.

And thus for six weeks did the Professor and myself luxuriate amidst the *élite* of the most distinguished men then in Paris; and I lost no opportunity of obtaining the best thoughts of these superior characters, and here I discovered for the first time one advantage from not knowing any other than my native language.

I had continually the highly learned and gifted Professor Pictet for my companion and interpreter, well known to all the foremost men in France, from his long official residence in it, and, liberal as he was, so much respected for his attainments and high character, that he was the only person allowed by Napoleon to import monthly a box of English publications unopened and duty

^a Camille Jordan (1771–1821): Lyonnais deputy during the revolution.

^b François-Alexandre-Frédéric, duc de la Rochefoucauld (1747–1827): French educator and social reformer.

free. With such a friend, guide, and interpreter, our visits were always to men and women of high standing for some eminent qualities, and our conversations were therefore always on the investigation of some important knowledge, worth the trouble and time of interpreting. And, from one cause or another, I was made during this period, through the Professor's means and others, the lion of Paris. Knowing the defects of early education, the little instruction I had received from others, the little I really knew of the mind, habits, and manners of the great world, and being then and for a long time afterwards unconscious of the deep and wide-spread impressions which had been made by my publications on the formation of character, my practical measures so long pursued at New Lanark, and latterly my public meetings and proceedings in London, – I was continually at a loss to account for the extraordinary deference and attention which was paid to me by all these parties. But so it was.

After this effective sojourn of six weeks in Paris under these favourable circumstances, adding greatly to my experience of the learned and great world, the Professor and myself, joined before setting out by my sisters-in-law, proceeded towards the Professor's native country and his home in Geneva. Our journey was one of every day pleasure. In the course of it two events occurred to add to my experience, and which made an impression on my memory, although they were of a light nature.

On crossing the Jura, the weather being warm and pleasant, we walked much to enjoy the pure air and grand scenery before and around us, and the carriage slowly followed us at some distance. The Professor and myself were cosily engaged in some interesting discussion, walking slowly, my sisters walking on at some distance in advance of us. They were dressed in the English fashion of the time, and they passed an ordinary house, at which were standing at the door three or four young women well dressed in their fashion. We were so much behind, and being dressed as travellers usually were who passed that way, we did not appear to these natives to belong to the ladies who had just passed by them, and they were making merry with the strange dresses and appearance of the strangers, and the Professor heard them say – 'Did you ever see such frightful dresses? How could people think of wearing them!' I think my sisters on that occasion wore riding habits and hats, expecting to ride some part of the day on mules. We passed on, and soon joined our advanced party, and the first thing my sisters said was – 'Did you ever see such frights? How could any people so disfigure themselves?' My sisters-in-law were at this time young travellers in a foreign country, and had not yet been in Switzerland, to see, to them, the still greater variety of strange costumes. 'Yes', I replied, 'we saw them, and heard their strongly expressed surprise at the frights who had just passed, and they making merry with the strange figures you had made yourselves.' This was a lesson which they never afterwards forgot.

Shortly after this occurrence, and when we had walked until we had made ourselves very warm, we had to cross a cold clear running stream, at which the

Professor took out a pocket handkerchief, dipped it in the stream, and while it was saturated with water, put one corner of it into his mouth and then threw it over his fine bald head. I exclaimed – ‘Professor! what are you doing? You will give yourself a death cold!’ He smiled, and said, ‘I am experienced in these matters. Although very cold water is dangerous taken internally when thus heated, it is most refreshing when applied on the outside and on the head as you now see, and it carries off the extra heat in the most agreeable manner.’ And so I discovered it was in his case; for at every stream we passed he repeated the same operation, and appeared indeed to be greatly relieved by it from the effects of heat during the remainder of the day’s journey.

Our first view of Monc Blanc before we entered Switzerland made a deep and lasting impression upon those of the party who had not before seen it. The atmosphere was most favourable for seeing it to the greatest advantage in its most magnificent beauty, with tints as various as the rainbow. The Professor, who had passed and re-passed the point of view very often, said he had never seen it to greater advantage. We therefore entered this country of endless magnificent and beautiful scenery, with favorable prepossessions, and were during our stay never disappointed.

On our arrival at Geneva we found that the Professor had arranged to make everything most convenient for our comfort. He had residing with him his daughter, Madame Prevost,^a a charming highly gifted woman, just such as it was natural to suppose that the beloved daughter of the Professor, brought up under his immediate tuition, would be. I say beloved, – because it was delightful to witness the affection which was most evident in every look and word between them.

I was gradually introduced to all the *elite* in and around Geneva. The brother of the Professor was the celebrated statesman of Geneva,^b who negotiated on the part of Switzerland, and obtained advantages and privileges which were deemed important, with the congress of sovereigns met in 1818 at Aix-la-Chapelle.^c Among many others, I was also introduced during this visit to Madame Neckar,^d the sister of Madame de Stael,^e the celebrated opponent of Napoleon I. Madame Neckar was the widow of M Neckar, the well-known minister in France,^f and she was esteemed superior in many respects to her better known sister. She was on the most friendly terms with the Professor’s

^a Pictet’s daughter Albertine married Jean-Gaspard Prévost (1777–1851), a Swiss civil servant.

^b Professor Charles Pictet de Rochemont (1755–1824): statesman and diplomat.

^c At the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818, the European great powers met to settle French affairs after Napoleon’s defeat.

^d Probably Albertine-Adrienne Necker de Saussure (1766–1841), Madame de Stael’s cousin, since she had no sister.

^e Anne-Louise-Germaine Necker, Baronne de Stael-Holstein (1766–1817): French-Swiss writer and political propagandist.

^f Jacques Necker (1732–1804): finance minister under Louis XVI.

family, was often of our party, and we as frequently with her, for her society was always interesting and highly instructive and suggestive.

The Professor had made my 'New Views of Society' very popular at Geneva, and they were always the favourite topic of conversation with Madame Neckar and the Professor's daughter, who were never tired of pursuing it through all its ramifications, to its beautiful results, ending in the practice of the Millennium over the Earth, and the cordial union of the race as one superior and highly enlightened family.

At this time Captain Hall,^a the well-known visitor to Napoleon at St Helena, arrived at Geneva, full of the, to him, important event of twenty minutes conversation with so great a personage. He had made a narrative of this visit, so minute, and worked up with so much dramatic effect, that upon every occasion when we met him in different parties he occupied about two hours in giving the details, and as they were given each time pretty much in the same order, and often in the same words and phrases, the two ladies mentioned were after they had once heard it especially annoyed. The Captain's mind was one of detail, and he evidently attached the greatest importance to this, to him, wonderful event. While the minds of these ladies were in search of principles which could be applied in practice to permanently benefit humanity.

I could not help observing on these occasions how little a mind of detail comprehends the mind formed and accustomed to generalization. The first comprehends little of the associations of ideas in the mind of the latter; while the latter often under-values the utility in practice of the first. In many cases where these qualities are unmixed, one being wholly accustomed to details, and the other to generalise, the parties cannot understand each other. In this case Captain Hall had no interest in those subjects which were thought to be so important by some of his impatient listeners.

I now took my sisters-in-law to see the most prominent scenes of nature's beauty in these Cantons, so full of such scenes, and which have been so often described as to be familiar to every reader and continental traveller. While on this excursion, stopping at a hotel about midway up the shore of the lake of Geneva, we were met by my old and greatly respected friend Mr Joseph Strutt of Derby, with his two daughters.^b Thus meeting, we agreed to prolong our stay there another day beyond our previous intention. I had promised a morning visit the next day to Mademoiselle de Stael,^c the daughter of the celebrated authoress, and afterwards the wife of the Duke ———. We therefore arranged to dine on my return at three o'clock, and I left my sisters and our friend to enjoy themselves in that beautiful situation in their own way, while I went

^a Basil Hall (1788–1844): Royal Navy Captain who visited Napoleon at St Helena.

^b Elizabeth Strutt (1793–1848) and Anne Strutt (1795–1873).

^c Albertine de Stael (b. 1796), who married the Duke of Broglie.

early to Copec, the seat of the renowned Madame de Stael, who had but lately died, leaving her only daughter to lament this great bereavement.

On my arrival I found among other visitors Monsieur Sismondi,^a and entering at once into a conversation mutually interesting, time was unnoticed, until I recollected my engagement to return and dine with my friends the Strutts and my sisters-in-law at the hotel, eight miles distant, at three o'clock, – when, taking out my watch, I discovered it was five o'clock, and I did not arrive at the hotel until six. But my friend very kindly excused my oversight under the circumstances in which I was placed. I met the same friend some weeks afterwards at Frankfort, when we remained in the same hotel, – and I just now recollect that one day while Mr Strutt and myself were sitting after dinner there, it occurred to us that it might be possible perhaps, it being a superior hotel, for us to obtain a bottle of the genuine old hock, grown upon Prince Metternich's^b estate. Calling in the hotel keeper, we asked if such a matter was practicable. He said 'I could obtain but six bottles of a particularly good vintage, – it being divided among many, – and I will with pleasure,' (I believe we had become favourites with the landlord,) 'let you have one bottle. But the price is high.' 'We will give your own price, and shall be obliged in addition.' The bottle was brought, and certainly, in the estimation of Mr Strutt and myself, it was the most delicious wine we had ever drunk. Its price was ten francs.^c

When my sisters had seen all they desired to see in Switzerland, they left me to pass over into Italy, and I rejoined the Professor, after first paying a visit to my partner, Mr John Walker of Arno's Grove, Middlesex, and his family, who had taken up their residence for some time on the banks of the lake of Lucerne. While remaining with them, I went with two of his sons to the top of Mount Rigel, and we arrived there in time to see that splendid sight the sun rising, in a morning most favourable for seeing it to great advantage, displaying gradually all the beauties of that enchanting distant mountain and lake prospect, including parts of nearly all the Cantons.

Of Mr John Walker, just mentioned, I shall have occasion to speak in a future portion of these memoirs.

On my return to Professor Pictet's at Geneva, we first made a visit to the three then most noted schools for the poor in Switzerland. The first was Father Oberlin's,^d a Catholic school, conducted in a truly Catholic spirit by this good

^a Jean-Charles-Léonard Simonde de Sismondi (1773–1842): Swiss economist and historian, whose *Nouveau Principes d'économie Politique* was published in 1819.

^b Clemens Wenzel Nepomuk Lothar, Prince Metternich (1773–1859): Austrian statesman.

^c About eight shillings. Bricklayers made about five shillings weekly in this period, while the best cotton-spinner might make 44/-.

^d Johann Friedrich Oberlin (1740–1826): Lutheran philanthropist. However, Oberlin was a Protestant whose school was located in Alsace. Probably Father Giraud at Fribourg is meant.

father of the church, and with as little sectarian spirit in his proceedings as was practicable while he remained a member of his sect. This was a large school, well filled with the poorer class of children, well conducted on charitable principles, according to the old mode of teaching; but it was quite evident that the heart of this good man was in it, and he had laboured hard and long to bring it to the state in which it was when I visited him at Friburgh, where the school was situated. This excellent man, when informed by Professor Pictet of my school and establishment which he had seen and so frequently examined, became greatly interested to know how I obtained such extraordinary results, and became anxious to learn how to obtain them as I had done. His school consisted of boys of the usual age at which boys were sent at this time to school. I told him the plan which I pursued was a very simple one, and was obtained by a close and accurate study of human nature, not from books, (for these were very generally worse than useless,) but from the infant, child, youth, and man, as formed under a false fundamental principle, as was evident by the entire past history of the human race. To form the most superior character for the human race, the training and education should commence from the birth of the child; and to form a good character they must begin systematically when the child is one year old. But much has been done rightly or wrongly before that period. From that age no child should be brought up isolated. Every child should now be placed in the first division of a school for infants of from one to three years of age, and from thirty to fifty in number, – the latter number easily to be superintended by a properly chosen female, – instead of, as at present, one or two or three infants of such age being thoroughly spoiled by the attendance upon them of young persons wholly ignorant of human nature. In this first division the foundation of a good and rational character may be easily laid, by attending to the formation of every habit, to their manner, their disposition, and their conduct to each other; and in this respect I gave them but one rule or lesson for practice, and that was, from their entrance into the school, to endeavour to make each other very happy. And it is surprising how soon and how effectually this practice is acquired under a superintendent possessing the required unceasing love for children, and who has been properly instructed before commencing the task. These children, to be well trained and educated, should never hear from their teacher an angry word, or see a cross or threatening expression of countenance. The tone of voice and manner should be, impartially to them all, kind and affectionate. They should be out of doors in good air at play, as much as the weather and their strength will admit. When beginning to be tired of play in their play-ground, they should be taken within the school room, and amused by the teacher, by showing and explaining to them some useful object within their capacity to comprehend, – and a young active well taught teacher will easily find and provide something that they will be interested in seeing and in hearing it explained. While awake they should be actively occupied either at

this amusement or at play; and thirty to fifty infants, when left to themselves, will always amuse each other without any useless childish toys. In our rational infant school in New Lanark, a mere child's toy was not seen for upwards of twenty years. When however any infant felt inclined to sleep, it should be quietly allowed to do so.

Punishment, in a rationally conducted infant school, will never be required, and should be avoided as much as giving poison in their food.

The second division, from three to six, should continue to be treated in the same manner, except that their walks into the country should be frequent, and the objects brought to them for examination and explanation should be advanced in interest in proportion to the previous acquirements of the children, and to their age for better understanding them.

Books in infant schools are worse than useless. But at six, so trained and educated, a solid foundation will have been formed for good habits, manners, disposition, and conduct to others, and, so far, a consistent and rational mind will be given, varying in many particulars in different individuals, but all good and natural, according to their respective organizations.

No marks of merit or demerit should be given to any; no partiality shown to any one. But attention to each should be increased in proportion to natural defects or deficiency of any kind, physical or mental. 'I see by your school,' I continued, 'that it is after this age that you, like other masters of schools, receive your pupils. But to a great extent the character is made or marred before children enter the usual school room.'

The good father, feeling the truth of what I had stated, was yet anxious for more of my experience in forming character, and more anxious from the too favourable accounts which the Professor had given of what he had so often witnessed at New Lanark during his visits to me. I therefore proceeded, and stated the infants so treated, trained, and educated from one year of age, would at six, compare without disadvantage, in mind, manner, and conduct, with young persons as usually treated, trained, and educated with books, at ten and twelve years of age, or even yet older. And I advised him to add, if practicable under his circumstances, such an infant school to his present one. But he said – 'I have no means; and it is with great difficulty I can procure funds to maintain what I have, and to do so has cost me many sleepless nights.' On leaving him I said – 'You are making great exertions to obtain, under the system in which I see you must act, but limited and very partial results.'

The great earnestness and benevolence of this industrious poor *curé* of the Catholic church, labouring under many disadvantages, interested me very much.

He said he was most at a loss to know how I had succeeded in avoiding punishment altogether in the New Lanark schools. I told him the secret was in the first division of the infant school, from one to three, in which school the affections of the children were secured to their instructors; and that when their

affections are obtained, the children will always with pleasure to themselves exert their natural powers to their utmost extent. This result is most easily obtained by commencing the formation of character from one year of age, with numbers about the same age united. When human nature shall be understood by the public, the advantages of this early formation of character will be duly appreciated, and every child when a year old will be placed in a rational infant boarding school.

This good benevolent man eagerly enquired if there were any such infant boarding schools, – for I told him that mine were day schools only, and were in consequence imperfect for the formation of the best character which could be formed; but that society was not yet so far advanced as to admit of the best character being formed. This, I told him, could be obtained only under an entire change of society in spirit, principle, and practice. He said – ‘do you think that change can ever be effected?’ I replied that my settled conviction was that it could; that I saw all the steps in practice by which the change could be made in peace and most advantageously for every individual, of every class and rank, over the world; and that I should never cease my efforts to forward this change as long as life and health would admit. ‘But,’ he said, ‘you will be opposed by all religions and governments, and by the people whom they govern, and whose educated prejudices in favour of existing practices will be a difficulty insurmountable in your way.’ ‘So I am told,’ I answered, ‘by men of all parties. But my knowledge of human nature leads me to know that conviction does not depend upon the will of the individual; but that it depends upon the strongest impression which can be made upon his mind; and I hope by degrees to create new impressions upon the most advanced minds, and that they will gradually make similar impressions upon the general public mind.’

‘You must have great faith in the truth of your principles, to resolve upon such a course of conduct, against such obstacles as you must meet by the way. I, however, wish you all the success you desire, without much expectation that it is possible for any one to overcome the prejudices that apparent interests to be encountered from all sects and parties in all countries.’

Thus we concluded our visit to the first Swiss poor school which I had seen.

Our next visit was the Yverdun, to see the advance made by Pestalozzi^a – another good and benevolent man, acting for the benefit of his poor children to the extent of his knowledge and means. He was doing, he said, all he could to cultivate the heart, the head, and the hands of his pupils. His theory was good, but his means and experience were very limited, and his principles were

^a Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827): extremely influential Swiss educational reformer, visited by Henry Brougham, Andrew Bell, Maria Edgeworth and many others. His assistant teacher from 1817–21, James Pierrepont Greaves (1777–1842) later founded the ‘Sacred Socialist’ community at Ham Common in the early 1840s. Pestalozzi’s system stressed the need to move from observation to consciousness to speech, then to measuring, drawing, writing, and numbers.

those of the old system. His language was a confused *patois*, which Professor Pictet could but imperfectly understand. His goodness of heart and benevolence of intention were evident in what he had done under the disadvantages which he had to encounter. His school, however, was one step in advance of ordinary schools, or the old routine schools for the poor in common society, and we were pleased with it as being this one step in advance, for the rudiments of common school education for the poor, without attention to their dispositions and habits, and without teaching them useful occupation, by which to earn a living, are of little real utility. We left him, being much pleased with the honest homely simplicity of the old man. His one step beyond the usual routine had attracted and was attracting the attention of many who had previously known only the common routine.

Professor Pictet now said he would take me to a former partner of Pestalozzi, but a man very superior to him in talent and attainments, who had also a poor school, and another for pupils of the more wealthy and of the upper classes, even sons of princes. We therefore went to Hofwyl, and I was introduced by M. Pictet to M. de Fellenberg,^a in such a manner as to induce him to open his house and his heart to me, so as to make us very speedily acquainted with each other's views, and to place me at once at ease and at home with him. Here the Professor and I remained partaking of M. de Fellenberg's hospitality for three days, – the Professor and M. de Fellenberg being previously old and much attached friends. I found M. de Fellenberg a man of no ordinary mould, – possessing rare administrative talent, and a good knowledge of human nature as formed under the existing system of society, but alive to its many errors and defects. After minutely inspecting his admirably conducted school of instruction and labour for the poor, under the immediate care of M. Verdi,^b and the schools of the upper class, with the improved cultivation which he had introduced on his estate around the establishment, – all of which we found in order, and the schools two or three steps in advance of any I had yet seen in England or on the continent, – we spent the remainder of the three days in considering what could be done to bring society out of its present delusion and error.

The Professor and M. de Fellenberg had both minds far in advance of things as they were, and were quite willing to proceed onward as fast and as far as their surroundings would permit them to proceed. They were in each other's confidence. The Professor had become a true convert to my views, and before the third day of our stay, M. de Fellenberg also became a disciple of the 'new

^a Philippe Emanuel von Fellenberg (1771–1844): Swiss educational reformer who aimed to use agriculture as the basis for a new system of elevating the lower orders and rightly training the higher orders, wedding them into a closer union than had hitherto been thought possible. Owen sent his sons, Robert Dale Owen and William, to study at Hofwyl in 1819, and later sent David Dale and Richard as well.

^b The elder Vehrli or his son, Jacob Vehrli (b. 1790), may have assisted Owen.

views.' We then considered how far the Hofwyl Establishment could be made to assist to prepare the way for the entire change which I contemplated. M. de Fellenberg had pupils of high rank from Russia and from various parts of Germany. But his known strong inclination to liberal, not to say democratic principles, had created in the neighbouring despotic powers a suspicion that he might go too far in instilling these advanced liberal views into the minds and habits of his pupils. His school had been therefore placed under the *surveillance* of three commissioners, of German, Prussian, and Russian appointment, and their examinations of the schools were quarterly or half yearly. One of these examinations took place while we were there, but it did not occupy much time, it being known to the Professor and M. de Fellenberg that the commissioners were friendly to them both. But there was indeed nothing that intelligent men could reasonably object to.

The Professor explained to M. de Fellenberg the extraordinary results, as he considered them, which were produced in the new infant school at New Lanark; and in our conversation on this subject I strongly recommended him to commence an infant school in his establishment. At this time he had no boys in his school under ten years of age. He had never before heard of a rational infant school; but he greatly approved of the principles and practices of it, as they were explained to him by the Professor and myself; and he seemed much inclined to introduce one into his establishment, if he could make the necessary arrangements for one to unite harmoniously with the general arrangements now in practice and in progress. I learned afterwards that to add such a nursery as would be necessary in his situation, as well to build suitable infant schools with play-ground, would too much derange his domestic and other arrangements, to permit him without great inconvenience and a large addition to his capital, which could not be easily obtained, to add properly constructed accommodations for this purpose, and that he rightly judged that it was better not to commence, unless he could do justice to the system; and he had at this time as much upon his hands as any one man could direct with the superior success which he desired, and with his limited capital.

My two eldest sons, Robert Dale and William, were now, the first sixteen, and the second fourteen years of age. They had received as good a private training and education as could be given to them by the aid of well-selected governesses and tutors, and their characters and habits, physical and mental, had been so far formed on rational principles, that I had no fears to send them from home to acquire foreign languages, and to yet farther pursue useful studies, and to become more practically acquainted with the ways of men in the old world, – so different in many respects to the half new world in which alone to this time they had been trained and so far educated.

Knowing by experience the importance of the surroundings in which all parties, but especially the young, are placed, I looked everywhere for the best in which to place my sons; to complete their training and education. I had

seen nothing to equal the existing and projected arrangements or surroundings at this establishment; and on consulting with the Professor, he approved of my intention to propose to M. de Fellenberg to receive my two sons. There then had never been an English boy among his pupils, and he said he should have peculiar pleasure in receiving my two sons, as they had had a previous training and education at New Lanark. The terms were high, but not more than the superior house and school arrangements made necessary for the support of the pupils. I agreed to send my sons and place them under M. de Fellenberg's especial care and direction. I have ever remembered this visit with unmixed pleasure, from the gratification I experienced in the friendly, frank, confidential communication of mind to mind on all subjects, enhanced by the mutual confidence each had in the other.

When the Professor and I were with my partner, Mr John Walker, it was arranged, – as I intended to visit Frankfort, and to be at Aix-la-Chapelle during the Congress of Sovereigns speedily to be held there, and as Professor Pictet had been my travelling companion and interpreter for several months, – that Mr Walker, who most kindly wished to promote my views, which I was going to promulgate in Frankfort and Aix-la-Chapelle, should take the place of the Professor, and should assist me in Germany, as the Professor had aided me in France and Switzerland; and that I should return to the Professor on my way homeward. I very reluctantly parted from a friend who had been so kindly attentive and so essentially serviceable to me, with the peculiar views which I entertained, and in which he so thoroughly united, that where-ever we went he tried to anticipate my wishes. But a more willing, amiable, and accomplished successor could scarcely be imagined, than the one I was so fortunate as to meet with in my friend and partner Mr John Walker, with whom I had previously spent many a happy day at his residence, Arno's Grove, Southgate, Middlesex, where an occurrence took place which was deeply impressed on my memory, and the relation of which, with previous explanations, may hereafter be useful to many.

Mr Walker was born of very wealthy parents of the society of friends, and by them was carefully trained as such until he was twelve years of age. At that age a highly gifted artistic and scientific gentleman, not of the society, but upon very friendly terms with the family, observing the superior and teachable qualities of his young friend, as he called him, pressed the parents to permit him to take their son to Rome, to which city he was going, and where he intended to remain to study the arts and sciences, and, seeing that young John had a strong natural taste for both, he would, if they would permit him to go with him, give him every advantage that Rome could offer to promote his progress in all his studies. The parents consented, and the pupil remained many years with his mentor, during which he made extraordinary progress in all the arts and sciences, for, with great natural abilities, continued study was his delight, and while he was progressing it was a constant source of happiness

to him. How long he remained in Rome and afterwards travelling to acquire additional knowledge with his experienced accomplished friend, I do not recollect, but it was a long period. He told me that during his stay the impression made upon his youthful mind by the extraordinary splendour and getting up of high mass, to engage the feelings of the inexperienced, were so overpowering to the senses, that he was on one of these occasions nearly tempted to become a Catholic, and but just escaped by the advice of his friend from openly declaring himself to be a convert. He said that always afterwards, whenever the moments of his delirium, as he called it, recurred to him, it was a source of the highest satisfaction to him that he then escaped the delusion. Such however were the attainments which he acquired under the direction of this accomplished and experienced mentor, that on his return to England he was readily elected member of the Royal Society; but such was his natural retiring timidity, that only confidential friends living with him under his own most hospitable roof had any idea of his varied great acquirements. His fortune was ample, – he had married a lady in all ways most suitable to him, – and their esteem and affection for each other were ever evident through every day's proceeding. When I first knew them, on Mr Walker's becoming my partner with others in the New Lanark Establishment, his country house was Arno's Grove, purchased by him from Lord Newman,^a as far as I remember, and his town house was 49 Bedford Square, which he allowed me to occupy as my home when my public proceedings detained me in London, making occasional visits to Arno's Grove when the family were absent from London.

He had at this time a large family of fine well-grown and highly educated sons and daughters; – he had carriages and horses in the best condition; – an extensive and well-selected library in his town and in his country residence; – a rare and very expensive museum of choice specimens of nature in every department; – and at Arno's Grove a more extensive and select arrangement of exotic plants from all climates than could be found in any private establishment at that time in the kingdom, – having one hundred and fifty acres chiefly in pleasure grounds around his house.

Knowing all these particulars, and that he had an ample fortune to establish all his children in various professions and in wealthy and successful mercantile or manufacturing establishments, (being decided as he informed me that all should have some occupation,) I had a question on my mind to ask him while on one of my visits to him at Arno's Grove, to ascertain whether what I considered to be an universal fact had any exception. From reflecting upon the false base on which the human-made character of all through past generations to the present had been formed, and on which society in all its varieties over the world had been and was to this day constructed, – I had been compelled to

^a Lord Newhaven, the previous owner but one.

believe that character so formed and society so constructed could not produce one happy man or woman, without some drawback or cause of unhappiness. But in Mr Walker's case I could not discover any private cause of unhappiness, and I was in consequence most desirous to be informed as to this fact.

Walking one day alone with him in his oak wood, at some distance from the house, while in an interesting conversation (for all his conversations were highly interesting and instructive,) upon the inconsistencies of society and the miseries which it created, I said – 'My impressions are, and have been for a considerable time, that society falsely based as it ever has been could not create one truly happy man or woman, except in some cases from unconscious ignorance, when all the animal wants of our nature are satisfied; but since I have become so well acquainted with you, your surroundings and your history, I think I have discovered one who is intelligent and is yet, in all his private and individual relations, not only without cause of unhappiness, but in the actual possession of uninterrupted of rational enjoyment.'

I then asked the question whether I was correct or not, for information on the subject which so much occupied my thoughts – the renovation of society by an entire change of system from its base, in principle, spirit, and practice.

He said – 'I am conscious of your motives,' and with the most natural simplicity and feeling in his manner he added – 'I am not happy.' I had enumerated to him the many superior surroundings, of family, fortune, and position, which he possessed, and his numerous sources of intellectual enjoyment, and that I could discover nothing left for him to wish for, all his family being at this time in strong health. In continuation he said – 'All this is true; and with respect to these surroundings I have nothing more to wish for; but yet I am not happy.'

'May I, without intruding upon private or family feelings, ask the cause?' He replied – 'To one so well acquainted with human nature as you are, I willingly answer your question. My parents were very wealthy; they had but myself and a sister to provide for; my fortune was therefore ample beyond my means of lavish expenditure in pursuit of knowledge in every direction, and subsequently for the highest comfort of my family; and the confidential union between us is, as you have now so often witnessed, complete. But now that all these things have been attained in a superior and most satisfactory manner, nothing being deficient that wealth can give, I feel daily the necessity of some regular occupation, to call daily for active exertion, and to force me, as it were, into physical and mental activity.'

I said – 'I can readily comprehend the want you feel, and am satisfied that it is a law of nature that happiness is unattainable through life except our physical and mental powers are daily exercised to the point of temperance.'

'It is,' he said, 'from my own experience in this matter, that I seek employment for all my sons, that they may not be subjected later in life to the want of daily occupation.'

Such was the man who volunteered to be my companion and interpreter in Germany.

We at once proceeded to Frankfort, where we remained until the meeting of the Congress of Sovereigns at Aix-la-Chapelle, to which I intended to present memorials on the present state and future prospects of society.^a

I wrote at Frankfort the two memorials which I intended to present, and had them printed for private circulation previous to the meeting of Congress, and they were printed in English, French, and German, in the same pamphlet.

The Germanic Diet was now sitting in Frankfort, and was attended at this time by the representatives of twenty-two different governments. My letters introduced me to all the prominent learned and political characters now in the city, and it was crowded with strangers expecting the arrival of the Sovereigns and their Ambassadorial attendants from many courts. But I had also, from my friend the late celebrated Nathan Rothschild, an especial letter to the late well-known Frankfort banker, the friend and host of the Emperor Alexander of Russia, M. Bethman,^b to whom I was much indebted for many attentions while I remained in that city.

The secretary to the Congress of Sovereigns had arrived to wait the coming of the Emperors, Kings, etc., etc. He was the well-known politician M. Gentz,^c learned in all the policy of the leading despots in Europe, and in their full confidence, and therefore he had been appointed by them for this office of high trust and position.

M. Bethman and the members of the Germanic Diet were, as I afterwards discovered, desirous to hear what could be said by this celebrated politician, the secretary to the Congress of Sovereigns, in favour of the old system of society, in opposition to what I had to say in advocating the new system, which it was now known was the object of my visit to Frankfort.

To bring about a discussion between us, M. Bethman had arranged to give a sumptuous dinner or banquet to all the members of the Diet, and to invite the secretary and myself. The secretary, no doubt, was in the secret of this arrangement, but I had not the least suspicion of it. The dinner was the most superb and complete in all its qualities and accompaniments of any I had ever partaken of. My own habits having through life been very temperate and simple, in conformity with the laws of health, I could not avoid perceiving in this mode of life the causes of many diseases and of premature death. It would be a useful lesson to know how many who sat with me at that table are now living.

When dinner was over, the conversation was soon so directed as to engage the secretary and myself in a regular discussion, to which the others were attentive listeners, and in which they were apparently much interested.

^a See *Two Memorials on Behalf of the Working Class* (Lanark, 1818), (*infra*, vol. 1, pp. 253–67).

^b Simon Moritz Bethmann (1768–1826).

^c Friedrich Gentz (1764–1832): German political journalist and disciple of Burke.

As the discussion proceeded from one point to another, I stated that now, through the progress of science, the means amply existed in all countries, or might easily be made to exist on the principle of union for the foundation of society, instead of its present foundation of disunion, to saturate society at all times with wealth, sufficient to amply supply the wants of all through life. What was my surprise to hear the reply of the learned secretary! 'Yes,' he said, and apparently speaking for the governments, 'we know that very well; but we do not want the mass to become wealthy and independent of us. How could we govern them if they were?'

This short speech opened my eyes at once to the impracticability of the present system of society in Europe being maintained under a rational system of education and employment for the people. They would soon become too wise, too wealthy, and too powerful, to be so irrationally treated, trained, educated, employed, governed, and placed, as they are now under every form of government in practice. And it should be now universally and most emphatically made known to the population of the world, that if it were treated, trained, educated, employed, and placed, in accordance with the most plain dictates of common sense, crimes would terminate, the miseries of humanity would cease, wealth and wisdom would be universal, and man would everywhere become a peaceable superior animal in all his animal nature, and yet more superior in his intellectual, moral, spiritual, and united practical nature.

After this confession by the secretary, the discussion lost much of its interest in my mind; for I had discovered that I had a long and arduous task before me, to convince governments and governed of the gross ignorance under which they were contending against each other, in direct opposition to the real interests and true happiness of both. I now foresaw that the prejudices which I had to overcome in all classes in all countries were of the most formidable character, and that, in addition to illimitable patience and perseverance, it would require the wisdom said to be possessed by the serpent, with the harmlessness of the dove, and the courage of the lion.^a

I had passed the rubicon, and was strongly impressed to proceed onward in a straight course, without turning to the right or to the left until the great object of my life was attained, or to die in pursuing the attempt. Having written the memorials which I intended to present to the Congress of Sovereigns, being on friendly terms with many of the diplomatic persons at this eventful period in Frankfort, I was visited one day by the Russian Ambassador, a German,^b and a fine open-hearted frank character by nature, and thus friendly when not engaged in diplomatic discussions with diplomatists. I had the intended memorials in Mss. preparing for the printer, and I read them to him, that I might have the benefit of his opinion respecting them. When he heard me read –

^a See for example Matthew 10:16.

^b Count Karl Robert Nesselrode (1780–1862).

'That I was not influenced in these proceedings by considerations of wealth, privileges, or honours, for these already appear to me as the playthings of infants,' – he suddenly started back, expressing great emotion and surprise. I said, 'I see you think the words you have read are too strong for sovereigns' – 'Oh no!' he replied, 'I am too delighted to hear them; for that is the only way to make any useful impression on such kind of fellows.' He spoke English well, but I do not know whether he understood our meaning when he applied the term 'fellows' to Emperors, Kings, etc, etc, etc.

Another kind-hearted person was then connected with the Russian Embassy, waiting the arrival of the Emperor Alexander. This was Baron de Krudener,^a son of the celebrated Madame de Krudener, the spiritualist, living in Switzerland, whom the Emperor used to visit and consult through spiritual agencies respecting his mundane proceedings.

This young man became much attached to me, and gave me as much useful information respecting passing events as he knew or could collect for me, keeping me well posted up as to the arrivals of the many great personages who were daily coming from all parts of Germany to pay their respects to the Emperor, his sovereign.

He informed me that the Prince of Tour and Taxis^b had arrived at my hotel, and being a relative of the Emperor, visits would immediately be exchanged between them. The Prince went to pay his respects to the Emperor, and had not long returned before the Emperor came to return the visit. He was met on entering the public entrance leading to the Prince's suite of apartments, and I witnessed their meeting, which appeared to be most friendly and cordial. The Emperor remained with the Prince about twenty minutes.

I had in the meantime provided myself with a copy of my memorials, intending to present them to the Emperor as he returned from his visit to the Prince. I offered them to him, but his dress fitted so tightly to his person, that, having no pockets, he had no place in which he could put so large a packet. He was evidently annoyed by the circumstance, and said, as I thought angrily, 'I cannot receive it – I have no place to put it in. Who are you?' – 'Robert Owen,' was my reply. 'Come to me in the evening at Mr Bethman's,' – and he passed on.

I did not like his manner of speaking to me, and did not go; which I afterwards regretted, for he was naturally amiable, and as kind-hearted as the surroundings of despotism would admit; and I then might have influenced him to some public beneficial purpose, for my influence among European governing parties was, as I learned afterwards, far greater than I was conscious of. But being a true lover of equal rights in the human race, I never could refrain from

^a Baron Paul Krüdener (1784–1858): son of Barbara Juliane von de Krüdener (1764–1824).

^b Probably Karl Alexander von Thurn und Taxis (1770–1827), fifth Fürst, who was the German Imperial Postmaster.

firmly repelling in manner what I deemed unnecessary assumption in any one.

I had previously written a letter to the Emperor, and Count Capo D'Istria,^a his secretary, was directed to inform me that the Emperor of Russia was overwhelmed with engagements during my short stay in Frankfort, but that he would if possible give me an audience. I had several interesting interviews with Count Capo D'Istria, and I found him highly talented, and strongly inclined to investigate the most advanced liberal principles, expressing a strong desire that the time had arrived when the views which I entertained, and which I fully explained to him, could be generally adopted in practice.

I may here remark, that in all my intercourse with the ministers of despotic powers, I uniformly found them in principle favourably disposed to the introduction in practice of the new system of society, and that they gave me all the facilities and aid which their position would admit.

My visit to Frankfort was an important event. It enlarged my views of the errors of the existing system of society, and of the thralldom to each other to which governments and governed were subjected, and how little both knew of the means by which their liberty of mind and action were to be obtained. My sympathy for both governments and people, under every form of government, was in consequence greatly increased, and my determination to unfetter both, and by simple truth to set the nations free, not by force, but by reason, was yet more strongly increased.

But every step in advance required a deep insight into the effects produced on the minds of all classes in different countries by their respective surroundings.

I discovered that I had to oppose the educated prejudices and apparent interests of all parties, with the habits created by the irrational surroundings emanating in all countries from the error on which society from its commencement had been founded and to this day constructed. My mission, then, was to bring forward the most important truths for man to know, and to bring them forward in such manner as to create the least angry excitement practicable, and to make a lasting impression on the public mind, so as gradually to undermine all that a system grossly false in principle, repulsive in spirit, and evil in practice, had for so long a period established in all nations and among all people. My letters written from this city to my wife at this period, will explain the feelings with which I pursued the object which so deeply engaged my thoughts.^b

As soon as the sovereigns met I hastened to Aix-la-Chapelle, and there completed the two memorials to the governments of Europe and America. I

^a Giovanni Anton, Count Capo d'Istria (1776–1831): Greek politician who was the Russian envoy to the Congresses of Vienna and Paris.

^b These letters have not survived.

then applied to Lord Castlereagh,^a the representative, with the Duke of Wellington,^b of the British government at this Congress. Lord Castlereagh in the most friendly manner promised to present these documents to Congress under the most favourable circumstances. He did so; and it was stated to me in confidence on my return to Paris, by one of the ministers of the government, that those two memorials were considered the most important documents which had been presented to the Congress during its sittings.

As soon as I received the assurance from Lord Castlereagh that he would take charge of the memorials and present them at the most favourable period to gain the attention of the great powers then assembled, I left Aix-la-Chapelle, to return to M. Pictet in Switzerland.

I should have previously stated that my kind friend, Mr Walker, left me at Frankfort, circumstances having occurred to make it necessary for him to return to his family.

On returning to Geneva, I learned there was to be a meeting of the Swiss National Society of Natural History to be held in Lausaune at that period, and that Professor Pictet, my friend, and so long my companion, was the president. He said all the most eminent men from the different Cantons would be present, besides many distinguished strangers; and he proposed that I should accompany him, to which proposal, as one of my objects to travel was to meet and confidentially converse with men of mind of every cast of character, I readily consented.

The members, from eighty to ninety in number, assembled on the Sunday, and the meeting commenced on the Monday morning, and terminated on Saturday evening. We all breakfasted, dined, and supped together, and the meeting at meals and for business appeared like the meeting of a friendly family party, although composed of members of opposing creeds and politics.

I was truly gratified with the spirit which prevailed among these parties from their meeting to their separation. I did not during the entire week hear an angry word or witness an unkind feeling among these learned men, met to promote useful knowledge in the spirit of charity and kindness. Among such a number of *savants*, each occupied for so long a period in giving and receiving valuable scientific discoveries, I never before or since witnessed so much unbroken harmony, or so little ignorant selfishness.

Early in the week I was requested to explain my views to the meeting. They appeared to create a lively sensation and much interest among the members, and were the subject of much conversation while we remained at Lausanne. I was unanimously elected an honorary member of the society, and no doubt

^a Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh and 2nd Marquess of Londonderry (1769–1822): MP and active foreign minister.

^b Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington (1769–1852): British general and victor at Waterloo; Tory Prime Minister 1828–30.

through the kindness of Professor Pictet, who was almost revered by the members, as the promoter of science, and a father in kindness and benevolence to them all.

I was made one of lions of the meeting. The celebrated friend and tutor of the Emperor Alexander was of the number, and received much notice. His name has escaped my memory.^a

Many matters now requiring my attention in England and Scotland, I was obliged to hasten my departure homeward, and after remaining a few days longer in Geneva with the Professor and his most interesting daughter, and visiting his circle of select friends, I most reluctantly took leave of the man who had rendered me so many important services, and who had shown me attentions and kindness which could not be surpassed.

On my arrival in Paris I met with renewed attention from the friends and parties whom I had left there, and by one of the ministers I was told that my two memorials had been presented to Congress, and that copies were immediately forwarded to the French government, and that they were acknowledged by the members of the Congress to be the most important documents that had been received during its sittings. The subjects of these memorials were new to the members, and opened to them a wide field for investigation and reflection. They were also prophecies which are now fulfilling in part, and will ultimately become truthful to their full extent.

I found several years afterwards that these two memorials had made an extraordinary impression on the Sovereigns who were present, and upon the representatives of those governments whose Sovereigns and heads were not present. As society progresses the subjects of these memorials will have to be considered by all governments and people.

By this visit to the continent of Europe the general interest which had been excited by the extensive publication of my proceedings in the previous year in the City of London Tavern was greatly increased, and to this day it remains, more or less, to influence both governments and people. Important general truths, openly declared, without mystery, mixture of error or fear of man, and not promulgated for private, but for the public good, will always produce their natural effects, especially when given in the true spirit of charity and love for all.

On my arrival in England I found myself at once in the midst of most exciting proceedings.

The measures which I had adopted had aroused fears in various quarters for the continued maintenance of old established prejudices and long protected vested interests, known to rest on no solid base, and to be opposed to the general interests of society.

^a Frédéric César de la Harpe (1754–1838), who had directed the Helvetic Republic from 1790–1800.

New Lanark had become generally known, was popular, and its popularity was daily increasing. The New Rational Infant School which I had invented, and its unheard-of results, were blazed abroad, and excited great interest; as also were the measures which I had adopted to obtain relief for children and others so unwisely employed and oppressed by over work in our manufactories, by a bill in parliament to stay these evils.

Now all these measures, coming from one who had in the most public manner, in mid-day, denounced all the religions of the world as now taught, as being the great obstacle to all permanent substantial improvement, the origin of all crime, and the cause of many of the most grievous evils in human existence, was far too much to be permitted without the whole power of the religious world being aroused to stay my course, and if possible to destroy the individual who had the temerity thus single-handed openly to oppose the greatest power of human creation, supported by the prejudices implanted in society during many centuries.

The cause of the individual thus placed seemed to all utterly hopeless. But from his first daring onset he had, contrary to his own anticipations, not only escaped without personal danger, but for the daring act itself had received, from one of the most numerous and exciting public meetings ever held under cover in the metropolis of the British empire, the most heart felt overwhelming applause perhaps ever witnessed.

But how was this? – for the applause was almost unanimous from all parties, friends and foes. It was not that these parties approved of a deed so daring against all the religions of the world, and of course against all the constituted authorities of the earth; but all present were conscious that on entering that meeting I was beyond comparison the most generally popular character living, and all were at once, (as many of my former opponents in principle afterwards acknowledged to me,) struck, as it were by an electric shock, with the magnitude of the self-sacrifice which I had thus made to truth, intended for the benefit of the human race.

To that hour my society was courted by the most distinguished for talent, goodness, and station, and my influence with those in power was deemed to be greater than that of any private individual, being at this period well known personally to the leading members of both houses of parliament, and favoured by most of them. The audience upon that occasion were conscious that in a few minutes I had destroyed this unequalled popularity, the growth of many years.

To that hour all the London morning and evening daily newspapers were unitedly warm in my praises, and in advocating my views for the relief of the poor, and for ameliorating the condition of the children and others employed in our manufactories. The impression of this great self-sacrifice was such on the meeting, that I had even after this daring denouncement for a considerable time a large majority in favour of the resolution which I proposed, to appoint

a committee of the leading men of both parties to fully investigate the new views which I advocated. But the leaders of the out of doors violent party had come there determined to prevent its being carried; and finding the majority strong against them, they agreed among themselves to speak against time. The house had been crammed full from eleven o'clock in the morning, many having come to secure seats even earlier, and this most excited meeting had continued until four o'clock, and the motion was going to be put, when these out-and-out opponents raised such a clamour against putting the resolution to the meeting, that for the sake of quietness and order they were allowed to go on speaking until about seven o'clock. Many of the most respectable part of the meeting left, for they were disgusted with this unreasonable proceeding; for these violent men had sent out scouts to bring in their men to occupy the seats of those who had been fairly tired out with speeches having no real reference to the subject before them.

But my mission for the hour and the day had been accomplished. I was satisfied, and was indifferent, or rather wished that the resolution should be lost, which it was not even yet by numbers; but, yielding to the clamour, I advised my friends to permit the negative to be declared, rather than longer detain the meeting.

The Rubicon was now passed, and I had my future measures to consider and adopt.

The next day, as I had previously arranged, all the daily morning and evening papers had my address to the meeting published accurately, word for word. But the *Times* newspaper on this day for the first time had an article in addition opposed to my views, written I had reason to believe by a clergyman of the Church of England.^a

By such a publication in all the newspapers my main point was gained, and I purchased that day more than thirty thousand additional newspapers, and sent them to the leading characters over the kingdom. Thus making such an open attack on the combined superstitions of the world as was never before made, or as never could have been made by any one except under the peculiar and extraordinary circumstances in which I was placed when I went to that meeting.

I was fully aware of the powers of darkness against which I had to contend, clothed in the religious garb of all the superstitions in the world. I was quite conscious of the innumerable ramifications of vested interests and of the customs and habits of the various countries in favour of things as they were, and of the strong dislike to change. In addition to all these, I had made an impression on the minds of many of my friends, that I had destroyed my influence with the public for ever. In their opinion I had entered the meeting

^a See *The Times*, no. 10,231 (22 August 1817), p. 2.

clothed in the garb of the highest and most valuable popularity, and I had left it disrobed of the entire garment, and henceforward to be an isolated unnoticed individual, without a thread of popularity for my use through life.

These sayings, however, influenced me not. I had previously made up my mind, not only to the loss of popularity, but to the loss of liberty, fortune, and life; and I therefore considered I was the gainer of a great victory over prejudice, superstition, and the powers of the old system of falsehood, ignorance, poverty, disunion, and crime; and I felt not only strong in the power of truth, but conscious that by patience, perseverance, and consistency in the course which I had adopted, ultimate success was certain.

It is an extraordinary fact, that under the innumerable contests in which I was destined to encounter the prejudices or superstition of all parties for so many years, I never once felt the slightest mis-giving or doubt that I should in the course of time overcome every obstacle, and that sooner or later the population as one man would admit the great and all-important truth for the permanent progress and happiness of all of human kind, 'that the character of man is before and from birth formed for him,' and that, with this knowledge, comprehended in all its bearings, a good, useful, and most valuable character might with ease and pleasure be formed by society for every one from birth, and to some important extent even before birth, so as to improve the germ or natural organisation before birth in an increasing ratio through every succeeding generation.

With this impression deeply seated in the inmost recesses of my mind, no obstacle, no temporary defect, no abuse from the press or religions, created the slightest discouragement to my onward progress. Knowing how the characters of all were formed for them, their abuse and violence only created a sympathy for them in proportion to their ignorance, and to the misery which that ignorance necessarily inflicted upon them.

But on my return to England I soon found I must prepare for the full extent of opposition which my so public uncompromising denunciations against all the religions of the world naturally excited. And this opposition continued without ceasing for upwards of thirty years, following my footsteps wherever I went, using all the unfair means of established power and prejudices to frustrate every attempt I made to practically benefit poor suffering ill-used humanity.

My antecedents, however, were a tower of strength to me, and enabled me whenever I was openly attacked to come off victor. But nothing short of these could for so long a period have sustained any one against the extended unfair means adopted by the, no doubt in many cases, sincerely pious, and bigoted, of all the religious sects, trained to believe that by so doing, they, poor creatures, were doing their supposed God a great service!

But my antecedents were unassailable. I had steadily for more than a quarter of a century governed one population in England of five hundred and another in Scotland of two thousand five hundred, and had produced, by a new mode

of governing by love and wisdom, results never before witnessed, and a degree of happiness for twenty years, among the latter, never previously known to be experienced by any workpeople in any part of the world.

I had been Lancaster's first and most confided-in patron as long as he remained in England. I had given him a thousand pounds to aid him in the founding of his germ of education for the poor in England, Ireland, and Scotland. (See his various letters to me in my 'Correspondence.')

^a

I had offered a similar sum to Dr Bell's committee for aiding him, if they would open their schools for children of all denominations, as Lancaster and his committee had done, but only half that amount if they continued to exclude all except those of the Church of England. As I have before stated, this offer was debated two days in full committee, and ultimately it was decided by a small majority to continue to exclude all dissenters from the Church and to accept only the five hundred pounds. But in twelve months afterwards I had the satisfaction to learn that the practice which I had advocated was adopted.

I had caused a bill to be brought into Parliament to give the best relief that such a despotic and evil devised system as our manufacturing system is would admit, and I exhibited in the manufactory which I directed at New Lanark the practice recommended in the bill as I first had it introduced by Sir Robert Peel into the House of Commons, where it was allowed by him to be so altered as to be of little or no real utility.

And I had now sacrificed every worldly consideration to perform a deeply impressed conscientious conviction of a duty, deemed far more important to perform than the preservation of life itself.

These antecedents now constituted a shield which so protected me that no party in Church or State ever ventured to make an open attack upon me, or to impugn my motives.

But the word 'infidel' was the watch-word of attack with all my opponents, and by attributing all that the imagination could be made to receive to be the worst of wickedness or the essence of evil, the objects of the deluded pious and of the bigot were to a certain extent successful for many years against the progress of the system which I advocated, and which I have never ceased to advocate even to this day, knowing that the principles, spirit, and practice, were too true and good to be ultimately overcome by all the powers of darkness and of mystification. My confidence that truth and goodness would, by patience and perseverance, overcome falsehood and evil, was never for a moment shaken; and let me ask where now is the power that will fairly and openly attempt to defend the principle, spirit, and universal practice of the old system, by which the population of the world ever has been, and is at this day, so grossly mis-governed, or will attempt to disprove the divine truth, spirit,

^a These letters have not survived.

and practice, of the system for the speedy change of the present wretched mode of forming the character and governing the population of the world, and to obtain the permanent happiness of our race?

I challenged to friendly debate the advanced minds of the world, to meet me at the Congress which I called to commence the 14th May, 1857,^a to disprove what I have said of the old system, or to deny the plain and obvious facts from the knowledge of which the glorious new existence of man will arise and be established for ever.

Opposed by the underlings of the church, by the conscientious pious, and by the bigoted and ignorant of all parties, especially by the cruel Malthusian political economists, yet have I been continually sustained by the best and the most advanced and independent among all classes.

The most valuable of these, while he lived, was his Royal Highness the late Duke of Kent, whose real character for the last four years of his life is yet but little known to the public. His letters addressed to me, about thirty of them, will show the power and goodness of that mind which, had he lived to reign, would have given all his influence to have peaceably established truth in principle, spirit, and practice, throughout the British Empire, and by the success of such a change in governing, would have induced all other governments to imitate his.

In 1815 I first submitted to his Royal Highness the 'New Views of society,' by which a new and very superior character could be permanently given to the human race. He immediately studied the subject, with a mind truly desirous of discovering the truth for useful practical application. He daily witnessed and strongly felt the hollowness, worthlessness, and hourly annoyances of what the world called greatness, and he ardently longed that simple nature in all its truthfulness should attain and assert her rightful dominion over the ignorant, undeveloped assumptions of man, flattered to his injury and to the destruction of common sense in all his associations of ideas and conduct, and made continually, by being trained in a false and wicked system, to call good evil and evil good, and thus to prevent the possibility of that union of the human race, through which alone happiness can ever be attained.

During the period from 1815, and to the time of the ever-to-be lamented death of his late Royal Highness, I often resided at 49 Bedford Square, the town residence of my friend and partner John Walker of Arno's Grove.

Their Royal Highnesses the Dukes of Kent and Sussex, who at this period were much united in affection and pursuits, occasionally looked in upon me to study the model which I had there, of the first new surroundings in which I proposed to place the poor and working classes to train them out of their inferior habits, and to give good and superior ones to their children; and also

^a See Owen, *Report of the Meetings of the Congress of the Advanced Minds of the World* (1857).

to see and draw their own conclusions from inspecting the cubic proportions of the different classes of society, which I had directed to be made to exhibit to the eye the contrast between the amounts in numbers of the governing and the governed classes.

On some of these visits the royal dukes would bring with them some members of the higher nobility. On one occasion the Duke of Kent observed one of them to point significantly to the great difference between the very small cube which represented the governing powers, (the Royal Family and House of Peers,) and the various classes governed by them, and looking at the duke, as much as to say is not this rather a dangerous and levelling exhibition? The duke caught the expression, and said – ‘I see you imagine I have not studied this subject, and that I do not foresee its ultimate results. I know these will be a much more just equality of our race, and an equality that will give much more security and happiness to all, than the present system can give to any; and it is for this reason that I so much approve of it and give it my support.’

And his Royal Highness was consistent in this conduct to the day of his departure into the sphere of spirits.^a

Many of the so-called strong (sceptical) minds of the world will object to this last phrase ‘sphere of spirits.’ But I am compelled by the evidence of my senses to know that spirits occupy space, called by them spheres, and that they communicate with their friends here on earth, in their natural character, except that they are not visible as when living. I have had the unspeakable gratification and happiness of being visited by the spirit of his Royal Highness, who communicated with me in precisely his manner and phrasiology as when conversing with me formerly, and spoke of his former domestic relations and interests, and gave me more valuable and important information respecting the spheres and past events and personages than I could have conceived to be possible.^b

This may be new to many who cannot believe in any thing new which they cannot comprehend.

A committee was formed to promote my ‘New Views’, and the Duke was its chairman. Public meetings of much interest were held with the same objects. His Royal Highness presided at these public meetings, and a better chairman for such meetings has seldom been seen; for as a chairman over an audience of strong conflicting opinions, he was, in his manner and mode of conducting it, so faultless as to satisfy all parties with his fairness and just impartiality. His sudden and premature departure hence made a great difference in the manner

^a Owen converted to spiritualism in 1853.

^b On the Duke of Kent’s ‘communications’, see Owen, *The New Existence of Man Upon the Earth*, pt 6 (1855), pp. x–xxix, *The Rational Quarterly Review*, no. 3 (August 1853), pp. 139–46, no. 4 (November 1853), pp. 222–45.

in which I had afterwards to carry on my contest with the old system. But no doubt, like all other proceedings throughout the universe, it was necessary, and for the best, to assist to bring about future events in the due order of nature.

His Royal Highness died but a short period after he had arranged personally with me to come in the spring with the Duchess and the infant princess (our present so justly loved and popular Queen,)^a to spend three months quietly with me at Braxfield, my then residence, beautifully situated on the banks of the Clyde, surrounded on all sides by romantic scenery, and at a convenient distance from New Lanark then unique in its arrangements and in its results, to produce as much goodness and happiness in a working population as the existing system of ignorance, falsehood, and evil, would admit.

During this intended visit we had proposed to consider in what manner the change of system could be gradually and peaceably made, so that, if possible, none should be injured, but all should be benefited by the change. The Duke's mind was one of high integrity, and of great firmness when he felt strongly that he was in the true path of right principle and beneficial practice, and his judgement and foresight greatly exceeded the aristocratic mind of Europe at that period. His letters evince the goodness of his disposition and his anxious desire to improve the condition of the suffering classes, and he well knew that all classes were suffering in different ways, and every suggestion which he made proved his practical knowledge of the present state of society, and of the difficulties to be overcome before the public mind could be fully prepared for such an entire change as he foresaw must be effected in principle, spirit, and practice, before any real substantial permanent good could be effected for society.

It was a great privilege to converse confidentially on these subjects with his Royal Highness, whose charity for the trained and educated weakness of all classes was a prominent feature in his character, which contained all the essential qualities for a great and successful reformer, without violence.

After he had studied the 'New Views of Society,' and other works which I had written explanatory of the principles and spirit of the system for new forming the human character from birth and in part even before birth, and for new governing the human race, and when he had conversed much with me on these subjects, which, when he fully comprehended them, appeared to take full possession of his mind, he was desirous to learn from the best sources how these 'New Views' worked in practice. He had heard much in their favour from a variety of visitors to New Lanark, but he wanted fuller detailed accounts from parties on whose experience and unbiased judgment he could rely. He therefore

^a Victoria (1819–1901): Queen 1837–1901, the daughter of Owen's close friend, the Duke of Kent. Owen was presented to the Queen in 1840 by the Prime Minister, Melbourne, occasioning some public outcry.

first sent Dr Henry Gray Macnab,^a his friend and honorary physician, requesting him to visit the establishment, and to remain sufficiently long to make himself fully master of all he saw, and to report to him accordingly.

The Doctor came, and made his report.^b

The Duke's friend General Desaix^c was in Scotland. His Royal Highness had a high opinion of the General's experience and knowledge of the world, and of his integrity and judgment, and the Duke wished to have such a General's opinion, to compare it with that of his honorary physician. The General soon succeeded the physician in his visit; made his examination during many days; and made his report also in person to the Duke. After the Duke's last letter, wishing to see me in London, I visited him at Kensington, when he informed me that Dr Macnab was so pleased and satisfied with all the results in practice, that he was become quite an enthusiast in the cause, and would do all in his power to promote it, and that he intended to print and publish an account of what he had seen – which he did. And that General Desaix was equally delighted with the to him wonderful arrangement of a system formed of so many parts, and yet dovetailed into one whole, working day by day in perfect harmony, and the minds and conduct of the children in the three schools and the workpeople in every department appearing to form an essential part of that harmony. And both agreed that they never witnessed so much oneness of feeling and so much satisfied happiness in any population, or indeed, they added, anything approaching to it in these respects.

'I am therefore,' the Duke continued, 'now, for myself, fully satisfied with the principles, spirit, and practice of the system which you advocate for new forming the human character, so far as human means are concerned, and for new governing the human race, and I acknowledge myself to be a full and devoted convert to your philosophy, in principle, spirit, and practice. But,' his Royal Highness continued, 'we must act with prudence and foresight. The English are emphatically a practical people, and practice has great influence over them. I will with my family visit you, as I have long wished to do, and will remain a sufficient time to convince all parties that I had leisure and every opportunity to examine and observe the working in detail of every part of the system, and that what I state to the public meetings which we will hold on my return, and to Parliament in my place in the House of Peers, is from my own closely inspected and fully examined knowledge; and this will do more to prevent small cavil and mere talking opposition than any other mode that could be now adopted.'

^a Dr Henry Gray Macnab (1761–1823): educational reformer. His philosophical and religious principles were very close to Owen's. See his *Observations on the Political, Moral, and Religious State of the Civilized World* (1820), esp. pp. iii, 13–22.

^b See Henry Gray Macnab, *The New Views of Mr. Owen of Lanark Impartially Examined* (1819).

^c Joseph Dusseaux became a general on 4 June 1814.

I cordially agreed with his Royal Highness, and it was so decided. We parted – and little did I suppose it was the last time I should see him in his earthly life.

He presided as chairman of my committee for the last time on the first of December 1819. In the address of the committee to the public on that day, (which is given in the Appendix,)^a the true character of the Duke is given by those who had so often witnessed his devotion to the cause which he foresaw was destined ultimately to change the condition of the human race, from all that was inconsistent and irrational, in forming their character by society, in producing and distributing wealth, in attempts to create union, goodness, knowledge, wisdom, love, charity, and happiness, – to all that will be consistent and rational in all these particulars.

And here I must do justice to the firm integrity and strong sense of justice of his Royal Highness, and give some account of a branch of the Royal Family which, from a variety of causes, some of them mysterious, have suffered since the death of his Royal Highness poverty and destitution, which have called into action the characteristic quality for firmness or sometimes obstinacy of the Royal Family, and which obstinacy lost to this country the colonies of the now United States, destined to change the condition of nations, confused as it is at this day between slavery and a new state of existence, the latter being certain to prevail.

The branch of the Royal Family alluded to has been known as Mrs Serries,^b afterwards as the Princess Olive of Cumberland, and now as Mrs Lavinia Serries, the only child of the latter.^c

From the documents existing and carefully preserved, there can be no doubt of the legal claim of this family to their being the direct descendants of the Duke of Cumberland, brother to his Majesty George III, and entitled to his rank and property. His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent introduced Mrs Serries to me as his cousin, and as legally entitled to the rank of Princess Olive of Cumberland. He was deeply interested in her cause, and in that of her only daughter and child Lavinia.

The Duke in his younger and inexperienced days, had, like all young princes of his time, outrun his income, and now suffered the inconveniences arising from a heavy debt. The 'New Views of Society' had opened his mind, naturally a very honest and sincere one, to a new world of superior existence for man upon the earth, and he became most desirous to adopt a new mode of life for himself, that he might the most effectually aid to promote the change from all which now appeared to him to be error, to that which his new convictions

^a See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 249–50.

^b Olivia Serres née Wilmot (1772–1834): painter and aristocratic pretender, who claimed to be the illegitimate daughter of the Duke of Cumberland, and assumed the title of Princess Olive in 1821.

^c Lavinia Serres (1797–1871), who called herself Princess Lavinia of Cumberland.

compelled him to believe was true and right. The reading and studying of my four first essays on the New View of Society and the formation of character, produced a similar effect upon Lord Liverpool, the then prime minister, upon several members of his cabinet, and many other men of note and consideration.

In consequence of this new mind being thus formed for his Royal Highness, he was determined to do as much justice to his creditors as his position would admit, and he limited himself to a comparatively small income, giving up a large proportion of it to gradually extinguish the debt which he had previously incurred, and it was ultimately discharged with interest, except several sums which at his request I advanced to relieve the wants of his cousin, and which, if I had taken from him a legal document for the amount, would also have been paid. But when in the month of November previous to his demise he offered and even pressed me to receive his note of hand for six months, when he proposed to pay me, I resolutely declined doing so, having the fullest confidence in his word, and never supposing, with his strong health and constitution, that there could be any risk of the continuance of his life.

I see he requests me in one of his letters at that date, to advance on his account to Mrs Serries three hundred pounds, and a letter to me from Mrs Serries contains an acknowledgement of five hundred pounds received from me by her on account of his Royal Highness and at his request. Also another sum of one hundred pounds; and in other letters sums not especially stated.

At this period I was making money rapidly, and set little value upon it, except for its use to forward the great cause which so much occupied my attention, and it was not my intention at that time, knowing the Duke's limited means of expenditure, to ask for its return, until I should myself feel the want of it. He made me, as may be seen by his letters, acquainted with his financial affairs and domestic interests.

These things are now past; and looking back through the vista of so many years, I have asked myself why was the life of his Royal Highness thus cut short, and the world deprived of the first sovereign who was a convert to truth and to the just rights of humanity, and who possessed firmness which when in power would have stimulated him to attempt to bring over the aristocracy to his views of gradually reforming society for the permanent benefit of all?

The reply is, as it now appears to me, that that aristocracy of powerful and wealthy families would not then have been prepared by a sufficient progress in general society to second his desires; that he would have been opposed by the then all powerful church and state interests; that contests and confusion would have arisen, and matters would not have been to-day so far advanced by the sovereign's premature attempt at reformation, as the civilised world, and especially the British Empire, now are, under the comparatively peaceable reign of her Majesty, and the gradual increase of scientific knowledge and real liberty, which have progressed in so remarkable a manner since she ascended the throne.

And, little as the ignorant learned, and therefore presumptuous in opposing all new knowledge beyond their previously taught acquirements, may be prepared to believe in Spiritual existences, I have the best evidence of my senses to know, that spirits do exist, and that they communicate now, in the best manner that their new state will admit, with the friends whom they have left living in their earthly form upon the earth. And from the highly gratifying communications which I have had from time to time with the spirit of his Royal Highness, I have reason to believe that from his departure hence he has had a fatherly watchful care over his daughter and her family, and over the interests of the British people. Also that he has had a strong affectionate brotherly interest in all the affairs and proceedings of the King of the Belgians.^a

The statement now made will surprise many whose minds have not yet been prepared for this advanced period of new knowledge so little anticipated by the learned universities, scientific men, and the philosophers and statesmen of the world.

The learned conservatives, in church, state, and literature, who so strenuously hold fast to old things which are to pass away, cannot admit into their minds new truths, based on new facts, previously unknown and unsuspected by them.

To communicate in a material manner with our past and now (except on particular occasions and by particular persons,) invisible relatives and friends, is an idea as monstrous to receive by the so-called enlightened of this day, as the monstrous statement of Galileo^b in his day, to the learned of that period, that the earth was not flat, but was a sphere in diurnal and annual motions of immense velocities.

But yet more, (to prove the irrational state to which a fundamental error has forced even men of advanced knowledge under this old system,) when facts too strong for the mind to resist are seen and felt to force conviction, there is not sufficient moral courage openly to declare the truths which they are thus compelled to know.

Such has never been the constitution of my mind. It could never take without examination anything asserted for truth; and when convinced by the evidence of my senses, through the practical investigation of facts, of an important truth, the knowledge of which would benefit the population of the world, I have never hesitated on account of public opinion to make it widely known, and I yet continue the practice.

I therefore now declare that no one, with sound judgment and a sincere desire to discover truth, can fairly and fully investigate the subject of these new material manifestations, proceeding from some new cause, hitherto unknown

^a Leopold I (1790–1865): King of Belgium 1831–65; married to Charlotte, daughter of George IV.

^b Galileo (1564–1642): Italian mathematician and astronomer.

to and unsuspected by the public, without being convinced that these manifestations do actually come from the spirits of our departed friends, relatives, and others, and not from any other source, and that the communications thus made are in many cases highly important to the best permanent interests of society, and most gratifying and delightful to those who receive these manifestations from their loved friends and relatives.

Of this character have been my communications with the spirits of many past worthies, who evidently possess a strong desire to improve the condition of the population of the world.

Among these, in an especial manner, I have to name the apparent very anxious feelings of the spirit of his Royal Highness the late Duke of Kent, (who early informed me there were no titles in the spiritual spheres into which he had entered,) to benefit, not a class, a sect, a party, or any particular country, but the whole of the human race through futurity. And in this feeling he seemed to be strongly united with the spirit of my friend and warm disciple President Jefferson,^a and his particular friend the celebrated Benjamin Franklin.^b These three spirits have frequently come together to communicate to me the most interesting and valuable knowledge, with occasional notices of persons who when living were dear to these superior spirits.^c But never upon any occasion was there a trivial idea expressed by either of them.

At one important *seance* these three spirits came in company with the spirits of Channing,^d Chalmers,^e Shelly,^f Byron,^g and several of the old prophets; and on this occasion the spirits of eight of my deceased relatives were also present. Each one communicated with me through distinct different raps, in their strongly marked characters as when in life upon the earth.

The object of these extraordinary communications from the invisible spheres of spirits is uniformly stated by each of these advanced spirits, when asked separately and at different times, to be to reform the world and to unite the population as one family or one man.

The spirit of the Duke of Kent has uniformly expressed for me the same

^a Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826): 3rd President of the United States, and like Owen a deist.

^b Benjamin Franklin (1706–90): philosopher, inventor, diplomat, philanthropist.

^c For 'communications' from Jefferson and Franklin, see Owen, *The New Existence of Man Upon the Earth*, pt 6 (1855), pp. x–xxix, *The Rational Quarterly Review*, no. 4 (November 1853), pp. 212–14, 225–45.

^d William Ellery Channing (1780–1842): Unitarian clergyman known in British co-operative circles for his *Remarks on Associations* (1829).

^e Probably Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847): theologian, preacher, leader of the Church of Scotland, and philanthropist; well known critic of unplanned urbanisation in his *Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns* (1821).

^f Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822): romantic and radical poet, who was married to Godwin's daughter by Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley.

^g George Gordon Byron (1788–1824): romantic poet and champion of Greek independence.

kindness, confidence, and affection, so evident in his manner while alive upon the earth.

I doubt not the truth of the frequent statements of these superior spirits, that these manifestations shall be increased more and more, until all sceptics shall be convinced of their reality, and the world shall be reformed and re-generated in character, conduct, and spirit.

But I must now return to my material history.

I had published a letter addressed to his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, on the union of Churches and Schools, which letter was printed and widely circulated, and it produced a powerful effect on the public mind, and prepared many members of both houses of parliament to begin to think it a duty not longer to be resisted to take some thought and to adopt some means to introduce national education into their legislative proceedings.

This letter will be now useful to be republished, in the present, confused, disordered, and irrational contests engaging public notice upon this all-important subject. And it is inserted in the Appendix.^a

The public meetings which created so much excitement in 1817, – my memorials to the Sovereigns assembled in Congress at Aix-la-Chapelle, – my public letter to the manufacturers, – and this to the Archbishop of Canterbury, – with the bill for the relief of children, which was yet only in progress in the House of Commons, had aroused in many a great desire that an experiment should be made of one community, or that Parliament should at least fully investigate the principles and plans which I advocated and proposed. But the church, then all powerful, and a large majority of the old aristocracy, had now combined to prevent, to the extent of their means, direct and indirect, any public or Parliamentary investigation; and as far as possible the church took measures to prevent the circulation of my writings.

My first four Essays on a New View of Society and the formation of character had gone through five superior large editions, and all the leading and most respectable publishers were desirous of having their names to the work, and there those names are on the few copies remaining in the hands of friends and in public and private libraries.

But now the booksellers throughout the two Islands were warned by the supposed friends of the church, that if they sold Mr Owen's works, they should not sell any of theirs; and from that time my works were not to be had at any so-called respectable booksellers in Great Britain or Ireland. And from this cause those esteemed the most respectable publishers were deterred from publishing any of my works, even those to which they had been previously so ambitious to put their names – works which had passed the ordeal of our government, and had been submitted by it to the most learned universities and

^a See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1 (1857), pp. 361–7 (*infra*, vol. 1, pp. 245–9).

the most prominently learned men in the civilized world, who found no error in them: – works which, with my other proceedings, converted Lord Liverpool, (the then Prime Minister,) and Lady Liverpool, who in consequence requested to be admitted to our interviews, and who took an interested part in our conversation; for she had a superior mind, with a kind and most amiable disposition.

At one of these interviews in Fife House she said ‘Mr Owen, we have had a young man lately come into our office, who appears of much promise. His name is Peel, and he is the eldest son of Sir Robert Peel.’ This was in 1815, when Mr Peel had been lately made private secretary to Lord Liverpool – the same who in my next interview with Lord Liverpool, when I entered the private secretary’s apartment to wait the announcement of my arrival to his Lordship, immediately stood up, and remained standing until Lord Liverpool himself came to request me to come into his own apartment. The same who became the well-known Sir Robert Peel, Prime Minister of the British government.

But yet more, – the works which all the so-called most respectable publishers and booksellers were, on account of their substantial worldly interests, obliged to decline to publish or sell, Lord Sidmouth, while secretary of state for the home department, requested copies of, for each of the English bishops; which I gave him, and which he distributed to the bishops, the same works of which the Archbishop of Armagh, when Mr Edgworth, the author, and father of the celebrated Miss Edgworth, was present, knowing what Lord Sidmouth had done, requested from me copies for all the Irish bishops, which I gave him, and which induced the Irish bishops, when I visited Ireland, almost as one man to give me the most kind and hospitable reception.

These works had also been translated into foreign languages, and very many editions were published in the United States, where also they had prepared for me a warm national reception. For, as I have before stated, in 1816, when John Quincy Adams was the United States ambassador in London, he applied to me, as these works were then widely circulating among the higher ranks and much commended, to know if I wished them to be introduced into the United States, for if I did, he should shortly return there, and if I would intrust him with copies for the President and his cabinet, and for the governor of each State in the Union, he would assure me that they should be faithfully delivered. I was gratified by the request; and afterwards, when in the United States, I found he had punctually performed his promise. And these rejected works of the booksellers, and of course of the publishers, made me the lion of the time when I made the voyage and first visited the United States. They gave me a ready introduction to all the Presidents of the Republic, from John Adams^a

^a John Adams (1735–1826): 2nd President of the United States.

downwards, and with him, Jefferson, Madison,^a Munro,^b John Quincy Adams, General Jackson,^c and Mr Van Buren,^d by all of whom I was admitted into their confidence, and from whom I obtained their best thoughts, and the unbiassed results of their valuable experience. President Washington^e was dead before my first arrival; but I was kindly welcomed and cordially received by his near relative Judge Washington, of the Supreme Court of the United States.^f The particulars of these interesting events will be given in future volumes of my life, should my earthly life be spared to write them.

These works, imperially bound, were also gladly received by every sovereign in Europe, and by Napoleon the First when in the Island of Elba, in which he had time to study them, and did so, as I was afterwards informed by Major General Sir Neil Campbell, who had been applied to at the request of Napoleon by Bethier,^g (the Emperor's friend and favourite,) to learn if Sir Neil knew anything of the author, which at that time he did not. It was stated that these works, in which the erroneous warlike proceedings of Napoleon were animadverted upon, had so far changed his views, that he said, should he be allowed by the other European Powers to remain quiet on the throne of France, he would do as much for peace as he had previously done in war.^h

Yet these works, so esteemed by the leading minds of the world, I was, through the influence of the church and other religious sects, henceforth obliged to publish through the cheap and fearless liberal radical publishers; and so with all my works written since, or to be written, as I have for some time been my own publisher, against all the poor mistaken powers of darkness, who yet dare not permit the light of truth to be seen, although they would themselves become speedily great gainers through the knowledge which the light of truth would bring to them. But their deeds are yet too dark to bear this light.

The increase, however, of true charity, arising from the knowledge how their characters have been mis-formed for them, will now soon make a great change for them in the minds and feelings of all parties, when real mental liberty shall be attained, and truth for the first time in the history of the human race shall be set free from the tyranny of ignorance and superstition; and then knowledge, kindness, charity, love, and wisdom, shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the seas.

All may be assured that this glorious period is near at hand, and that the new

^a James Madison (1750–1836): 4th President of the United States.

^b James Monroe (1758–1831): 5th President of the United States.

^c Andrew Jackson (1767–1845): 7th President of the United States.

^d Martin Van Buren (1782–1862): 8th President of the United States.

^e George Washington (1732–99): 1st President of the United States.

^f Bushrod Washington (1762–1829).

^g Louis-Alexandre Berthier (1753–1815): French marshal.

^h See Owen, *A New View of Society* (1857 edn), pp. 111–12 (*infra*, vol. 1, pp. 36–7).

spiritual manifestations are destined to be the great lever in this movement, and that the stone with which the builders up of society refused to build, will become the chief stone of the corner.

Notwithstanding the combined underhand opposition of the Church and all other religious sects, aided on all occasions by the Malthusian modern political economists, the principles which I advocated, and the public practices, opened to all parties at home or from abroad, which I continued to pursue without turning to the right side or to the left, made great way daily with the thoughtful and disinterested among all classes.

The poor law guardians in Leeds were in difficulties about maintaining their increasing poor, arising from a want of employment for those willing and able to work. They had turned their attention to the plans which I had so publicly spread abroad by my various publications, and I was requested to visit Leeds and give them a more full and detailed explanation of the practical measures which I recommended. In consequence I took there my model of the proposed new surroundings in which to place the working classes, and thus, if rationally followed up, to destroy poverty for ever from the face of the earth.

On my arrival in Leeds, a public meeting was called, and the Mayor (George Banks Esq.,)^a presided. [See his letters.]^b The meeting was crowded to excess. I explained my views, not only by word, but through the model, to the eye, the best of all modes of instruction. The meeting became enthusiastic in its applause, and was unanimous in its favour and warm approval, as intelligent unprejudiced minds must ever be, and which was afterwards evinced by the practical measures which the poor law guardians immediately commenced. [See Mr Robert Oastler's^c and Mr John Cawood's^d letters,^e which will be published in my correspondence.]^f

They determined to appoint three delegates, upon whose practical knowledge, judgment, and integrity, they could depend, to visit New Lanark, and to report what was the actual practice in that now far-formed establishment. Mr Edward Baines,^g proprietor of the *Leeds Mercury*, and father of the present Right Hon. M. T. Baines,^h and of the present editor of the *Leeds Mercury*,ⁱ (of

^a George Banks, of Banks and Goodman, Hunslet Lane (in 1827) was a Leeds stuff-merchant. He was Mayor of Leeds in 1818–19.

^b These letters have not survived.

^c Robert Oastler (1748–1819): father of Richard Oastler.

^d John Cawood (1777–1846): steam engine manufacturer, later of Blenheim Terrace, Leeds; much active in Leeds philanthropic works, such as the House of Recovery, and later the first Chairman of the Board of Poor Law Guardians; Anglican and Conservative.

^e These letters have not survived.

^f Owen's correspondence was never printed.

^g Edward Baines (1774–1848): journalist and Liberal MP 1847–59. On the visit, see Edward Baines, *The Life of Edward Baines, Late M.P. for the Borough of Leeds* (1851), pp. 103–5.

^h Matthew Talbot Baines (1799–1860): the eldest son of Edward Baines, MP.

ⁱ Sir Edward Baines (1800–90): editor from 1818; historian; free trader; friend of Brougham.

whom I will afterwards speak,) – Mr John Cawood, a wealthy manufacturer, and an important and very active member of the town council, – and Mr Robert Oastler, a highly respected citizen of Leeds, and father of the afterwards popular and well-known Richard Oastler, – were the delegates appointed.

These gentlemen came – fully and closely examined the schools, mills, machine manufactories, brass and iron founderies, and the unique village arrangements for providing food and clothes, and the pleasure grounds, etc, for the improvement, comfort, and happiness of the workpeople, the great majority, about 2,500, remaining stationary inhabitants of the village, all of which was the property of the company. The report made by these gentlemen on their return, was printed and widely circulated, and it is a full answer to the many would be opposing objections; because this superior condition of the schools, mills, and establishment generally, was effected without religious interference, and solely by the dictates of common sense, applied to the study of humanity, of its natural wants, and of the easy natural means of supplying those wants, as far as the irrationality of all religions would admit of these remedies being applied. (The printed authentic report, as made by these three gentlemen, is given in the Appendix.)^a

All of these gentlemen while living, although differing from me in their religious views, were ever most kind and hospitable to me whenever I afterwards visited Leeds, and when I was with them their greatest pleasure seemed to be to converse about the schools, people, and establishment, at New Lanark, as being the most advanced working, and the best and happiest population they had seen, and they could not conceive how such results were attained.

I was often much amused with earnest and sincere religious persons who came to visit and inspect the schools and establishment. After expressing their astonishment and great delight with the wonderful results, as they called them, which they saw, so complicated, and yet combined in such a manner as to work together with the regularity and harmony of clockwork, they would say – ‘Ah! Mr Owen, if you would but add to all these beautiful proceedings our religious views, your establishment would be perfect, and there would be nothing more to wish for.’

I would then put a few questions to them in this manner – ‘You approve of what you have seen in practice throughout all the departments of the establishment – schools, mills, village stores, and the appearance and manners of the people?’

‘Yes; nothing that I have seen elsewhere,’ (or something similar in meaning,) ‘can be compared with the order, system, and arrangement of the whole, or with the evident harmony and delight of the children, or the apparent self-satisfaction and happiness of the workpeople.’

^a See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 253–60.

'But,' I continued, 'you are very desirous I should introduce your religious views?'

'Yes; that is the only thing now required.'

I then would ask the well-meaning party, whether Churchman, Catholic, Dissenter, Quaker, (or whatever might be the religious belief which they had been taught,) whether they had ever seen such practical results produced by any persons possessing their religious opinions? 'No, they had not' – was the answer without exception, from every one; and the number of those well-intentioned kind-hearted men and women who came with the hope of converting me, each to their own peculiar religious views, and thus to save me from everlasting perdition, was very great, and continued so until I left the establishment.

My final reply to all these kind friends was – 'When you can show me a similar practice created by those of your belief, I will then investigate your particular views of religion more fully than I have yet done. But I have most conscientiously examined all the religious faiths of which I could obtain authentic information, yours among the number, and I have not yet discovered one of them that was calculated to produce the practice, which you have so highly approved. You very naturally, as you have been taught, desire my practice with your faith and religious prejudices. My experience leads me to know that your religious views and this practice are incompatible. They are like oil and water, and never can be made to unite. Your mind has been so trained and educated from infancy, that you would conscientiously prefer your faith without the practice, to having that practice without the faith. I know this from having been much in the interior of the various sects of religious minds, and knowing well the limited circle of their ideas.'

I preferred the good and happy practice without these sectarian faiths, to any of them without the practice of goodness and happiness.

Knowing well that pure love and charity, the only foundation for real goodness and happiness among the human race, and all the religions of the world as they have been taught to this day, are directly opposed to each other, and never can be united, my plans were all laid to gradually supersede these religions of opposing repulsive and irrational faiths, by the practical religion of love and charity for our race, irrespective of colour, country, class, sect, sex, party, or difference in natural organisation or constitution; and thus to attain happiness, the great object of humanity, as well as of all that have life.

The religions of the world are and ever have been the real cause of all falsehood, disunion, and crime, and of all the miseries of the human race, as is so obvious at this day to all who can observe, reflect, and deduce sound or rational conclusions from such observations and reflections.

This subject must be now fairly met in front, and without the shadow of turning from the direct road to real knowledge, goodness, and happiness; for until this perpetual source of falsehood, disunion, crime, and all the miseries which these evils necessarily force upon the human race, be removed, it would

be most vain and useless to attempt or to talk of measures to give wisdom, wealth, goodness, and happiness, to the human race.

Where now, among what people, shall we go to find the language of truth, and the practice of union, love, and charity? And yet all these religions *profess* to teach truth, union, love, and charity.

To all whose minds by false training and educating have been made irrational, not to say insane, what I am writing will appear as an unknown language, not one word or idea of which can they comprehend. And who has not from birth been thus injured, physically and mentally, by a false training and education, and by false human external conditions?

Humanity has ardently desired truth, union, goodness, love, charity, liberty, equality, and fraternity. *All* these are necessary ingredients for the attainment of rationality, wisdom, wealth, goodness, and happiness. Shall we find these *natural virtues* and their *results* among the old nations of the world, in China, Japan, India, Persia, or in more modern nations – Russia, Turkey, Austria, France, Prussia, or any of the other European kingdoms and principalities; or in Popedom, or in Great Britain, or in the United States?

Listen, my friends of the human race, to the first voice of truth that has ever been fully spoken to you, and this universal truth shall set all nations free, and make man for the first time in his history, from his creation, a rational, good, wise, and happy being, having love and charity for all of his race, and through that knowledge of himself which can alone create universal love and charity, all will be united as one man, and each will thus, with the highest pleasure to every one, acquire the essence of the wisdom of all. And man will hereafter perpetually progress in wisdom, love, and happiness. Listen and open your ears and your minds to receive the most important truths that man has yet spoken to man.

All the Religions of the World are based on total ignorance of all the fundamental laws of humanity, and of the facts of undeviating perpetual occurrence.

Hence their hatred of truth, the *All Good of Humanity*. Hence the two most advanced nations of modern times are now governed by falsehood, fraud, and force, and the population of Great Britain are held in such physical and mental (that is religious) bondage, that at this day, called an enlightened period of human existence, all, from the highest to the lowest in power and intellect, are afraid and dare not to speak the truth openly and fully before their fellow men. And no wonder that all are thus cowed, and made so grossly irrational, when it is discovered that all religions are based on the false notions that man makes his own qualities of body and mind; that he can believe or disbelieve at his pleasure; and that he can love and hate at the dictates of others, or against his own natural feelings.

These gross falsehoods are the sole cause of all disunion and crime, and now of ignorance and poverty and all their evil consequences.

Seeing and knowing this, and that the religions of the world, so deeply

rooted as they are made to be by early training, are the horrid monsters, and united are the real demons of humanity, which swallow up all its rationality and happiness, can you, my reader, after one moment's reflection on what has been written in these pages, wonder that I should think so little of all worldly considerations, and of life itself, as I did when in the great public meeting held in the metropolis in August, 1817, I so openly and fearlessly dared to denounce all the religions of the world, as containing too much error to admit of happiness even in paradise itself, were any of them to be suffered to enter to disunite its inhabitants, to create crime, and to destroy love and charity.

Fully conscious, as I am, of the misery which these religions have created in the human race, which they now create, and which they must create while supported by the authorities of the world and a public opinion of ignorant presumption, I would now, if I possessed ten thousand lives and could suffer a painful death for each, willingly thus sacrifice them, to destroy this Moloch, which in every generation destroys the rationality and happiness of about a thousand millions of my poor suffering fellow men and women.

This knowledge and this feeling will explain, not only the cause of that denouncement in 1817, but that of the forty years undeviating contest which I have waged against this monster of ignorance and wickedness; for from the time I made that, to the world, astounding declaration against all the religions of the world, to the period when I write these lines, it will in six months be just *forty years* that I may say 'I have been grieved with this generation,'^a while it has been passing through the wilderness of ignorance and gross superstitions.

During this period, as I fully anticipated, I have been reviled, denounced as an infidel, and opposed in every one of my various attempts to liberate the human mind from slavery, and from all poverty or the fear of it.

Yet when I consider the magnitude of my supposed offending against what has hitherto been taught as true and good, I am surprised at the small amount of evil which I have suffered, and the extent of inward and outward happiness which I have enjoyed.

Unknowing in what form or manner the Intelligence and Power exists, which creates, un-creates, and recreates all forms eternally throughout the universe – an Intelligence and Power far beyond the faculties of humanity hitherto to comprehend – yet am I compelled to believe that this Intelligence directs all things within the universe to produce the best possible ultimate results that the eternal elements of the universe will admit. And this supreme Creating Mind, Intelligence, Energy, or call it what you will, has to me, in a wondrous manner, directed all my measures, without a particle of merit being in any way due to me, so as to enable me to sustain this long contest, not only without physical or mental injury, but, as far as I can judge from my knowledge

^a See for example Hebrews 3:10.

of human nature under its present most unfavourable conditions and surroundings, with a greater degree of continually sustained happiness than has fallen to the lot of any I have known.

This may have arisen from the convictions which I have been compelled to receive respecting humanity, and how the created and educated character of all men has been forced upon them.

With this knowledge I have been obliged to feel pity and compassion for the characters called the worst, in proportion to their defects created for them by the ignorance of society, and for my most violent opponents, knowing that they thought they were doing their duty by opposing what they had been taught to call an infidel – yet such an infidel as would at any time willingly have sacrificed his life for the happiness of all.

The enjoyment of my life has been greatly promoted by the undoubted love and untiring kindness of all with who I have ever lived, and of a numerous association of disciples, from whom I have continually received the most pleasant attentions, in many cases amounting to a devotion to which I was in no way entitled; and I have often warned them against the injurious influence of *names* upon the independence of mind and of free thought on all subjects.

I have had much difficulty in convincing many that the authority given to names had been through all past ages most injurious to the human race, and that at this day their weakness of intellect was destructive of mental power and independence. That *truth* required no name for its support; it substantially supported itself. But that falsehood and error always required the authority of names to maintain them in society, and to give them ready currency with those who never reflected or thought for themselves. Had it not been for the baneful influence of the authority given to names, this false, ignorant, unjust, extravagant, cruel, and misery-producing system, of individual interest opposed to individual interest, and of national interests opposed to national interests, could not have been thus long maintained through the centuries which have passed. The immense – the incalculable superiority of the true, enlightened, just, economical, merciful, and happiness-producing system, of union between individuals, nations, and tribes, over the earth, would have been long since discovered and practised, and the Millennial state of man upon the earth would have been now in full vigour and established for ever.

What division, hatreds, miseries, and dreadful physical and mental sufferings, have been produced by the names of Confucious, Bramah, Juggernaut, Moses, Jesus, Mahomet, Penn,^a Joe Smith,^b Mother Lee,^c etc, etc, etc! If any

^a William Penn (1644–1718): English Quaker and founder of Pennsylvania.

^b Joseph Smith (1805–44): founder of the Mormon sect of Christians.

^c Mother Ann Lee (1736–84): founder of the Shaker or Shaking Quaker sect of Quakers, who emphasised celibacy, spiritual rebirth and Christ's Second Coming; active in America from 1774, and highly successful, with at least 18 colonies formed before 1861.

of these could have imagined that their names should cause the disunion, hatred, and suffering, which their poor deluded followers and disciples have experienced, how these good or well-intentioned persons would have lamented that they had ever lived to implant such deadly hatred between man and man, and to cause so much error and false being between those whose happiness can arise only from universal union of mind and co-operation in practice, neither of which can any of the religions of the world as now taught and practiced ever produce.

Listen! men of *all* religions, and especially the authorities and present directing powers of each! and let what I am going to say sink deep into your minds, and ponder well upon every word which shall be stated.

The reign of all your religions is coming to an end. I trust it will be a peaceful and happy termination for yourselves, and a joyful one for all the nations of the earth. And should it not be so, it will be because you have been trained and educated from birth in error, and have thus been made to be obstinate in error, against glaring universal facts, right reason from those facts, and against the plainest dictates of common sense.

‘What!’ you will all now naturally exclaim, ‘are you going to deprive us of our long cherished religion, on which our hopes of heaven depend, and by which loss you will leave the human mind baseless for good, and a wild waste of errors and of misery?’

No! my friends, I am not going to deprive you of religion; only of its errors; for true religion can alone create and secure permanently the goodness, the wisdom, (which includes knowledge and its right application to all human affairs,) and the everlasting happiness of man through all his changes through eternity.

‘What,’ you will now ask, ‘is this *true* religion?’

It is the essence of all your religions, freed from the garbage with which man in his inexperience of his own nature, and while his reasoning faculties have been undeveloped and in the progress of their growth, has more or less surrounded the modicum of truth in each, which all of you have most innocently called and believed to be the *true* religion. This essence is the spirit of pure undefiled universal love and charity for man, applied to daily practice in voice, manner, and act, and of love for that energy and power which composes, decomposes, and recomposes perpetually the elements of the universe, and which is called God, or by some term similar in signification; but which term or word, so used, makes a different impression upon minds differently combined by nature, and differently trained and educated.

Now, as man can do no good to this, to us, yet mysterious ever-acting power throughout the universe, or God, man has no other rational means of showing his love to God, except through his unceasing love in daily practice to man, and in showing mercy to all that has life, as far as is practicable with safety to his own life and rational existence.

Now this true religion of love and charity, evident in voice, manner, and act, daily to all of human-kind, and in showing mercy to all sentient life, will

create an entirely *new system* in forming the character of the human race, in constructing society through all its ramifications, and in governing all human affairs. This great change, as it will be given to the world through me as the human agent, would be, according to past unfortunate custom, called the 'Owenian' system of society. Now 'Owenian' has no more meaning than any of the names of authority through past ages, and which have created such deadly feud, hatred, and sufferings between different divisions of the human race; and in future every means should be adopted to prevent this most lamentable practice through the future history of man upon the earth.

This new state of existence may be called 'The Millennium;' or 'The Rational State of Human Existence;' or 'The Natural State of man, arising from his Physical and Mental powers being rationally developed;' or 'The Union of Humanity for the Happiness of all;' or 'The Brotherhood of the Human Race;' or by any other yet more expressive designation. But avoid personal names, as you would avoid a serpent or a hungry boa constrictor.

I will now return to the narrative of my life. The establishment at New Lanark had created great excitement among the active public, making many friends and many opponents – and well it might.

Its friends saw in the distance a possible escape from disunion, sin, and misery. Its opponents saw in the distance the destruction of their so much cherished sectarianism, vested interests, and private property. These were powerful forces on both sides.

I soon perceived that the enlightened good were arranging themselves on the one side, the ignorant and prejudiced good, with the ignorantly selfish, on the other. The first in favour of my 'New View,' the last in favour of 'things as they are.'

I find on referring to my correspondence, that my 'Observations on the Manufacturing System,'^a and the measures which I had proposed to remedy some of the great evils which it had produced, and to prevent the yet greater which it was in its present state calculated to create, had made a favourable impression for me among all the members of the cabinet, particularly with Lords Liverpool, Sidmouth, and Castlereagh, and Mr Canning,^b the Queen, Prince Regent, Dukes of York, Cumberland, Kent, Sussex, Cambridge, and Gloucester, Prince Leopold, Princess Charlotte, Duchess of Kent,^c and in fact

^a *Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System* (1815) (see *infra*, vol. 1, pp. 111–19).

^b George Canning (1770–1827): foreign secretary 1807–9, 1822–7. In 1821, Canning, on the suggestion of Wilberforce, opposed a commission to enquire into New Lanark.

^c Charlotte of Mecklenburg (1744–1818).

George Augustus Frederick (1762–1830), later George IV.

Duke of Cumberland: Ernst August (1771–1851).

Duke of Cambridge: Adolphus (1774–1850).

Duke of Gloucester: William Frederick (1776–1834).

Prince Leopold: Leopold George Frederick of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld (1790–1865).

Princess Charlotte (1766–1816): daughter of George III.

Victoria, Duchess of Kent (1786–1861).

with all the members of the Royal Family, and with considerable numbers among the highest nobility and most distinguished men and women of the day, – as will be seen when my correspondence is published.

My Essays on the ‘New View of Society and the formation of Character,’ had, as I have stated, now passed through five superior editions, had been translated into French and German, and had attracted the attention of the leading European and American governments, and were well received by most of them, and not opposed by any of them. [See the letters of my foreign correspondents, addressed to myself and to my friend and partner, and agent with foreign governments, John Walker, Esq., of Arno’s Grove, Southgate, Middlesex.]^a

I had also with me Mr Wilberforce,^b Mr Thornton, and Mr Charles Grant,^c Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, and father of Lord Glenelg,^d who, with his brother the eloquent member of parliament,^e who had afterwards an official appointment in India, were most friendly to my views, and to a greater or less extent aided and promoted them; as also did, perhaps to a somewhat less extent, on account of his sectarian views, Mr Zachary Macaulay,^f father of the present celebrated historical and former eloquent MP.^g

Among innumerable others who took a lively interest in aiding my measures, were Lord Lauderdale,^h of whom more hereafter. Also the Marquis,ⁱ and especially the Marchioness of Hastings, while the Countess of Loudon,^j and after her marriage with the Marquis; the Earl of Harrowby;^k his brother Mr Rider;^l John Smith, Esq., MP; Mr Hoare, Senior, banker; Henry Hase, chief cashier of the Bank of England; Mr Nathan Rothschild, the celebrated founder of his house, and the truly good and excellent Madame Rothschild,^m of both of whom, more hereafter; Mr, now Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, his lady, and

^a These letters have not survived.

^b William Wilberforce (1759–1833): evangelical philanthropist, MP, founder of the Society for the Suppression of Vice (1802).

^c Charles Grant (1746–1823): Clapham Sect MP (1802–18) and philanthropist.

^d Charles Grant, Lord Glenelg (1778–1866): free trade politician.

^e Sir Robert Grant (1785–1838): first elected MP for Elgin Burghs in 1818. In Parliament he championed the cause of Jewish emancipation.

^f Zachary Macaulay (1768–1838): evangelical abolitionist and philanthropist.

^g Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–59), the first part of whose *History of England* appeared in 1848.

^h James Maitland, 8th Earl of Lord Lauderdale (1759–1839): Whig and later Tory MP, liberal reformer.

ⁱ Francis Rawdon, 1st Marquis of Hastings (1754–1826): soldier and Indian colonial administrator.

^j Lady Flora Mure Campbell, Countess of Loudon (1780–1840): wife of the Marquis of Hastings.

^k Dudley Ryder, 1st Earl of Harrowby (1762–1847).

^l Henry Ryder (1777–1836): successively Bishop of Gloucester and of Lichfield and Coventry.

^m Hannah Rothschild (1783–1850): wife of Nathan Meyer Rothschild.

their family, of whom also more hereafter; Sir Charles Gray,^a late Governor of Jamaica, of whom I shall give an anecdote subsequently.

To these may be added, as especial friends, Viscount and Viscountess Torrington,^b Sir William de Crespigny,^c Mr, afterwards Sir Robert Liston,^d our, at the time, most efficient Ambassador to many courts – see later in my history an interesting account of him in one of his visits to me.

Of men of great practical knowledge who were much interested in my views and practical measures, were Mr William Strutt, of Derby, father of the lately made Lord Belper,^e and his brother Joseph, two men whose talents in various ways and whose truly benevolent dispositions have seldom been equaled.

And as friends, although not disciples, the wealthy Richard Arkwright; Mr Samuel Oldknow; the Marslands, of Stockport, Samuel and Peter; Mr Simpson; Messrs Maconel and Kenedy of Manchester; Messrs Gott,^f Banks,^g Goodman,^h Cawood, Baines, etc, of Leeds; all at the time brother cotton-spinners. [See their letters.]

Among the literary men and women who were friendly to my views, were Mrs Fletcher, so long, and I believe still considered Queen of the Unitarians,ⁱ of whom more hereafter; Miss Edgworth, Miss Porter,^j William Godwin, William Roscoe,^k Thomas Clarkson, of anti-slavery memory, and many of the liberal writers of the day, whose names, except that of John Minter Morgan,^l do not now occur to me.

Among those who were very friendly, but were opposed to me on some points of political economy or politics, were the Rev. Mr Malthus; James Mill, of the India House, and the friend of Jeremy Bentham, my partner in the New

^a Sir Charles Edward Gray (1785–1865): judge and colonial administrator.

^b George Byng, 6th Viscount Torrington (1768–1831): a close friend of Owen, who was godfather to one of his sons. His wife was Frances Harriet Byng (1786–1868).

^c Sir William de Crespigny, 2nd Baronet (1765–1829) and radical MP, who often defended Owen in the House of Commons. Like Owen, he opposed paper currency, was suspicious about the post-war resumption of cash payments, and supported various plans for poor relief.

^d Sir Robert Liston (1742–1836): diplomat.

^e Edward Strutt (1801–80): son of William Strutt; friend of Bentham and Mills; Liberal MP 1830–47; made Baron Belper in 1856.

^f Benjamin Gott (1762–1857): son of a surveyor; in 1792 built the first large woollen factory in Yorkshire, Bean Ing.

^g Probably George Banks, stuff-merchant, of Banks and Goodman, Hunslet Lane, Leeds.

^h Probably George Goodman (1792–1859): magistrate and MP, knighted in 1852; or his brother John Goodman (1789–1869), of Goodman & Elam. Their father was Benjamin Goodman (1771–1848).

ⁱ The reference is unclear. Owen may have meant Eliza Flower (1803–46), whose dalliance with the Unitarian leader W. J. Fox caused a scandal of sorts; or Sarah Flower (d. 1848), his wife. But both were dead by 1858.

^j Probably Anna Maria Porter (1780–1832), novelist, or her sister Jane Porter (1776–1850), novelist.

^k William Roscoe (1753–1831): historian, Whig MP and parliamentary reformer.

^l John Minter Morgan (1782–1854): writer, social reformer, and author of various works supportive of Owen's ideas, most notably *Hampden in the Nineteenth Century* (2 vols, 1834).

Lanark, establishment, of whom more hereafter; Messrs David Ricardo, MP; Joseph Hume, MP; Francis Place; Major;^a Thomas Attwood,^b MP; etc, etc.

Among the leading radical reformers who were personally very friendly, but yet were opposed to my 'New Views of Society' were Sir Francis Burdett,^c MP; Major Cartwright;^d Henry Hunt,^e MP; William Cobbett,^f MP; Feargus O'Connor,^g MP; Mr John Frost;^h Mr Ernest Jones;ⁱ and many others.

My knowledge of the formation of character enabled me to know how their characters were formed, and therefore enabled me to differ from them in opinion and yet to do justice to their good intentions, although their measures always appeared to me to arise from want of a comprehensive knowledge of human nature and society, and from their supposing that violence and force could effect any permanent good, while mind remained unconverted.

In fact, my 'New Views of Society,' and their application to practice, imperfect as it was at New Lanark, had aroused the dormant mind of the sectarian and sceptic world to investigate a new mine of knowledge, which, if followed through all its various ramifications, would lead to an entire change in principle, spirit, and practice; but for such a radical change in thought and action, when these changes were first openly and fully announced to the wondering world, now forty years ago, it was not prepared. And it has required the constant action of forty years upon the public mind of the civilised world, to prepare it for this change, which ultimately no power on earth can prevent or now much retard.

This statement is thus confidently made, from a thorough knowledge that the existing falsely based system of society is permanently, in principle, spirit, and practice, highly injurious to every one of every rank and class, from the highest to the lowest, and from the most learned to the most ignorant; and that the proposed truly based new system of society, for forming character, creating wealth, reconstructing society, and governing all the affairs of men, will insure, without chance of failure, the permanent well-being, well-doing, and perpetual progress in wealth, knowledge, wisdom, union, and happiness, of the human race.

^a Major [Torrens], who was one of Owen's main critics, from a Malthusian perspective, during the meetings in August 1817. See *infra*, vol. 1, p. 188.

^b Thomas Attwood (1789–1856): political economist, MP, and currency reformer.

^c Sir Francis Burdett (1770–1844): radical MP.

^d Major John Cartwright (1740–1824): political reformer.

^e Henry Hunt (1770–1835): radical politician and a leading opponent of Owen's plans in 1817. (See *infra*, vol. 1, p. 215.)

^f William Cobbett (1762–1835): writer and radical reformer, and critic of Owen's plans in 1817 in particular.

^g Feargus O'Connor (1794–1855): Chartist leader and often a critic of socialism, though Owen apparently attempted to form an alliance with him in 1843.

^h John Frost (d. 1877): Chartist.

ⁱ Ernest Jones (1819–69): Chartist who approved of some types of socialism (he was a friend of Marx and Engels), but did not especially favour communities such as Owen proposed.

Perceiving these results, the best and most advanced minds at home and abroad have been at once attracted to the truth and inestimable value of the new system, when I have had an opportunity of fully explaining it to them. But they have, in many cases, said – ‘We do not see how it is to be introduced into practice.’ Or ‘It is too true, good, and beautiful, to be adopted by the present ignorant, deceptive, and selfish population in all countries.’ Or, ‘The system which you advocate, although true in principle, and however desirable, is in the present state of society, impracticable.’ – Or some such conclusion. While the more advanced practical men were really desirous to see the experiment carried into execution.

[See the subscriptions in Great Britain and Ireland for this object, and the letters of approbation of my views for practice and the expressions of desire to see the new system as I advocated it carried fairly into execution.]^a

But the period for the adoption of this advanced phase in the history of humanity, was not come.

To clear away the rubbish of prejudices, so deeply implanted in all minds by the errors of the existing false and most baneful system for forming character and governing the population of the world, required not only the open decided public attack which I had made upon all the superstitions of the world, but a continued incessant attack on the errors of the whole system, in principle, spirit, and practice, for the forty years which have elapsed since that ever memorable denunciation of this undeveloped and misery-creating system was made.

And it is now only that these prejudices have been sufficiently overcome in the advanced minds of the world, to admit of the new and true system of society being advocated, to produce a beneficial result for practice upon the public.

I see by reference to my letters, that I attended a public meeting with the first Sir Robert Peel, to prevent if possible his son’s measure, as chairman of the Bullion committee, to return to cash payments.^b

Sir Robert was too much a man of business not to perceive the gross injustice of this measure, and the great suffering it would inflict upon a large portion of the middle and lower classes; and seeing and knowing the certainty of these results, he came to me in great agitation, to ask me to go with him to the meeting, to endeavour to create a public feeling against it, sufficiently strong to prevent the evils which his then inexperienced son and those friendly to his measures were about to bring upon the country.

^a A good sense of the social composition of Owen’s subscribers emerges from the *Proceedings of the First General Meeting of the British and Foreign Philanthropic Society* (1822), and from Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 240–1.

^b Redemption of banknotes in gold was suspended by the Bank Restriction Act in 1797 and reintroduced in 1819, causing deflation.

When will those called practical men learn that now, were it not for the error of making gold and silver money, and wealth private property, there would be no poverty or fear of it; but that all might, with health, ease, and pleasure, superabound at all times, without contest or competition, in the use and enjoyment of the most valuable wealth; and that, too, by the most simple yet beautiful surroundings, which will be gradually developed as I proceed with my life.

At this meeting Sir Robert Peel the elder said, to show the injustice of this measure, – ‘Its operation on society will be to double my property and the property of all other capitalists; while it will injure the operative producers and debtors in the same proportion, and, by its gradual operations of returning to cash payments, will double the national debt, or, which is the same thing, will double the amount of real wealth which will be required to pay the interest of it.’

I have seldom seen a man in public so excited by strong affectionate feelings as Sir Robert Peel was on this occasion, from the magnitude of the evil which he foresaw his favorite son was about to bring upon the most helpless portion of the population of his country. He told the meeting, with a faltering voice and tears in his eyes, that this was the first time there had been a difference of opinion between him and his son Robert, – who was afterwards the well-known prime minister, and who, if he had lived, would have undone all which he had erroneously done through Conservative association in his younger and inexperienced life.

Visiting the father very often at his house in Upper Grosvenor Street, especially from 1815 to 1820, I occasionally met his son, who was then young in the ministry, but without practical knowledge, yet full of Oxford learning and injurious prejudices. The contrast at this time between the practical knowledge of the father and son, was most obvious. But the natural talent of the son, with his growing experience, led him by degrees to overcome the many disadvantages of an Oxford formation of character, and especially that of commoners with the nobility – both being much injured by the assumption of the one and the submission of the other, and also by the extent of false or useless learning, as it is called, which is forced into the minds of all who are educated at Oxford and Cambridge.

In the years 1817, '18, and '19, many public meetings were held to promote more or less directly the peculiar measures which I recommended, and the new views in principle which I advocated.

At the meetings held in '18 and '19, his Royal Highness the Duke of Kent usually presided as chairman, assisted by his brother the Duke of Sussex, although the latter was a decided Whig politician, and after the death of the Duke of Kent, whose mind was too expanded and independent to be limited within the bounds of party politics, his brother became an out-and-out supporter of the Whig party, and most faithful to it, from his desire to give his aid to what he deemed to be the most liberal practical party in his day.

The result of one of these public meetings, at which the Duke of Kent presided, was to appoint a committee to promote the views which I had publicly advocated for the relief of the poor and to *prevent* poverty and ignorance by national employment for useful purposes, and by a good national education, or a right formation of character. [See, in the Appendix, the proceedings and speeches explanatory of the objects of these meetings, and of the committee, as published in the newspapers at the time, with the names of the committee, and of the subscribers to the fund for carrying the plan proposed for trial into practice.]^a

The interest produced in the metropolis, throughout the two islands, and abroad, was for a time intense among all classes, and especially with the suffering classes. The subject was debated in both houses of parliament, and Lord Liverpool with several of his cabinet were very desirous that it should be fully investigated by parliament. But this measure, so truly important for all parties throughout the empire, was frustrated through the means which I little anticipated.

Lord Lauderdale at this time was one of the most, if not the most active and influential member of the House of Peers. I had become a great favorite with him, was often his visitor, and so much did he desire my conversation and to listen to the explanation of my views, that he ordered his servants always to say he was at home when I called, and if he should be in bed at the time, which was frequently the case, I was to be shown to his bedroom; and our conversations were sometimes long continued while he lay talking and listening to me. This familiar intimacy continued for some time, until one day he asked me how I intended to make my arrangements to give education and useful constant employment to all the poor and working classes.

I had now had engraved at a considerable expense a beautiful picture of these proposed arrangements as they appear when generally adopted, as I expected they would be by the country, on account of the immense improvement it would make in the condition of the poor and working classes, and the still greater improvement which would be produced by these new surroundings in the condition of all classes.

I told his Lordship I would at my next visit bring him one of these engravings, and would explain the whole subject to him. This I did at our next meeting a few days afterwards.

No intelligent unprejudiced mind could avoid being struck with the simplicity, order, and arrangement of this plan for the working classes, at that time as well as now, to train their children for a new, higher, and much superior state of earthly existence, and to enable these children to be beneficial associates with the children of all classes.

^a See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 235–50.

His Lordship was thus struck with the combination of these proposed new surroundings, for training, educating, and usefully employing the poor and working classes. He examined it in silence for some time; when he suddenly exclaimed – ‘Oh! I see it all! Nothing can be more complete for the poor and working classes. But what will become of *us*?’ meaning the aristocracy.

Lord Lauderdale had mind and penetration sufficient to perceive how completely this plan would destroy poverty, gradually instruct and elevate the working class, and ultimately make them independent of the upper classes and of the aristocracy. But he had not the strength of mind and capacity to continue the investigation to its necessary results, or he would have discovered that in the most gradual and peaceable manner this plan would have, in the most natural way in which the change from a false and inferior to a true and superior system can be made, immensely improved the permanent condition of every class, and secured wisdom, goodness, and happiness, to the human race through futurity.

Had Lord Lauderdale pursued the investigation to its natural ultimate results, he would have perceived that this change from evil to good can be effected only by a rational formation of character from birth, and useful employment or occupation through life, within surroundings made to be in accordance with the laws of humanity or of man’s natural constitution.

The subject of my new views was brought before the two houses by petitions to both, signed in its favour by the nobility and gentry of the county of Lanark, of both parties, by several of its presbyteries, and some of them unanimously, by the members of the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and by influential persons of all parties in the country, to whom my proceedings and experiment were well known.

In both houses the motion that the petition should be taken into consideration was moved and seconded by a leading influential member from each of the two great parties which then divided both houses into ministerialists and their opponents; and an interesting debate took place, for which see Hansard’s Parliamentary Reports and the London leading newspapers of that day.^a

In the House of Commons Mr William Smith,^b the then popular member for Norwich, took up the petition while the subject was under debate in the house, and said – ‘Mr Speaker, – I have been carefully examining this petition, and it is the most extraordinary petition I have ever seen presented to this house. It is signed by the leading members of the aristocracy, of the church, the gentry, merchants, and manufacturers, and in fact by persons of all classes and sects in politics and religion, and I therefore, not having previously known anything of its contents, am at a loss to know what can induce these incongruous parties so numerous to sign this petition.’

^a See for example *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 39 (1819), p. 656.

^b William Smith (1756–1835): dissenting MP from 1790, of Norwich 1807–30; radical Whig; supported Catholic emancipation, the anti-slavery movement, and religious toleration.

In the House of Lords it was evident that Lord Liverpool and the leading members of his cabinet were favorable to the full investigation of the subject, and the debate was taking that turn, when Lord Lauderdale arose, and with marked emphasis in his manner and tone of voice, said – ‘My Lords, – I know Mr Owen, and I have examined his plan for the relief of the working classes, as he has published it to the world, and I now tell your Lordships, that if you countenance Mr Owen and his New Views, there is no government in Europe that can stand against them.’

This declaration from a peer of the highest influence in the house, decided the course which government must take in both houses, much to their regret, for they heartily inclined to have the principles and plans which I had so openly placed before the public, fairly tried under the auspices of their administration.

In consequence of this speech of Lord Lauderdale’s, the speakers, both ministerial and their opponents, in both houses, made most complimentary speeches in my favour, and would not vote directly against my application for full investigation into the measures which I proposed, and the motion was lost in both houses by a motion to proceed to the order of the day.

This speech of Lord Lauderdale decided the question for that period among the aristocracy, and of course with all under their influence, which directly or indirectly included all deemed fashionable or respectable.

To this period I had access to all the ministers, and was on friendly terms with the most influential of them. My essays on a new view of society had been very popular, and had passed rapidly through five superior editions; my bill introduced into the House of Commons by the first Sir Robert Peel for the relief of young children and others employed in manufactories had greatly tended to increase my popularity, and although by my open denouncement of all the religions of the world as now taught, this was materially diminished with many, and particularly with all bigots having the contracted views of their sectarian creeds, yet with superior minds at home and abroad I found that that declaration had produced the effects which I intended, to a far greater extent than I had anticipated.

It was from this period that all the respectable booksellers were under the necessity to decline selling my works, and that a strong undermining opposition commenced among sectarians of every creed, and among small minds among all parties, to whom my views in principle and practice were opposed.

Yet the truth and beauty of these views in principle, and their promise of so many advantages in practice, with my antecedents of actual practice at Manchester, and now of twenty years at New Lanark, with my self-sacrifice by my public declaration of there being too much error in all the religions of the world to enable them to make man good, wise, and happy, retained for me a high place in the estimation of the more advanced and independent minds, and a strong feeling of regard and approbation by women of superior attainments and goodness of dispositions in every rank of life.

My model of proposed new surroundings to give education and permanent employment to the poor and working classes continued to be visited by many persons of high rank and distinction of both sexes, natives and foreigners, and this year (1819,) I was invited by the ever-to-be-esteemed and honoured Mr Coke,^a of high agricultural fame, at Holkham, to his celebrated annual sheep shearing, and to accompany our mutual friend, his Excellency Richard Rush,^b the then much respected ambassador in London from the United States. We went together, were most hospitably received by Mr Coke, and during our stay of some days we received especial marks of his attention, although his house was filled with visitors of the highest rank and liberal talent.

The superior Americans were great favorites with Mr Coke. We were at this time fifty guests in his house, and about seven hundred of the leading friends to agricultural improvements from every part of the kingdom were invited, and were accommodated around by his neighbours, and chiefly tenants of superior standing for agricultural acquirements.

In the house with us were the Duke of Sussex; the present Duke of Bedford,^c then Lord Tavistock; Lord Bradford;^d Sir Francis Burdett; Joseph Hume, MP; and many other MP's, foreigners, and strangers, whose names I have forgotten.

The order, arrangement, and harmony, with which this aggregation of so many guests within, and of important operations without, day after day, were conducted, with the kind attention of Mr Coke to every one, and his fine manly self-possession in directing and explaining to his visitors his agricultural experiments and their successful progress, gained the hearts and admiration of every one who had the pleasure of being present at this last most interesting and extraordinary exhibition and gathering of liberal men from all parts of the kingdom and from abroad.

Mr Coke was no ordinary man. He was a decided honest Republican in principle, and no respecter of persons merely on account of their rank. Upon this occasion Mr Rush and myself were especially noticed by him during our visit, and he seemed to take pleasure in giving as much of his confidence. He told us that when he came into possession of the Holkham estate, it was let at 3s. per acre. This price he thought too low, and he required an advance of two shillings per acre. The tenants said they could not afford to give 5s. per acre for land so unproductive, and at this period the county of Norfolk imported considerable quantities of wheat. Mr Coke told them that if they could not afford to give 5s. an acre, he would take the estate into his own hands, and would try what he could make of it. And he told us he was then receiving 25s.

^a Thomas William Coke (1752–1842): liberal Whig MP from 1776–1831; Earl of Leicester from 1837; famous agricultural experimenter.

^b Richard Rush (1780–1859): lawyer and diplomat.

^c Francis Russell, 7th Duke of Bedford (1788–1861).

^d Orlando Bridgeman, 1st Earl of Bradford (1762–1825).

an acre for the whole estate, from farmers who had become wealthy while paying that rent; and that the income of the estate had risen from a low figure when he came into possession of it, to an income exceeding fifty thousand a year, and that through his aid and example Norfolk *exported* large quantities of wheat; proving how much one man of earnest purpose can accomplish when his powers are rightly directed.

Being accustomed in my own proceedings to great order and systematic arrangement on an extensive scale, I was yet surprised to witness the order and arrangement of Mr Coke's proceedings, day after day, on the present occasion, when so many new measures required his personal attention. I expressed to Mr Coke my surprise at seeing no hurry or confusion, while, in the most calm and self-possessed state of mind, he attended day by day to fifty visitors, several of them of high distinction, within his house, and seven hundred during the day were out visitors, but to whom also he was not wanting in every required attention; and I asked the secret of this unique appearance in the management of such varied and extensive operations.

He said – 'I rise at five o'clock, and go into the office of Mr Blackie,^a my steward, and there we quietly arrange the business for the day, and we take an early breakfast, during which the letters and papers by post are brought to me; I examine my own, and attend to those which require immediate replies; assort those for my guests in the house, who, as you see, breakfast punctually at nine o'clock, and while they are at breakfast, as you have witnessed, I bring in the letters and give to each his own.' This he did, and while going round the table he had something kind and appropriate to say to every one, making no perceptible distinction between royalty and the untitled.

Mr Coke continued – 'While I attend to you at breakfast time, the out-of-door business of the day is in active progress. First that for our attention after breakfast and during the morning, and while we are attending to this,' (and every morning was fully occupied, as well as every afternoon and evening,) 'the business for the afternoon and evening is in preparation; and so far you have seen no bustle and confusion; and by the same means I hope you will not perceive any to the end of these public proceedings; for each day's operations have been considered, and as well foreseen as my experience and this establishment will admit.'

And so we found it, though on the third, the great and last day of the public exhibition, all were yet more surprised to see how he managed matters to get through that multitudinous hard day's work. On this morning, the first thing after breakfast was to examine the process of flax spinning on the lawn, by the peasantry of the estate; and an interesting sight it was to see so many healthy happy looking faces so actively occupied in the various processes of this

^a Francis Blaikie, who became Coke's steward in 1816 and retired in 1832.

domestic manufacture, and so expert in every operation, clean in their dress and person, and well conducted in manner, answering the questions put to them with great propriety, without any appearance of degrading servility, exhibiting an independence and self-respect taught them by Mr Coke's strong republican principles.

While this inspection was going on, the carriages and horses were preparing to take the company to see the results of the various improvements and new experiments made on several of his principal farms. The Duke of Sussex and some of the older personages of distinction went with him in an open barouche with four horses. About seven hundred gentlemen and noted agriculturists were on horseback. Mr Coke had provided Mr Rush and myself with horses, and requested we would keep near him the whole day. His practice on this occasion was to ride at a good speed, heading the party, to the farm on which he intended to show and explain the new improvements he had lately made, or experiments in progress. When the party had had time to examine the details of what had been done or was doing, Mr Coke formed the party into a circle around him, and then, in a strong clear voice, explained to those in the carriages and on horseback the process which had been pursued, and the results, and this he did on farm after farm, in a masterly manner most satisfactorily to all present.

After thus examining the operations of several farms at some distance from each other, we were requested to alight and to enter a good-looking house on one of the largest farms; and in this house we found a sumptuous luncheon prepared for the company, which surprised many by its completeness in appearance and its substantial good qualities, and seemed to be enjoyed by all.

After thus again going from farm to farm, we had to return homeward at good speed to dress for an early three o'clock dinner. And this was the great day of this unique festival and exhibition.

All the company were invited to dine in this extensive and most hospitable mansion. It was said that on that day seven hundred gentlemen of England, and some foreigners, dined at tables at which all could see and hear what was said and done; for the prizes for the superior inventions of all things for agricultural purposes, which were brought there from all parts of the kingdom for competition, were to be given by Mr Coke to each inventor and improver who had merited these prizes, so liberally offered to all competitors.

It was also known that in addition to large quantities of other wines and liquors, a pipe of port was drunk at dinner.

The first business after the cloths were drawn, was the commencement of an arduous task for any one except our host, whose constitution, talents, and self-possession, made extraordinary exertions apparently easy to him.

He had around him a number of distinguished guests, accustomed to public speaking, and he seemed determined on this occasion to call their respective powers into useful action. He began by giving an explanatory statement of the

more public and useful qualities of the person whose health he intended to propose, commencing with his Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex, to whom, for his professed liberal views and popular bearing, he seemed much attached; and this caused, as was anticipated, a speech in reply.

In these preliminary complimentary speeches by Mr Coke, he seemed quite at home, and was most happy in his individual applications to each of his guests thus called into especial notice. Among these were the noblemen present, Sir Francis Burdett, Mr Hume, etc, etc, whose speeches were published afterwards in some of the newspapers of the day.^a

Mr Rush and myself were also thus noticed. Mr Rush, as Mr Coke anticipated, made one of the most telling and best speeches of the day, and it was well received by the company. As to myself, I never could make an after dinner speech in which it was necessary to speak of personal good qualities, for I had so often published my conviction that our characters were before and from birth formed for us, and that there could not be any personal merit or demerit, that I could not, consistently with my well-known views on this subject, say anything in after dinner speeches satisfactory to myself, nor, consequently, to others. I therefore avoided them whenever it was practicable.

The healths and speech making having concluded, Mr Coke had then to call up the parties entitled to receive the prizes awarded to them. And calling up one by one, he made most appropriate speeches to each on giving the prizes, of which there were many, and several were given to those living on his own estates.

Mr Coke then invited the company to go and examine the inventions for which the prizes had been awarded; and as these machines were various and numerous, their examination required explanation from their inventors, and this occupied much of the time and attention of Mr Coke, who appeared to be everywhere to assist when asked for his opinion or advice.

A painting was shown of my model of the proposed new villages of union and co-operation for the poor to give them employment and relief from poverty, or the preliminary new surroundings by which to train all, beginning with the lowest, for the rational or Millennial State of Existence upon Earth. This painting was a rough sketch, hastily executed on canvas, put on rollers, and sent down to me from London.

When I was explaining it to the company, the Earl of Albemarle,^b one of the guests, and a near neighbour to Mr Coke, and who became the next year father-in-law to Mr Coke, asked me upon what scale it was drawn, but no scale had been sent with it, as it was enlarged in all its proportions from the model. I was therefore puzzled for a reply, for I had no means there of knowing.

^a See R. N. Bacon, *A Report of the Holkham Sheep Shearing* (1821), pp. 30–46. Owen's speech is given on pp. 61–5.

^b George Thomas Keppel, 6th Earl of Albemarle (1799–1891): soldier and MP.

I mention this, to show the necessity when anything new, and especially when anything opposed to old favoured notions, is brought forward, for great attention to be given to meet every probable objection, even the most frivolous.

After this examination of new inventions, the company returned to the house to tea, which was no sooner over than we were invited to go to the actual sheep-shearing, first to see the quality and condition of the sheep, and then to witness the process of shearing them, which was most skilfully done, upon sheep which attracted great attention and much approbation from the judges appointed to inspect them.

In all this, Mr Coke was active and ready to answer all the numerous questions put to him, either for information or from curiosity, never appearing in the least hurried or unwilling to attend to any one who, desired to address him, or inattentive to the suggestions of any experienced parties seeking information wherever it could be obtained.

The evening was far advanced before this part of the business was concluded, and we were summoned home to supper, and the company commenced this meal at eleven o'clock. The party were not seated formally according to rank or station, but promiscuously; and it so happened that I sat next to Mr Coke on his right, and as at his request I had been near him the whole day, witnessing his multifarious duties and his attentions to everything as it came in regular succession, and seeing him now calm, collected, and untired, after this unceasing action of body and mind, I said to him 'I am truly surprised, after seeing what you have passed through to-day, that you appear as though it had been an ordinary every-day proceeding.'

He said in reply – 'I am really so little tired, that I could now begin the business of the day over again.'

He was now sixty-nine, and his constitution was superior to most men's at forty. His habits were all good, and his daily exercise well calculated to give and to sustain such a constitution.

This was the last public day of this year's sheep-shearing; and events soon occurred afterwards to make it the last sheep-shearing at Holkham.

The out-visitors now dispersed in all directions; but Mr Coke detained his home guests some days longer to enjoy relaxation and amusement, and quietly to see and examine his well-conducted estate and immense private establishment.

His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent had made an engagement, as before stated, to come with the Duchess and her infant to spend three months with me at Braxfield, to make himself fully master of the practical measures which I had adopted at New Lanark for new forming the character of the adults, and new-governing the whole population. And at this meeting the Duke of Sussex and Mr Coke agreed also to visit me in the spring for the same object.

In consequence of these engagements I laid in an additional quantity of

choice wines, and made my other arrangements suitable to provide for the expected distinguished guests.

So long as Prince Edward lived there was a strong brotherly attachment between him and the Duke of Sussex. Where one was, the other was generally present, on all public occasions, and in their private interviews with parties on business.

These proposed visits were not destined to be made. The sudden premature death of Prince Edward,^a and the unexpected marriage of Mr Coke,^b were the causes which deprived me of the pleasure of the association with some of the foremost and best minds in their station of those days, and of the immediate benefit which the rational social system of society would have derived from such minds seeing its preliminary practice to be so effective for good even while opposed by so many prejudices of the old system, and carried into execution under the many disadvantages of a cotton mill establishment. The effect of the happiness produced in the entire population, and the new character formed for the children at that establishment, could not have failed to make an impression on those minds, which, through their independent instrumentality, would have fixed public attention upon such new and important facts, and would have given great facilities to the spread over the civilized world of the knowledge of the principles and practices which could produce such extraordinary beneficial and happy results; and more especially as Lord Liverpool's administration, then in power, was most favourable to my views, although not in sufficient power to contend against the church and the most bigoted and least informed of the public.

No – that system which, in spirit, principle, and practice, is to introduce and establish the Millennial state of goodness and happiness upon earth, was not to be introduced and established by the patronage of persons of rank and station. These could not give stability to falsehood or error, or to any system based on either. While truth, which can withstand the test, and ultimately resist all power opposed to it, requires no patronage of persons nor any factitious aid. Truth, to be permanent, must stand alone on its own foundation. If it needs the aid of names, it is not that unchanging eternal truth which is ultimately to control the human mind, and to govern the population of the world through future ages.

This is that truth which the nations of the earth now seek, and which by seeking they will assuredly find. It is that truth which, when fully understood and consistently applied in practice, will make all to become good, wise, and happy. And such is the GREAT TRUTH 'That the character of man, divine and human, is formed for him without his knowledge, and may now be well formed from birth for all.'

^a The Duke of Kent died on 23 January 1820, at the age of 52.

^b Coke married for the second time in 1822, at the age of 68. His bride, Anne Amelia, was 18.

This truth requires no name for its support. All facts declare it. The whole history of man sustains and confirms it. And it will overcome all the prejudices established against it through the ages which have passed. It is that glorious truth which will set the nations free, and will secure the future happiness of our race.

The new system of society for the re-forming of man and reconstruction of society over the world, was not to be patronised by rank or station, or by any name whatever. Its truth of principle and inestimable value for practice are to establish and maintain it over the earth, overcoming every prejudice and all kinds of opposition. In fact, it was far above and beyond the reach of patronage. I was, however, at the time greatly disappointed to be deprived of the familiar society of men so friendly to my views, for whom I had the greatest regard and esteem, and from whom at that period I had anticipated much assistance in promoting my great object of securing the permanent progress and happiness of the human race.

I have said that after the third public day the guests of Mr Coke were inclined for relaxation from serious business, and to amuse themselves.

The Duke of Sussex was at this period Grand Master of the Freemasons of England, and it was proposed that he should hold a lodge, and should make members of those who were not already masons. A party came to me to request my name to their list. I said I had always avoided becoming a member of any society for amusement, which I imagined was now the chief object of Freemasonry. I had hitherto declined being made a member, and requested now to be excused. The parties said, as it was a harmless society, and tended to create good fellowship and humanity among the members, they would be much pleased if I would consent to be made a member with them. I said if there was nothing ridiculous in the process, I would not resist their wishes. The Duke of Sussex was very frequently present with the Duke of Kent when he came to me, and more frequently when I visited the latter at Kensington Palace, and was therefore well acquainted with my views and objects. When he was told by the parties who came to me that they had obtained my consent to have my name added to the list for new membership, he said – ‘No, by all that is good, were he to witness our ceremonies he would make us all to appear fools. His objects are of a character too serious and extended for him to be occupied with our trifling amusements.’ So I escaped being let into the secrets of Freemasonry.

My duties now called me to the metropolis, to attend to the Factory Bill then in the House of Lords; to watch Sir William De Crespigny’s motion in the House of Commons to take my subject into its consideration, and to attend to the public meeting which I had called, to be held in the Freemason’s Tavern, and to be presided over by his Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, and also to attend to explain my model of proposed new surroundings for the poor and working classes who could not themselves find employment.

These occupations, and superintending the establishment at New Lanark by

directions to the heads of the various departments by correspondence, occupied my time daily from early to late. The public meetings are recorded in the published accounts in the newspapers of the time, and the proceedings in both houses of parliament on my petition for my 'New Views' to undergo parliamentary investigation, are given in Hansard's parliamentary proceedings, and also the progress of both houses in spoiling my Factory Bill for the relief of the children and others employed most injuriously as to age and time in cotton and other factories over the two islands.

In addition, I had to attend the committee appointed at the public meeting to promote my objects, — a committee of which his Royal Highness the Duke of Kent was chairman, and who was the most punctual attendant of all its members. The committee consisted of a long list of the most prominent liberal noblemen and gentlemen, chiefly members of both houses of parliament, and of the principal foreign ministers resident in London, as will be seen on referring to the published list of their names given in the Appendix.^a

But yet to add to these varied occupations, I was under the following circumstances induced to offer myself a candidate to represent in the House of Commons the Royal Burghs of Lanark, Selkirk, Peebles, and Linlithgow.

At the previous general election I published an address to the electors of those burghs, which I published merely for a model address, such as I deemed all candidates for membership in the House of Commons ought to issue, if they intended to benefit their constituents and their country. [See this advertisement in the newspapers of that period.]^b

But not supposing I had any chance of succeeding, not having any intention of canvassing the boroughs, or of being a candidate, I thought no more of it, and continued to attend the parliamentary committees on the Factory Bill, as it was strongly opposed, and often by the most unfair means, by almost all the cotton spinners and manufacturers in the kingdom, except Messrs Arkwright, the Strutts, and the Fieldens.^c

I neither visited nor wrote to nor communicated in any manner with one of the Burghs, and the thought of being a candidate in reality never entered my mind.

To my surprise, on my return home some weeks afterwards, I learned that the Burghs had been kept open for me for a fortnight after my advertisement appeared in the London daily papers, and that if I had returned home during that period, I should have been elected free of cost. This was news which took me by surprise, and I regretted my want of this knowledge at the proper time.

^a See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 240–1.

^b *The Times* . . . Owen's chronology is confused here. He appears to have first run for Parliament on this occasion.

^c John Fielden (1784–1849): of H. and W. Fielden; radical MP for Oldham and factory reformer whose ten-hour bill was passed in 1847. From 1811 he conducted the cotton-spinning firm of Fielden Brothers at Todmorden. Author of *The Curse of the Factory System* (1836).

But now, while occupied in London as previously mentioned I was informed of the demise of Sir John Buchanan Riddle,^a who had become member at the last election,^b and the circumstances just narrated induced me at once to issue an advertisement, [see Appendix,]^c and could I have proceeded immediately, my success would have been certain.^d But I was so continually engaged day by day with attending to the multiplied engagements of important business, that I was under the necessity of neglecting either the more immediate public business, or my apparent private interest in canvassing the Burghs, although my views in becoming an MP were solely to promote great public measures for the permanent benefit of all classes, and especially of the unemployed and uneducated classes. It was at this period, too, I see by documents which have come into my hands, that I had to attend to the Leeds party, who sent deputies to New Lanark to examine and report the result of their investigation – a subject which I have previously mentioned, and more details of which will be given in the volume of my correspondence, in the letters of the Mayor of Leeds (Mr George Banks,) Mr Baines, Mr Cawood, and Mr Robert Oastler, and in the published report of the deputies who were the three last named gentlemen, all men of high standing for integrity, – which report is given in the Appendix.^e

From Leeds I proceeded towards home; but I had to make many calls of interest on my journey. Mail coaches were now general, and in these I usually travelled on my journeys from Scotland to and from London. On one of these journeys, about this period, I was travelling from London to the North, and was the only inside passenger in the coach when it arrived at Newark, where horses were changed; and while this process was going on, both doors of the mail coach were at the same time opened, and a gentleman came in on each side, and they commenced a conversation together. The countenance of one of them immediately impressed me that I had an intelligent and interesting companion, who was seated opposite to me. The strangers sat together, and as they immediately entered into a conversation upon general topics of the day, I concluded they were friends who were travelling together. Their conversation continued for some time, when one said something to my supposed intelligent companion, who was opposite to me, which induced him to say – ‘Why that is Owenism! Who would ever think of anything so absurd?’ At this I opened my ears, and I heard this subject canvassed between them, and I soon found that the intelligent opponent knew little of Owenism, as he called the notions which he had received of it.

^a John Buchanan Riddell, 9th Baronet (c. 1768–1819), MP for Linlithgow Burghs 1812–19.

^b In fact, two elections earlier.

^c See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 332–3.

^d This seems unlikely. Riddell was succeeded by John Pringle. On the election, see *The History of Parliament. The House of Commons 1790–1820*, vol. 2: Constituencies (Secker and Warburg, 1986), pp. 612–13.

^e See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 253–60.

I then said to him – ‘Pray what is this Owenism about which you are conversing?’ My intelligent companion very readily replied, stating the usual mistakes given to the public by those who thought they had an interest in opposing my views, or who had not sufficient capacity to comprehend them. I listened as a stranger to the full explanation of his received ideas upon the subject, and they were truly absurd; enough so to call forth his first exclamation against Owenism.

When he concluded, I said – ‘I must be quite in error upon this subject, for my ideas of it are very different from those you have just stated.’ ‘Then,’ he said, ‘will you have the kindness to explain your views of it?’ I said, ‘Willingly,’ – and I entered fully into its principles and practices, and these we discussed with animation and interest for nearly three hours, when at last he said I am sure you are Spence,^a (the advocate at that time of an equal division of land,) or else Owen.

I then told him who I was, and while we pursued our journey our conversation continued with increasing interest, when, previous to our arrival at Heworth, he said – ‘I am a barrister returning from the Circuit, and I am going to visit my brother and his family, who live a few miles from Newcastle, and you must come and visit them. I will promise you a hearty welcome and a pleasant party.’ I thanked him and said I would endeavour, on some of my journeys from Scotland to London, to accept his kind offer.

I thought the invitation was a momentary travelling impulse, such as are sometimes acted upon and as soon repented of. But he continued urging his request until our arrival at Newcastle, where he stopped at his usual hotel, and the mail drove on to another, where the passengers were accustomed to have supper.

While we were eating our supper, in came my newly-found friend, and he seemed so earnest and anxious that I should remain there all night, and should go with him to his brother’s in the morning, that I at length yielded to his solicitations. This was then Mr Charles Grey, since Sir Charles Grey, and late Governor of Jamaica; a man as much equal to that task as governors of colonies usually are, and only some very untoward circumstances could prevent his success. I made the visit with him next morning, and it proved all he had promised, to its full extent; and I was detained two or three days.

On proceeding afterwards from Newcastle to Carlisle, I had to call upon Lord Brougham, (then well-known as Henry Brougham,) who had interested himself in investigating my views, and who often endeavoured to have them investigated in Parliament.

Mentioning Lord Brougham reminds me of an amusing occurrence which happened to me sometime afterwards on one of my journeys from London to Scotland. I was in the mail coach alone on one occasion, when it stopped to

^a Thomas Spence (1750–1814): agrarian reformer and advocate of land nationalisation and parish management of rents. Spence’s followers were active into the 1830s, and their views were often confused with Owen’s, though Spence never recommended communal production or living arrangements.

change horses at Macclesfield, and while it stopped, (it was a fine warm day,) a gentleman in evening dress mounted the box, looking at me as he passed to get up. He said something to the coachman, and he soon came down again, and entered the coach. In the meantime a crowd was collecting around the coach, and there was much stir without. No sooner had the gentleman seated himself than he said – ‘I am very happy, my Lord, to meet you again so soon.’ I was a little surprised with my new title, and replied – ‘You are under some mistake. Whom do you take me for?’ ‘Lord Brougham.’ ‘You are indeed in error. I have no such claim.’ ‘Oh,’ he said, ‘Your Lordship wishes to travel incognito.’ ‘You are really mistaken,’ I replied. ‘That cannot be,’ he rejoined, ‘for I dined with your Lordship only three weeks since;’ and I could not convince this positive gentleman of his mistake.

He had told the coachman not to proceed until he returned to him, and during this period the crowd around the coach continually increased, all eager to catch a sight of my Lord Brougham; and as no one was there to undeceive them, they were as much pleased and gratified as though they had seen the true Lord himself, and when the coach started, I was greeted with the hurras of the wondering people, who had, as they supposed, seen a Lord, and that Lord, Lord Brougham.

Such were the people at that day. They are now become somewhat wiser.

While I was busily engaged in attending to the parliamentary committee and to other public matters in London, I received intelligence from New Lanark that one of our four large cotton mills had been burned, and all engaged in it were by this accident thrown out of employment. I had immediately to make arrangements to give them occupation, without their being obliged to seek work elsewhere, and to leave the establishment, which to them, from the happiness they now experienced, would have appeared the greatest of misfortunes. I gave the necessary instructions for this purpose, and as soon as I could leave the public matters in which I was engaged, I returned home to see my instructions carried fully into execution, and not one left the establishment on account of this accident, which, when it occurred, created in those who were employed in that department of the establishment the greatest distress and sad forebodings of what would become of them.

This fire occurred at the end of November 1819, and I left London after my last personal communication with the Duke of Kent, my tried friend and best disciple, and of whose death after my return home I was so soon informed.

Little did I then anticipate, that after regretting his death for more than thirty years, his good and kind and enlightened Spirit should take the first opportunity that a medium for such communications offered, to communicate with me and to give me information of deep interest and most important for me to know. And to come in his so well known character to me, and with his usual kindness and consideration for others, in whose well-doing and well-being he continued to occupy himself, exhibiting the same affection and friendship for

them, which he so strongly possessed when in his earthly form upon the earth.

His whole spirit proceeding with me has been most beautiful; making his own appointments; meeting me on the day, hour, and minute he named; and never in one instance (and these appointments were numerous as long as I had mediums near me upon whom I could depend,) has this Spirit not been punctual to the minute he had named.

The unwisely taught, and therefore strongly prejudiced against these new manifestations, cannot believe in their reality, and I greatly pity them. They know not the pleasure and the knowledge which they lose. Some of the most gratifying and satisfying moments of my existence have been when in direct communication with my departed relatives and friends since they left their earthly forms in their graves. These and congenial spirits are now actively engaged in preparing the population of the world for the greatest of all changes in the history of humanity while on the earth in its visible form. And they smile at the puny efforts of the poor mis-taught of the present generation to stay their progress in this heavenly work.

Man, through all the ages which are past, has been created to desire happiness without ceasing. The desire is to day as strong as ever; and the period rapidly approaches when that desire will be gratified to an extent not yet to be imagined by unregenerated man. But of this, more hereafter.

Hastening my departure from the public business which engaged my attention in London, I arrived at home about the middle of December, and was occupied for sometime in completing the new required arrangements consequent on the burning of the mill, so as to give useful and productive employment to all who were thrown idle by that event. This occupied me for some weeks, and the election for the Burghs, for which I had declared myself a candidate, being fixed to take place soon after this, I had, after giving the candidates opposed to me all the benefit of a long first canvass, to visit the Burghs, and see what chance remained for me.

I found that through my delay in London four of the old Lanark voters upon whom I had every reason to depend, had, by being feasted, kept intoxicated, and by other means known at this time to most candidates, been bribed over to my opponent, and by this very unexpected proceeding I discovered this majority of four would be against me, and Lanark was the returning borough.

On my canvass to the other Burghs in which I was kindly assisted by my good friend Admiral Sir Robert Otway,^a we found Selkirk and Peebles positively engaged to Mr Monteith,^b my friendly opponent, and that Linlithgow had declared for me. I thus knew that I should lose the election by my four

^a Admiral Sir Robert Otway (1770–1846).

^b Henry Monteith (c. 1764–1848): MP Linlithgow Burghs 1820–6, 1830–1, Saltash 1826.

turn-coat Lanark voters; but with twenty to one I was the popular candidate with the people, and much were they disappointed at the result. It was however a fortunate result; for my proceedings with the two committees of the Houses of Parliament, and with the general members of both Houses, made it more than doubtful that my time as a member would have been much mis-employed. [For these election proceedings see my correspondence with my family, with Mr Boyd the Mayor of Linlithgow,^a and Lords Liverpool and Melville.]^b I may add that while I was a candidate, Sir Robert Peel, the late premier, wrote to me for my support of the government, expecting my election to be certain.

As an indication of the feelings of the inhabitants of the town of Old Lanark at this period, after I had been more than twenty years their near and always active neighbour, see their invitation to a public dinner previous to the election. See also the letters from the magistrates and town council of the burgh of Linlithgow, in addition to the Mayor's; and it must be remembered that I made it a condition that not one shilling should be expended for me to bribe one voter in either of the burghs. When this election was over, which I lost by four voters, who had promised me their votes, but who were bribed to break their promise, I was during the spring, summer, and autumn, overwhelmed with visitors to see the establishment, and among these many of high consideration at home and abroad, from all of whom, and I do not know one exception, their expressions were of wonder and delight, in seeing that which they never expected to witness on earth – a large promiscuous population of workpeople happy and highly contented, and their children's characters formed for them better than the character of the children of the same age had ever been formed; for it had been formed on the principle of charity and love and kindness, without punishment.

Affection for each other, and affection and esteem for their instructors, were deeply imbedded in the mind and feelings of these children, and they were during the whole period of their instruction the most innocent and happy children yet made under any system ever yet attempted, by which to form the character of humanity.

The precept or principle of action taught to them from their first day's entrance into the school, ('that they should always endeavour to make each other happy,') the youngest infant easily perceived, and was as easily induced, by the example of those previously so instructed, to apply the precept to undeviating practice. And this principle and practice might with incalculable benefit to all of our race be so deeply impressed at this early period on all infants, that it would become a habit never to be forgotten or unused in the every day transactions of life.

^a John Boyd (? d. 1840) was Provost of Linlithgow from 1818–30.

^b Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville (1742–1811).

This experiment with the children of all the population of New Lanark cannot be estimated too highly by the advanced minds of the age in all countries; for it at once opens the path by which all from their birth may have the divine parts of their nature so cultivated by their immediate predecessors, that all shall acquire good habits only, and a character as good as the divine parts of each and the existing knowledge of humanity will admit; and these now united in the training, educating, employing, placing, and governing of each, (for all these enter into the formation of the character of every one,) will produce such a change in the condition of society and of humanity, as can be expressed only by a change from a pandemonium to a paradise.

Let the authorities of this age now turn their attention to this subject, and they will discover that they have attained the knowledge of a moral lever by which they can with ease remove ignorance, poverty, disunion, vice, crime, evil, passions, and misery, from mankind. Place the human race from birth within superior spiritual and material surroundings, and the evils and sufferings of humanity will be no longer experienced, and will be retained on record only to enhance the pleasures of this new existence for man.

The arrangements to well-form the character of each will of necessity included the entire arrangements to well-form and conduct society; for there can be no part of society which does not enter into the formation of the character of every one.

That which I introduced as new in forming the character of the children of the working class may be thus stated –

1st – No scolding or punishment of the children.

2nd – Unceasing kindness in tone, look, word, and action, to all the children without exception, by every teacher employed, so as to create a real affection and full confidence between the teachers and the taught.

3rd – Instruction by the inspection of realities and their qualities, and these explained by familiar conversations between the teachers and the taught, and the latter always allowed to ask their own questions for explanations or additional information.

4th – These questions to be always answered in a kind and rational manner; and when beyond the teacher's knowledge, which often happened, the want of knowledge on that subject was at once to be fully admitted, so as never to lead the young mind into error.

5th – No regular in-door hours for school; but the teachers to discover when the minds of the taught, or their own minds, commenced to be fatigued by the in-door lesson, and then to change it for out-of-door physical exercise in good weather; or in bad weather for physical exercise under cover, or exercises in music.

6th – In addition to music, the children of these workpeople were taught and exercised in military discipline, to teach them habits of order, obedience, and exactness, to improve their health and carriage, and to prepare them at

the best time, in the best manner, when required, to defend their country at the least expense and trouble to themselves.

They were taught to dance, and to dance well, so as to improve their appearance, manner, and health. I found by experience that for both sexes the military discipline, dancing, and music, properly taught and conducted, were powerful means to form a good, rational, and happy character; and they should form part of the instruction and exercise in every rationally formed and conducted seminary for the formation of character. They form an essential part of the surroundings to give good and superior influences to the infants, children, and youth, as they grow towards maturity.

7th – But these exercises to be continued no longer than they were useful and could be beneficially enjoyed by the taught. On the first indications of lassitude, to return to their in-door mental lessons, for which their physical exercises had prepared them, and to which, if properly conducted, they will always return with renewed pleasure. And to receive physical or mental exercise and instruction may always be made to be highly gratifying to the children, when they are rationally treated.

8th – To take the children out to become familiar with the productions of gardens, orchards, fields, and woods, and with the domestic animals and natural history generally, is an essential part of the instruction to be given to the children of the working classes; and this was the practice in my time with the children at New Lanark.

9th – It was quite new to train the children of the working class to think and act rationally, and to acquire substantial knowledge which might be useful to them through after life.

10th – It was quite new to place the child of the working man within surroundings superior to those of the children of any class, as was done in a remarkable manner at New Lanark, by placing them during the day in the first and best institution for the formation of the character of the children of workpeople ever thought of or executed.

But it must be yet some time before these new practical proceedings for the children of the producers of wealth can be duly appreciated; or their importance for the advancement and permanent benefit of society can be comprehended.

It is however time to return to my narrative.

In 1819 another panic occurred in the commercial world, arising from the effects of the proceedings of the Bullion Committee of the House of Commons, under the late Sir Robert Peel as chairman.

These men knew no more than infants what they were legislating about, and had no knowledge of the amount of most unnecessary misery and severe suffering which they by their ignorance were about to inflict upon millions of their fellow subjects over the British Empire.

This was the second panic which they produced, to be followed by one yet much more severe in 1825, and to be succeeded at intervals by others, until

this absurd artificial monetary system of gold and silver shall be abolished, and the human powers, aided by science, shall be set free to produce wealth unfettered by the folly of statesmen and legislators.

Such was the distress in 1819, produced artificially, that thousands upon thousands of the working classes were out of work and starving, and the smaller tradesmen were involved in ruin as they always are when the working class is unemployed.

At this time many active young men between twenty and thirty years of age came to seek employment from me, and would willingly have accepted four or five shillings per week for their services. But our establishment was always fully supplied with our stationary population, who were continued by me without any diminution of their wages for twenty-five years.

Among other districts over the kingdom, the county of Lanark suffered from a great surplus of unemployed workpeople, and it having been noticed that there was no distress or complaint among this population of New Lanark, and that there had not been any for twenty years, I was called upon at a great meeting of the county of Lanark, to express my opinion as to the cause, and to point out an effectual cure for this now felt to be a great evil threatening the prosperity and peace of the kingdom.

In obedience to this request of the county I made a report explanatory of the causes of distress, and included a statement of the means by which a permanent remedy for the want of employment might be beneficially introduced, by society, being reconstructed and rationally arranged. And in this report, for the first time, I explained the science of constructing a rational system of society for forming the character and governing human nature beneficially for all of our race.

It was from this report that Fourier^a obtained all his knowledge respecting the formation of a society limited in number to form a *practical* community; but not knowing the true foundation on which to base society, he made a confused medley of old and new notions, which never can be combined to work permanently together with harmony.

A knowledge of this scientific development of society was forced upon me by thirty years of extensive practice through various departments of the business in real life, and by much study to overcome the many obstacles which stood in the way of combining a scientific arrangement of society to *prevent* the innumerable evils inflicted by error on the human race.

^a Charles Fourier (1772–1837): early French socialist whose plans for small-scale communities paralleled Owen's at many points. He had few followers in Britain, but by the early 1840s, more than Owen in the United States. For his life and ideas, see Jonathan Beecher, *Charles Fourier. The Visionary and His World* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986). On his American followers, see Carl J. Guarneri, *The Utopian Alternative. Fourierism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1991). Despite Owen's assertions, Fourier had conceived of the idea of a new model city as early as 1796.

The report thus presented to the public meeting of the county of Lanark, the late Duke of Hamilton,^a Lord Lieutenant of the County, presiding, and reported upon by six of the leading members of the county, (see in the Appendix this report and the official proceedings of these county meetings respecting them,)^b was the first publication ever given to the world which explained, even in outline, the circle of the practical science of society to form a good and superior character for all, to produce abundance of superior wealth for all, to unite all as members of one superior enlightened family, and to surround the human race with superior physical and mental conditions, or with surroundings to call forth and highly educate all the superior faculties of humanity, and to place all the animal propensities of our nature in their healthy and beneficial subjection to the higher organs, qualities, and powers, so as to make man in the aggregate physically and mentally healthy, good, wise, consistent, rational, and happy.

But when this report was first given to the world, in 1820, the world was quite unprepared to receive or to comprehend such a circle of scientific principles and practices, to work together in harmony to produce health, wealth, unity, wisdom, goodness, and happiness, for all.

Even now, after a lapse of thirty-seven years of continual instruction against old deep-rooted errors and habits, society is scarcely prepared to believe in the possibility of the attainment of so much unity, wisdom, goodness, and happiness, for all humanity. Men have hitherto been trained, educated, and placed, only within the shell of individual ignorance and habits, and have yet but little clear conception of universal truths, or of the immense new powers to be derived from the united mind and action of our race, directed by wisdom and sound practical knowledge, in the pure spirit of love and charity for the artificial and educated differences of all of humankind.

The glorious period when this spirit and this knowledge shall universally prevail is near at hand, and now approaches with giant strides.

Lest these high considerations now open the hearts and expand the minds of all to receive and understand these great truths, and to perceive with how much ease, when once in the right path, the population of this globe may be made superior, physically and mentally, and may be trained and placed so as to enable them all by the exercise of their rational faculties to become by degrees, after one or two preparatory generations, superior rational beings, compared with any of the existing races of men.

It was in this year when all things were rapidly progressing, day by day, at New Lanark, the people highly satisfied, and their children the best and happiest of human beings, that one of my partners, William Allen, returned

^a Alexander Hamilton Douglas, 10th Earl of Hamilton (1767–1852).

^b See Owen, *Report to the County of Lanark* (1858 edn), in Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 261–320 (*infra*, vol. 1, pp. 287–332).

from the continent of Europe, where he had come personally into communication with the Emperor Alexander of Russia and with some other crowned heads, which turned his head into a wrong channel for usefulness. His mind was limited to Quaker prejudices and the Lancastrian system of defective education, which I had materially assisted to make what it was, but the limited minds and religious prejudices of Lancaster's committee would not allow it to proceed further, and William Allen in particular thought this small step the perfection of education.^a

On his return he wished to depreciate all my proceedings, because I had denounced so publicly all the superstitions and false religions of the world; and he began to sow the seeds of disunion between the popular religions of my partners and my more expanded views of the true religion in practice.

He recommended the abandonment of my mode, (to this period so eminently successful in forming a superior and happy character for all the children in New Lanark, and which had contributed so much to improve it and to make their parents happy and highly satisfied with their condition and position,) for his petty Quaker notions and his supposed superior benefits to be derived from religion and by superseding my liberal modes of natural instruction, by his restricted small ideas of a quaker education, without music, dancing, or military discipline, all so essential to form a good and superior rational character.

For some time I paid little attention to his crude and prejudiced notions and I proceeded in my usual course for two or three years; but finding his pretensions to great sanctity and a tender conscience about music, dancing, and military exercises, I gradually perceived the necessity for a separation at no distant day, and in a few years this took place.^b

In the interim I proceeded in my usual course to forward by all the means in my power the great object of my life, the improvement of the condition of humanity, without distinction of colour, country, class, or creed; knowing that a part could never be permanently benefited except through measures that would secure the happiness of all through future ages.

In the early part of this year, 1820, I was deprived of the aid of his Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, as I have previously stated, by his sudden premature death.

But from the magistrates and inhabitants of the Burghs of Lanark and Linlithgow I received much complimentary notice, (see their letters,)^c to

^a On Owen's relations with William Allen, see *infra*, vol. 1, pp. xx-xxi.

^b Allen said that one partner holding more shares than anyone but Owen was 'holding back through alarm' about Owen's religious views (*The Life of William Allen*, 3 vols, 1846, vol. 1, p. 245). Owen had five shares, and Walker three, with Foster, Allen, Bentham, Fox and Gibbs having one each. Nonetheless Walker was on the Continent when Allen, Gibbs and Foster went to New Lanark to assess that religion was being properly taught in the school there.

^c See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 334-5.

compensate me for the loss of my election for these and their two connected Burghs of Selkirk and Peebles; an election lost to me by four votes only, – and votes which had been promised to me, but which were bribed by my opponents, while I had positively declined to bribe a single voter.

In my canvass on this occasion I was accompanied and much assisted by admiral Sir Robert Otway, who was much interested for my success.

Had I succeeded and taken my seat in the House of Commons, I do not know that my ultimate success would have been advanced by it; for society at that time was not sufficiently prepared for so great a change as I have always contemplated. Yet many efforts were made by many friends of my views to bring them into notice and practice, and considerable progress was made in keeping the subject before the public; but the loss of my earnest and devoted and most valued friend and patron, His Royal Highness Prince Edward, to the cause I had undertaken, could not be replaced by any other party, and checked for some time the rapid progress which my 'New Views' were making notwithstanding the great obstacle which I had made to retard their progress, by my so public denouncement of all the superstitions of the world, each falsely called by its supporters 'the true religion.'

But this depression was only of short duration. My official report called for by the county of Lanark a few months after the death of the Royal Duke, and the public measures taken thereon, again aroused public attention to the consideration of the subject; and after this report, with the report of the committee appointed by the county to examine and report upon it, had been published and widely circulated at home and abroad, the subject again became popular, and during the years, '20, '21, '22, and '23, especially excited in England, Scotland, Ireland, on the continent of Europe, and in the United States, an intense interest, and which, although with less prominent, intensity, has been to this day working in all directions through the public mind of the world, until it has now, in all reflecting sound thinking minds, utterly destroyed all faith or belief in the untenable foundation on which all society has been constructed, or in the possibility that it can ever produce a consistent or rational character, unity, prosperity, and happiness, among any portion of the human race, divided and separated as they now are by ignorant and superstitious notions, creating universal repulsive feelings between man and man and nation and nation.

In proof of the great interest felt at this period in favour of my 'New Views of Society,'^a see the proceedings of the county of Lanark to petition both houses of Parliament to take the subject into their most grave consideration – petitions signed, as no other petitions have since been signed, by the leading noblemen, gentlemen, and freeholders, of both political parties, the two

^a For the text, see Owen, *Life*, vol. 1 (1857), pp. 256–332 (*infra*, vol. 1, pp. 25–100).

universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, some entire Presbyteries, and most of the clergy, all being long well acquainted with the extraordinary beneficial results produced at New Lanark by the consistent application to practice of the principles which I so publicly advocated.

Perhaps no evidence could be stronger in favour of new principles and their practices, directly opposed to all popular prejudices, than these so numerous and generally signed petitions by all the contending parties in churches and state throughout this most learned, wealthy, and popular county in Scotland.

It was when these petitions were presented, and were evidently favoured by Lord Liverpool's administration, that to prevent their probable adoption, Lord Lauderdale made his celebrated telling speech, to stop the progress of the petition to the House of Peers.

When he rose in his place, after perceiving that Lord Liverpool was inclined to favour the petition, he said, with most marked emphasis, 'My Lords, – I know Mr Owen well; and I know his plans; having studied them for some time. And I can assure your Lordships that if you give any countenance to Mr Owen and his plans, no government in Europe can stand against them.'

This decided the fate of the petitions in both houses, and in both the previous question was moved. And although I have petitioned both houses session after session to take this subject into their consideration, and although it is the most important that can ever be brought before them, yet to this day they have, civilly, it is true, declined to do so.

But it was otherwise with the public at home and abroad. Our home nobility and men and women of superior acquirements and reflecting minds, and foreigners of high positions, came to New Lanark in increasing numbers and with increased desire to investigate the principles and practice by which it was governed. The French academy voted me their thanks for my report to the county of Lanark, which was translated, with my 'Essays on the Formation of Character,' into French and German; and great excitement was made throughout Europe by that report and the petitions respecting it by the county to which it was presented. [See the various documents given on these matters in the appendix.^a It will be seen from them that no one could have been more flattered than I was during this period by these private and public proceedings, showing how strongly human nature desires truth in principle and equal justice in practice.]

The report which excited all this interest was perhaps the first publication that ever gave a full view of society in its whole extent, including every department of real life necessary for the happiness of our race. It was the first time that the outlines of a science of society were given to the world, and the reasons explained for each part in this new combination; and it was after the

^a See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 311–14.

circulation of this report that the imaginative Fourier imagined his notions for forming a practical community society, mixing old and new principles and practices, which never can continue long to work together.

The reason why this official report of mine to the county of Lanark excited so much general interest, was because I commenced at the foundation of society, and, without regard to any existing popular prejudices, explained in simple, open, and direct terms, the several parts forming the entire circle of human requirements to form a full science of society, to attain and maintain perpetual prosperity, unity, and happiness.

It is now only, however, that the advanced minds of the age begin to comprehend so new a state of human existence; and even yet there are but few so far developed as to be enabled to encompass and compare two totally different systems for forming the character of and governing mankind; systems based on opposing principles and practices, antagonistic to each other in spirit and in the whole arrangements of the business of life.

How many have yet been trained and educated to venture upon such an investigation? How many minds are now unfettered to enter upon it without prejudice in favour of the old false and evil system, or unprejudiced against the new, true, and good system, for the government of mankind?

And yet the old, of necessity, leads to a pandemonium; while the new leads direct to a perpetual paradise on earth, – to the true practical Millennial state of human existence.

The one has created and maintained individual selfishness, which, in spirit, principle, and practice, is opposed to the formation of a rational character, and to the well-being, well-doing, and happiness of all of every colour, country, creed, and class, and of every one upon the earth.

It is remarkable that no one ever attempted to disprove the statement of this report and the reasoning thereon; and who will now attempt the task? None will venture upon it; because it will soon be discovered that it is founded upon self-evident truths, with self-evident deductions from those truths, and they will remain such to the end of time. By reference to documents, I find that it called forth the creation of the 'British and Foreign Philanthropic Society,'^a established with the view of forwarding the knowledge of the principles and practices which I advocated; and it will be seen by the names of the parties attached to this society as its officers, how widely spread and formidable these views had become, and by my correspondence how strong was the desire to have a model community commenced.

I was so beset from all quarters of the liberal portion of society, to commence this experiment in this country, that, although I felt that the public was only partially prepared for it, I at length consented that a subscription should be

^a The Society was founded in 1822 to further Owen's plans.

tried to carry it into execution; little expecting that the fund required could be raised – for I asked seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds for this purpose, and to my surprise fifty thousand pounds were subscribed, I declined for some time to commence with less than two hundred and fifty thousand; but many of my more ardent friends had become so confident of the success of the experiment, that they would not be satisfied unless I would permit them to commence, and would give them my assistance. So many of these were sincere good men, most ardent in the cause, and willing to make great personal and pecuniary sacrifices to attain the object of their wishes, that I felt constrained to agree to see whether an experiment could at that time be made in Scotland with any reasonable chance of success. And Mr J. A. Hamilton the younger,^a of Dalziel, who was one of the most ardent admirers of the New Views in principle and practice, having so often seen their superior effects on the children and matured population of New Lanark, took every method in his power to induce me to commence the first model community on his lands of Motherwell, a few miles from New Lanark,^b and being supported by many others equally ardent and active in the cause, it was determined to commence a community on his property, on as favourable terms as he could make on entailed property.

The preliminary measures occupied much time during 1822, '23, and part of '24, as will be seen by my correspondence.

While these preparations were in progress I was strongly invited to visit Ireland, which at this period was in a state bordering on barbarism, from the ignorant contention derived from religious hatreds and conflicts and political strifes between Conservatives and so-called Liberals, then better known as Tories, Whigs, and Radicals. Tempting offers and strong requests from highly influential parties at length induced me to visit this island of striking contrasts in the condition of its population, and in the practical working of a government made up of such contending materials. And surely such a medley of absurdity was not likely to produce any better practical results. It was a real Babel of religious and political confusions; all parties and interests contending against each other, making the island a Pandemonium; while a little truth and common sense would have made it a paradise.

But as the narrative of my proceedings in Ireland, with the published documents connected with them, would too much extend this volume, I will here conclude this first division of my life – requesting my readers to study

^a A. J. Hamilton of Dalziel (1793–1834): Lanarkshire landowner, son of General John Hamilton, helped establish the Orbiston community. With Abram Combe, Hamilton had previously set up the first Edinburgh co-operative or 'Practical Society'.

^b The Motherwell or Orbiston community was founded in 1825, principally through the efforts of A. J. Hamilton and the Edinburgh tanner Abram Combe. It lasted until late 1827. See generally Alexander Cullen, *Adventures in Socialism. New Lanark Establishment and Orbiston Community* (Glasgow, John Smith, 1910), pp. 171–322.

attentively the various divisions of the appendix,^a in which will be found the chief of my publications up to the period of my visit to the Sister Island.^b

Since writing the preceeding pages, which have been written at different and sometimes at distant periods, I have been reminded of several occurrences deserving notice in this volume.

One of these is, the accidental discovery, by Francis Place, when he was re-arranging his library and putting out what he deemed useless and worthless printed papers, as these were being swept out, of an old pamphlet, written 150 years before by John Bellars.^c As Mr Place was at that time much interested in my 'New Views' he immediately brought this pamphlet to me, saying – 'I have made a great discovery – of a work advocating your social views a century and a half ago.'

This was the only copy known to be in existence, and I begged it of him, and told him I would print one thousand copies of it for distribution, and that I would give the author the credit of originating the idea, although mine had been forced upon me by the practice of observing facts, reflecting upon them, and trying how far they were useful for the every-day business of life.

I had the thousand copies printed, and I widely circulated them, with the printed papers giving the account of my great public meetings in 1817, at one of which, as previously stated, I denounced all the superstitions (then called religions,) which were forced upon different nations over the world. [A copy of the Pamphlet referred to will be found in the Appendix.]

In referring to my expenses in preparing for, carrying on, and circulating the particulars of those meetings, I find my expenditure for these purposes in July and August of that year exceeded four thousand pounds.

Having now discovered the all over-powering influences of education, rightly understood, in forming the character of every one, in May, 1818, I wrote a public letter addressed to my friend the Archbishop of Canterbury, 'On the Union of Churches and Schools,' which also will be found in the supplement Appendix.^d

I may here refer to the Educational Conference lately got up (in June of the present year, 1857),^e by the church of England, in opposition to, and intended to counteract the effects of, the prior 'Congress of the Advanced Minds of the

^a See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858).

^b See Owen, *Report of the Proceedings at the Several Public Meetings Held in Dublin* (Dublin, 1823).

^c John Bellars (1654–1725): Quaker social reformer. His *Proposals For Raising a College of Industry* (1696) was reprinted by Owen in 1818. See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 155–81.

^d This was reprinted in Owen's *Life*, vol. 1 (1857), pp. 363–7 (*infra*, vol. 1, pp. 245–9).

^e See *The Times*, no. 22,714 (23 June 1857), p. 4.

Age,' which I had called to consider 'the best peaceable practical mode of superseding the present false, criminal-producing, and evil system, for the government of the population of the world, by the true, criminal-destroying, or good system of society, for perpetually governing all of the human race.'

At the time when this Educational Conference was called, it was known by all the advanced minds of the age, through my previous public proceedings, that I had by my public meetings and my public lectures in this country for more than ten years instructed the working classes, and that, by my numerous publications on the subjects connected with a superior formation of character, I had taken a most active part and a prominent lead in preparing the public mind for an entire change of system in training the human race from birth. And more especially was it known to the leading philanthropists of the last sixty years, that I had for more than a quarter of a century applied the new principles for forming a good and superior character for our race, most successfully to practice at New Lanark in Scotland, upon all the children of a population of between two and three thousand, – and where for that period my establishment and proceedings were freely open to the public, natives and foreigners, without distinction, and were visited by thousands annually. And here my visitors of all nations and ranks saw to their astonishment gradations of many hundred children, from one to twelve years of age, in the day time, and in the evening young men and women and persons of all ages, in a newly created institution for the formation of character, enjoying more happiness under this new training, without fear of punishment, and making a greater progress in useful knowledge, than had been seen at any former period in any age or country.

The spirit, the principle, the practice, and the surroundings, were all new to the world; and the infant schools which I invented and introduced into most successful practice were the first practical step ever taken towards the introduction of a rational system for forming and governing the human race, to lead it to the true millennial state of existence upon earth.

Now all of this must have been well known to the parties calling this extraordinary Educational Conference in the present year; and yet I was not called to assist, nor was my name once mentioned in the whole proceedings of the three days, until I made an attempt to speak on the last day – when I intended to make known and to explain to those present the most important discovery ever yet made known by man to man.

But, no doubt for an ulterior wise purpose, the parties present were insanely determined that I should not be heard.

While they were making their unseemly efforts to prevent my speaking, I could but pity their feelings and errors, knowing that I possessed the means to make myself heard through the four quarters of the world.

But seeing their alarm lest I should speak, I satisfied myself with asking Mr Edward Baines of Leeds one question, and with his ready and frank reply, that

he never in his life had seen so beautiful a sight as my establishment at New Lanark. This was seen by him before the bigotry and sectarian notions of the limited mind and views of William Allen had, as one of my partners, interfered, no doubt from good intentions, to substitute as far as he could his own narrow-minded views, for those beyond sects or parties, and which appeared to all other persons so superior to anything they had ever seen or had imagined could ever be seen in practice.

It is true, some of the heads of the church who were present on this to-be-remembered occasion, knew that my fixed determination had been, and was, to show good cause why this wretched system for government of humanity should be as speedily as possible peaceably superseded by the true and good universal system for the *prevention of evil* of all kinds, and for the establishment of all that will be substantially good through futurity for the human race.

But instead of being afraid of this great and all-glorious change, they would, if they could comprehend it in its full extent and consequences, hail it with the greatest joy, and be among the first to prepare for its introduction.

If their fears had not overwhelmed them at the moment, surely the phalanx of talent, learning, station, and power, present at this Conference, could have effectively replied to one unsupported old man!

But no! Their fears dictated that truth, spoken 'without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man,' would prevail; and even then, after Mr Baines had replied to my question, it did prevail in many minds.

I had also forgotten to mention the 'Sketch of the origin and proceedings of the Shakers,'^a which I published with my other pamphlets in 1817. This narrative of the successful practice of these singular people, in the United States of North America, shows that even by a very inferior community life, wealth could be so easily created for all, that after a comparatively short period all the members obtained abundance without money and without price, and were removed from the fear of want, knowing by experience that they could and would be supplied with all things necessary for health and comfort with the regularity of the seasons. And these parties have now proved for many years to be far more correct in morals and conduct than populations similar in number living under the individual competitive system. This 'Sketch' is re-printed in the Appendix.

The communities of these Shakers, based on public without private property, have exhibited the *second* step of progress in practice to prepare for the millennial state of existence.

The *first* step was to form a superior physical and mental character for all; the *second* to create abundance of wealth for all; and the *third* step will be to unite the two first, by basing society on its true principle, and by placing all within

^a The Shakers were known for their ecstatic utterances and eccentric worship. See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 143–54.

such arrangements of surroundings as will well-form the character, create the wealth, and cordially unite all in one interest and feeling over the world; which may now be easily attained in practice by the most beautiful new combinations of surroundings.

That no doubts may be left on the mind of the reader, respecting the high permanent importance in principle and practice of the long-continued experiment which I made at New Lanark, to form a new and superior character for all the children of that population, and to new-form the character of their parents and of all the older part of the same population, the following authentic documents are also given in the supplement Appendix.^a

1st – The address of the inhabitants of New Lanark to myself, and my answer – Janaury, 1817.

2nd – The address of the same to my partners, Messrs Foster, Allen, and Gibbs, – May, 1818, – and their answer.

3rd – An extract for the *Morning Post* of the 5th of May, 1817, contrasting the system which I had invented and adopted at New Lanark, with that recommended by Mr Curwen,^b MP.

4th – An address from myself to the working classes, dated 29th March, 1819, and published in the *Star* newspaper on the 15th April, 1819.

5th – The opening speech of His Royal Highness the late Duke of Kent, as Chairman of the Public Meeting held in the Freemason's Hall, on the 26th June, 1819, and the debates at that meeting.

6th – The Report of the Commission appointed in July, 1819, by the Guardians of the poor of Leeds, to visit New Lanark and to report respecting the means adopted there to remove the cause of poverty and pauperism and to well-educate children.

7th – See also, in my Correspondence, a letter of William Tooke,^c Esq., 18th November, 1819, relative to the same royal personage as acting chairman of my committee. And a second dated the 30th of the same month.

END OF VOL I.

^a See *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 223–30, 237–40, 251–60, 321–31.

^b John Christian Curwen (1756–1828): Whig MP and friend of Thomas Coke; poor law reformer, but opposed Peel's proposals for the regulation of child labour in cotton factories in 1816–17.

^c See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), p. 248.

APPENDIX

THE MEASURES WHICH I HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED FROM MY YOUTH TO ADOPT THROUGH LIFE TO THIS PERIOD, TO PREPARE THE POPULATION OF THE WORLD TO CHANGE THEIR SYSTEM OF FALSEHOOD, IGNORANCE, AND MISERY, FOR THE SYSTEM OF TRUTH, WISDOM, AND HAPPINESS.^a

In early youth I was strongly impressed with the conviction that 'truth is always consistent with itself and in accordance with all facts, which constitute the unchanging laws of nature.' I was fortunately uneducated according to the notions entertained under the existing system of society. I had therefore the less to unlearn, and the fewer prejudices to contend against. I was taught only to read, write, and to understand the elements of arithmetic, in a common school, in a small town consisting then of about nine hundred inhabitants. But I was early fond of reading, and I read immensely; and by this reading of all books which came in my way, as I read them was my real education commenced. I read promiscuously the leading novels of that period (1780), – Shakspeare, – Milton, – Harvey, – Young's night thoughts, – many religious works, – Universal History, – the Circumnavigators, – Lives of the Ancient Philosophers, and their Philosophies, – Biographies, etc., etc., etc. But I read all these differently from most youths. I had this standard of truth always in my mind when reading. I knew that 'all facts prove that God, (or nature,) and society make the character of every one upon the earth: – God, through nature, giving all the natural qualities at birth, – and society directing them from birth through life.' Whatever, therefore, in my readings, was opposed to this criterion, left no lasting impression on my mind. What was in accordance with it, was added to my stock of certain truths; and thus my mind gradually became filled with ideas consistent with themselves and in accordance with all known facts. I therefore soon ceased to blame man for those qualities which God forced him to receive when born, and which society afterwards directed either ill or well, foolishly or wisely. Soon being convinced, by facts narrated in history, and by those existing around me, that society knew not human nature, or how to direct it for the good of the individual or the happiness of any

^a Originally printed in *Robert Owen's Millennial Gazette*, no. 3 (1 May 1856), pp. 26–32; no. 4 (15 May 1856), pp. 1–28.

society or any nation, I early commenced to contend against the popular notions of all classes, sects, and parties; and I was soon called an infidel. But my readings and reflections opened to me the causes which necessarily produced the errors and prejudices prevalent in all these classes, sects, and parties; and, therefore, instead of being excited to anger for their educated mistakes, I was constrained to pity them for the unfortunate surroundings or circumstances in which they had been placed from their births. I was therefore impelled never to contend in anger for what I knew was truth; but to place it in the best manner I could before the mind of others, and to treat all with the kindness which charity for their educated differences to my opinions compelled me to have for them.

This mode of proceeding, I soon discovered, had the effect in a *very large* majority of cases, of enabling me to draw out the *good qualities* of those with whom I came into daily or occasional communications, and very seldom any of *educated* evil qualities. For those who have an experienced knowledge of humanity know that man is not bad, but is divinely good, by nature; and that it requires only that he should be placed from birth within good circumstances and superior surroundings, to draw out those good qualities in all over the earth.

But society, so far, has been blind to the natural qualities of man, and therefore blind to the easy and simple means to insure his happiness.

By thus thinking and acting differently from my fellow-men I was enabled at the age of twenty to have the sole management of a new, difficult, and extensive manufactory, and the direction of five hundred men, women, and children, employed in it. The whole was new to me; – I had at once to enter upon my task without an hour's instruction from any one. In four years, under my direction, the character of this population was greatly bettered in its general conduct, the manufacture extended, and so much improved as to be eminently successful.

At twenty-five I had to create another new establishment, with similar success.

At twenty-eight a much more extended establishment, with a population of thirteen hundred was placed under my sole direction, and which was gradually increased until the population exceeded two thousand. And this establishment continued under my direction for more than a quarter of a century.

There it was that I commenced to put into practice my knowledge of the influence of circumstances over human nature in the formation of character.

I had a very inferior and immoral population to begin with. I pitied, without blaming or punishing them, for the very unfavourable circumstances in which they had been placed before they were brought from various distant places to the establishment.

This establishment was at New Lanark, in the county of Lanark, Scotland; and the existing circumstances there at that period were far from being likely

to improve their condition. I did what all governments ought to do; – I gradually withdrew the unfavourable circumstances from around the adult part of the community, and created entirely new surroundings for the children of this population. These surroundings were unique in their character and results: – results never until then anticipated by any parties in any country. They were surroundings which created for the children a character totally different from that which had been given to their parents – a new character, which many clergymen and others who came to see and examine their proceedings said was so different from the character of other children, that it appeared to be a ‘new human nature.’ But it was only old human nature, *naturally* treated, by being surrounded by circumstances according with, instead of opposed to, its nature.

The result was such as ever will take place when human nature shall be placed from early life within surroundings in accordance with its nature. These children were, by comparison, with the same number and age of any other children, high or low, in society, good, wise, and happy; although the circumstances attending a large cotton-spinning population and establishment were far from being the best surroundings for these children, when they were obliged to leave each evening the new surroundings which I had created for them during the day.

These children, without the slightest merit on their parts, were of necessity made good in their tempers, manners, and habits, – wise in their conduct to each other, and to all around them, – and they formed by far the happiest population for a succession of years, that I ever witnessed in any part of the world. It was happiness never seen to be enjoyed for so long a period before or since.

And yet, by the same true principles and simple means, wisely and peaceably applied to practice, might the population of the world be made more happy throughout all future generations.

And to effect this result requires now only common sense and common honesty in the nations of the more civilised portions of the earth.

Let not these nations longer complain of their governments. For governments are nothing without the nation; and were there common sense in the nations, governments would act according to the will of the nation.

It was by carefully watching the progress and results of these new proceedings at New Lanark for upwards of a quarter of a century, that a practical knowledge of the science of society was forced upon me, so that I saw clearly the practical measures by which the population of the world could be yet made better, wiser, and happier, than these New Lanark children had been made. Yes, – even the population of the world, through all future ages; and yet no one will ever be entitled to individual merit.

The animate and inanimate surroundings will effect this great result; – a result which will commence as soon as society can be made to comprehend the now mysterious power of surroundings made on principles in accordance with

nature, and which would be as simple and as certain as all nature's operations.

Why – now that the road is opened, the path known, and the results certain – should man continue to be made an ignorant, poor, wicked, and miserable animal? Why? Because, with his false training and education, he is filled from his birth with prejudices of class, creed, sex, country, and colour, against his own happiness and the happiness of his race.

Knowing this, after I had ascertained the fact that man when enlightened could make man happy, I was impelled to direct all my means of powers of body and mind to endeavour to arouse men from their false mode of thinking and acting and of treating each other. I commenced by publishing my '*New Views of Society*,' in four essays, which were published under the sanction of Lord Liverpool's administration, in 1812 and 1813.^a

By calling the attention of parliament to the cruelty and injustice practiced on children by employing them, at so early an age and for so unreasonable a period per day, in cotton, flax, wool, and silk mills.^b

By holding large public meetings in the city of London in 1817, which caused universal excitement in governments and people.^c

By attending and memorialising the Congress of Sovereigns in Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818.^d

By encouraging and essentially aiding Lancaster and Bell in their preliminary attempts to educate the poor of Great Britain.^e

By visiting the learned institutions, the leading learned men of Europe, and their governments, from 1818 to 1821.

By holding great public meetings in the Rotunda at Dublin, and in the large towns throughout Ireland, – visiting at the same time, the most liberal members among the Irish aristocracy, with the Protestant and Catholic hierarchy of their respective creeds, in 1822–23.^f

In 1824 I first went to the United States, and purchased New Harmony from the Rappites.^g But I found the population of the States far too undeveloped at that period for the practice of a full true and social life – of that life foreshadowed by Jesus Christ, the great medium and reformer of His day. This establishment, however, at New Harmony, afforded to myself and my family much valuable experience and assistance towards attaining my ultimate object, – which has been, and is, to change the present system of society over the world, in spirit, principle, and practice.

^a See *infra*, vol. 1, pp. 25–100.

^b See *infra*, vol. 1, pp. 101–7.

^c See *infra*, vol. 1, pp. 183–210.

^d See *infra*, vol. 1, pp. 253–67.

^e See *infra*, vol. 1, pp. 9–10.

^f See Robert Owen, *Report of the Proceedings at the Several Public Meetings Held in Dublin* (Dublin, 1823).

^g See *infra*, vol. 2, pp. 3–47.

A favourable preparation for my reception had been made in the minds of the leading statesman of the United States by one of the late Presidents – John Quincy Adams. When he was ambassador from the United States to our Court, I had published my four essays on the Formation of Character and a New View of Society; and he was so much taken with the important practical truths contained in these essays, that on his departure for the United States, he requested to have copies of this work for his cabinet, the governors of each State, and others of the most advanced statesmen of that day, – assuring me that they should be faithfully put into their hands; and which on my arrival in the United States I found had been done.

This, with the notoriety acquired through my public meetings in London in 1817, and in Dublin in 1822–23, with the then well-known successful experiment at New Lanark in Scotland, gave me an introduction to all the first men throughout the Union, and a welcome reception from them. Consequently, in 1825 I visited president John Adams, in the ninetieth year of his age, – Jefferson, in his eighty-second, – and Maddison, in his seventy-fourth year.

From these men, full of the spirit of the founders of the Constitution of the Republic of the United States, and signers of the Declaration of Independence, I obtained their most matured thoughts and the latest experience of their lives; and from each a strong and cordial approval of my '*New Views of Society*,' which they had read and carefully studied.

With Mr Jefferson I spent four days in close communication upon the two systems of society; and he afterwards openly avowed himself a thorough disciple of the principles, – but added – 'I have not had sufficient experience in practice to know how to apply them to effect the change which you contemplate.'

With Mr Maddison I spent eight days; – four on my way to visit his friend Mr Jefferson, and four on returning from my visit. The result was similar with Mr and Mrs Maddison;^a – the latter taking a deep interest in our investigations.

With Mr Munroe, who was President on my first arrival in the States, our intimacy was that of brothers; the White House was always open to me, when others were excluded. He, – his cabinet, – the senate, – and all the judges of the supreme court of the United States, attended my lectures, given from the speaker's chair in the house of representatives, when Henry Clay was the speaker, and who offered me the use of it. In these lectures I fully advocated the new views of society, and they were cordially received by audiences which seldom, if ever, so attended the lectures of a private individual.^b

^a The former Dorothy Payne Todd (1772–1849).

^b See *infra*, vol. 2, pp. 3–47.

The present Earl of Derby,^a and his travelling companions, Lord Waincliffe,^b Mr Labouchere,^c and Mr Dennison,^d were also present.

Soon after, this same party were also present with me at the inauguration dinner by the new President, John Quincy Adams, who, during his presidency and to the end of his life, was most friendly to me; and when he became member of the house of representatives,^e made a motion and strongly advocated it, for my views of society to be fairly and fully investigated by Congress.

I had two modes open to me; – one to have the motion made by my son, Robert Dale Owen, who was then a popular member of the house,^f and of the Democratic party, and to have the majority of the house with them, – the other to give it to the ex-President and experienced statesman, John Quincy Adams, with the certainty of losing it. I preferred the latter mode, that I might have put upon the records of the house the testimony in favour of my views of one so experienced, sincere, honest, and deservedly esteemed by the best men of the Republic. Mr Adams advocated the subject with great ability and earnestness; but the motion was lost, as anticipated, although the minority was large and respectable.^g And my object was gained; for even then the population of the union was to undeveloped, and made too selfish by their false education, for a system true in principle and too pure in practice for dollars and cents to comprehend. And it would have long so remained, had not the new spiritual manifestations come to the aid of those who, from the pure principles of charity and love for humanity under all its varieties, desire to reform the world. And to reform it, not by violence and in anger, but in peace and with wise foresight, so as not to injure any party or individual by the change, – although that change must be entire and complete in principle and practice.

^a Edward Smith-Stanley, Lord Derby (1799–1869): Prime Minister 1852, 1858–9, 1866–8.

^b James Archibald Stuart-Wortley-Mackenzie, Lord Wharncliffe (1776–1845): Tory MP 1797–1826.

^c Henry Labouchere, Baron Taunton (1789–1869), who in 1824 travelled with Derby and Wharncliffe to the United States.

^d Probably Albert Denison Denison (1805–60), 1st Baron Londesborough, and British attaché in Berlin in 1824 and Vienna in 1825.

^e After being President from 1824–8, Adams served in the House from 1831–48. He had known Owen since 1817, and in 1844 termed him 'a speculative, scheming, mischievous man' who was 'still as crafty crazy as ever' (*Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 12 vols, Philadelphia, 1877, vol. 12, p. 116).

^f Robert Dale Owen was elected to Congress as a Democrat in 1842 and served until 1847. On his career there, see Richard Williams Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen, A Biography* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1940), pp. 163–251.

^g On 7 January 1845, Adams moved that the House provide its hall for Owen for four lectures. The following day, a coalition of Whigs ('who entertain strong prejudices against the man and his projects') and Southern slave-holders refused to allow the resolution to be laid on the table. Adams then modified his request so as to ask for only two nights, but this was defeated by ninety votes to sixty-eight, with twenty-four Whigs among the ayes (*Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, vol. 12, pp. 142–3). See *Journal of the House of Representatives*, Twenty-Eighth Congress, 2nd Session (1844–5), pp. 178–80.

After lecturing in several cities in the United States, I returned to Great Britain in the latter end of 1825.^a

In 1826 I returned again to the United States,^b and on my way to New Harmony in Indiana lectured again in the principal places through which I passed, and communicated much with the President, and also freely with Henry Clay,^c Mr Calhoun,^d and Mr Crawford^e – all candidates for the presidency.

In 1827 I came to Great Britain^f to prepare my partners for my leaving New Lanark, which I had much wished to do. But they were then unprepared with a successor, and I very reluctantly consented to continue until Mr Charles Walker,^g who was to succeed me, could gain the requisite experience.

In 1828 I returned again to the United States,^h taking more of my family with me to New Harmony, which I intended for their future home.

In this case also, in going and returning by the route of New Orleans, – instead of New York, as formerly, – I lectured in that city and others;ⁱ and before my return to Great Britain in 1829 I made an engagement with the Rev. Alexander Campbell,^j the celebrated baptist minister, leader of the Campbellites sect, to discuss with him in the city of Cincinnati his religious views and my dissent from them in favour of my 'New Views of Society.' The discussion to take place on a day fixed twelve months from the time of making this arrangement. And this year proved to be unexpectedly one of the most active of my life.

I had now two homes and two countries. On my arrival in Great Britain I was solicited to Mr Rocafuesti,^k the Mexican minister then in London, to

^a Owen left New York for Britain in July 1825 (*New Harmony Gazette*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1 October 1825, p. 6).

^b Owen was back at New Harmony by May 1826 (*New Harmony Gazette*, vol. 1, no. 33, 10 May 1826, p. 263).

^c Henry Clay (1777–1852): US Senator.

^d John Calhoun (1806–59): Illinois politician.

^e William Harris Crawford (1772–1834): US Senator.

^f Owen left in late May 1827 (*New Harmony Gazette*, vol. 2, no. 35, 30 May 1827, p. 278), and reached England on 24 July.

^g Charles Walker (b. 1798), the son of Owen's friend and partner, John Walker. Charles and his brother Henry (b. 1807) acquired New Lanark after Owen's retirement in 1828, and managed the mills until their sale in 1881 to the Birkmyres (in 1903, Gourcock) Ropeworks. For an account of New Lanark under Walker, see *New Moral World*, vol. 5, no. 25 (13 April 1839), pp. 385–8.

^h Owen returned to the US in late autumn 1827, and left New Harmony again on 22 July 1828 (*New Harmony Gazette*, vol. 3, no. 36, 2 July 1828, p. 287).

ⁱ Owen lectured in New Orleans at the end of January 1828.

^j Rev. Alexander Campbell (1788–1866): founder of the Disciples of Christ, and leading American cleric.

^k Vicente Rocafuerte (1773–1847): Secretary to the Mexican legation in London 1824–9; later prominent South American liberal; President of Ecuador 1835–9. Rocafuerte's reply to Owen's request was not very encouraging. See Frank Podmore, *Robert Owen. A Biography* (2 vols; repr. New York, Haskell House, 1971), vol. 1, pp. 337–8. This account of Owen's little-explored Mexican expedition is a condensed version of the narrative given in *Robert Owen's Opening Speech* (1829), pp. 184–226, which was reprinted in the *British Co-operator*, nos 1–7 (April–October 1830), pp. 20–1, 48, 69–72, 92–6, 115–20, 141–4, 163–8.

apply to the Mexican government, then a Republic, for the government of the provinces of Cohahuila and Texas. He and several other of the South American ministers were desirous that I should introduce my practical mode of governing as an example in Mexico, in the expectation that it would be afterwards extensively imitated, as were my new infant and other schools, on the then new principle of instruction by sensible signs, familiar conversations between the teacher and the taught, and without punishment or the fear of it.^a

Respecting this application to the Mexican government for the government of the provinces of Cohahuila and Texas, then belonging to the Mexican Republic, I wrote and printed a memorial,^b which I presented to our government and to the Ambassador of the United States in London,^c and both gave me great encouragement to proceed, and I determined to make the voyage to Mexico, and to negotiate personally with that government.

Mr Rocafuesti sent my memorial with various letters of recommendation of my views from several influential official parties, and I had strong letters from our government, especially from the Duke of Wellington, to Mr, now Sir Richard Pakenham,^d our Ambassador in Mexico, to use his influence, then very powerful, with that government, to the utmost, to forward my objects; and this he did with the most earnest good will, and, still more, with unexpected success. I had also letters from the American Embassy in London to Mr Poinsett,^e the then highly talented American Minister in Mexico.

In a month after my memorial and letters had been forwarded to the Mexican government, I commenced the voyage in the British Packet ship for the West Indies and Vera Cruz and Tampico, – Captain James commander.^f

^a Owen became interested in Texan colonisation through the successes of two emigration projectors, Benjamin Milam and Arthur Wavell, who had obtained a settlement grant from Mexico in 1826. Milam wrote to Owen in August 1828 stating that allotments could be offered on suitable terms, and Owen then apparently decided to see if he could secure a large grant on his own. See Frank Podmore, *Robert Owen* (2 vols, Hutchinson, 1906), vol. 1, p. 337, and Lois Garver, 'Benjamin Rush Milam', *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, vol. 38 (1934), pp. 110–11. Owen also apparently interested Simon Bolivar in his ideas at the same time.

^b See *infra*, vol. 2, pp. 117–22. The Memorial is dated 10 October 1828.

^c Louis McLane (1786–1857): minister 1829–31, who negotiated with Polk in London on the Oregon boundary issue in 1845–6, with which Owen was also involved.

^d Richard Pakenham (1797–1868): secretary of Legation 1827–35, and minister in Mexico 1835–43, who worked on the Oregon boundary question in 1845–6.

^e Joel Roberts Poinsett (1779–1851): minister 1825–30. The Mexican President, Guerrero, requested Poinsett's withdrawal in July 1829 because he was believed widely to have too much influence on the government, especially through masonic lodges he had helped to set up. He left in January 1830, partly delayed, Pakenham thought, by the fact that the President and Secretary of State regarded him as a Jacksonian best kept away from home (Public Record Office, FO50/44, June 1828). See generally William R. Manning, *Early Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Mexico* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1916), pp. 190–377.

^f According to his 1829 account, Owen left Falmouth for Jamaica on 22 November 1829. He arrived on 8 December, and the next day set sail for Vera Cruz, arriving on the 19th. He reached Mexico City on 7 January, and departed for Vera Cruz on 18 January (*Robert Owen's Opening Speech*, 1829, pp. 184–217).

My only cabin companion was Captain Deare, a most pleasant and excellent companion to as far as Jamaica, where upon his arrival he was immediately appointed to the *Grasshopper* – I believe a ten gun brig. Upon arriving safe at the Island of Jamaica I found there my excellent friend and most kind neighbour from Scotland, Admiral Fleming,^a with his fleet, having the command of the West India station; and he received me with open arms.

Admiral Fleming having the command of the fleet at this period at this station was to me a most fortunate circumstance, in aiding my intended proceedings in Mexico. He introduced me to the authorities in the Island, – invited the officers of the fleet to meet me at dinner, – and in the most friendly manner urged me to say whether he could in any way assist to promote the object of my voyage. I told him that I had two difficulties in my way unprovided for. I had abundant letters of introduction and recommendation to all the authorities in Mexico except the ecclesiastical, – and I was uncertain whether I should find a vessel at Vera Cruz, on my return from Mexico, to be in time to convey me to New Orleans, to enable me to fulfil my engagement to meet the Rev. Mr Campbell for our discussion on the day appointed in Cincinnati. The Admiral replied – ‘I can effectually assist you in the first, and perhaps when the time comes I may also assist you in the second. Since the revolution in Mexico^b there is but the Bishop of Puebla^c remaining,^d and he is now at the head of all ecclesiastical affairs. I have long known him intimately, having conveyed him some years since, before he was made Bishop, from Old Spain to Mexico, and I will give you a letter to him, which will effectually answer your purpose, and it may be that I can send a ten gun brig with seventy men to Vera Cruz, to wait your return and convey you from Vera Cruz to New Orleans. A larger vessel cannot with safety pass over the sand bar at the entrance to Belize going to New Orleans.’

The packet for Vera Cruz had to sail the third morning at four A.M. The Admiral came at that hour with me in his long boat to put me on board the packet, and to take farewell of me, wishing, with all the officers of the fleet, great success in my novel undertaking. Without my knowledge until we were out at sea, the Admiral had put a large hamper of the choicest fruits of the Island on board for me; and these were a great treat to the captain of the packet, his officers, and myself, during the remainder of the voyage to Vera Cruz, when many remained.

The seeds of the ‘New Views of Society’ were soon in the Island and among the officers of the fleet.

^a Charles Elphinstone Fleming (1774–1840): MP for Stirlingshire 1802, 1806–7.

^b A republic was proclaimed in Mexico in December 1822, following independence from Spain in 1821.

^c Antonio Pérez Martínez (1763–1829), Bishop from 1815.

^d Despite the regime’s efforts, relations with the Vatican remained poor throughout the 1820s. New bishops were not appointed until February 1831, though the government authorised them in April 1829.

The packet had to call and leave the mail for St Domingo, and I went on shore with the captain; and some of the British merchants who came to meet the boat at its landing, hearing the captain calling me by name, enquired if I was from New Lanark in Scotland. They said they had been present at my Great Meetings in London in 1817. They would like to introduce me to the authorities of the town, and to show me whatever I wished to see as long as I could remain. The captain remained as long as the service permitted, and we were much gratified by the attention of these gentlemen, taking us to all that was curious to us as strangers in the island. I was much surprised with their good taste in dress, their kind and polite manners to each other, the cleanliness of their persons, and their deference to strangers. I left some copies of my *New Views* among the British merchants, who appeared anxious to have them.

On arrival at Vera Cruz, preparation had been made to receive me and to forward my departure from so dangerous a place with the least possible delay; and early the next morning I was on my way to the city of Mexico, in a litter drawn by two mules, and accompanied by two Mexican muleteers, each on a mule, and these men were to convey me safe to Jalapa. They knew nothing of the English language, and I as little of the Spanish, and yet we had a pleasant, safe, and interesting journey of several days, in which the men taught me as much Spanish as I could teach them English, and we became good friends by the end of the journey. They proved to be faithful and attentive muleteers, and conducted me safely through what I afterwards learned was a very hazardous journey – the road being infested with robbers and military marauders.

The ascent from Vera Cruz to Jalapa being about 4000 feet, it is necessary for travellers going from Vera Cruz to the city of Mexico, to remain some days at Jalapa, to accustom the lungs to breath an air so much lighter, before proceeding to the yet higher plain on which the city of Mexico is situated. On arrival at Jalapa, I found the governor of Vera Cruz^a and several other travellers waiting there to take coaches onward towards Mexico; and after four or five days I induced them, though afraid, to proceed, (the governor being opposed to the existing government,) and to the surprise of all, on entering Perote, we found ourselves in the midst of Santa Anna's^b army of 1500 men. This general was the commander-in-chief of the Mexican forces. On discovering our position, the governor and his friends exclaimed, 'We are prisoners – what shall we do?' They were greatly alarmed. I said – 'Put a good face upon this circumstance, and go at once to the general, and ask for an escort forward, on account of danger to proceed unprotected.' 'Yes,' they said, 'but who will venture to go to him?' I said – 'if no one else will go, I will.' Then one or two, not of the governor's party, said they would accompany me.

^a Sebastián Camacho (1791–1847) was governor in 1829–30.

^b Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna (?1795–1876): Mexican general and revolutionary; President 1841–4, 1853–5.

I was introduced to the general as an Englishman going in haste to the city of Mexico on important business. He received me politely, and enquired my object. I said – ‘I am going in haste to the city of Mexico to communicate with the government, and I wish an escort to Puebla.’ ‘When will you want it?’ ‘Tomorrow morning at five o’clock.’ ‘You shall have it.’ Seeing his frankness, I said – ‘General, where will you be about six weeks hence? I do not ask the question from idle curiosity, – but I expect to be then on my return, and to have an important communication to make to you.’ ‘I shall then be at Jalapa.’ was his immediate reply, ‘and will be glad to see you.’ The escort of six mounted cavalry was punctual at the hour, and we proceeded with them safely to Puebla. But what became of the governor and his party I know not, I suppose he retreated quietly from Perote.

On arriving at Puebla, where our escort left us, I presented my letters from Admiral Fleming to the bishop, with whom I had a long and very interesting interview.

The government of Mexico was at this time a very liberal one,^a and much opposed to ecclesiastical domination; and I found the bishop was under great alarm for his own position. He had before the revolution an income of 120,000 dollars, and the government had unmercifully reduced his income so low as 80,000 dollars, and he did not know what they would do next to him, for he was now left the only bishop in all Mexico. He said what power and influence he had should be willingly used in my favor, on account of his great friendship for his old friend Admiral Fleming; and I was once again to visit the bishop on my return from the city of Mexico.

As my proceedings in this city of the ancient Mexicans were of a novel character for an uneducated, unpopular, unpatronised, and much opposed individual on account of his heterodox opinions against the present system of society, I must be somewhat less brief than I wish, to make the subject understood.

On my arrival in this city I was received by, and during my stay remained with, Mr Exter,^b then one of the most influential and talented British residents

^a The two main parties were the Conservative and Liberals. Within these, the main groups were two branches of Masons, the conservative Escocses, or Scottish Rite Masons, and the Yorkinos, or York Rite Masons, whom Poinsett helped to organise, and who supported federalism against the mainly pro-monarchical centralists of the old guard. After rumours of Spanish efforts to reconquer the country, a Yorkino revolt against the presidency of Guadalupe Victoria (1786–1843) broke out in December 1828, with Poinsett backing the insurgents publicly. Under the republic, the first major assault on clerical privilege came with the law of 7 February 1828, which gave to the State of Chihuahua the buildings of the College of Jesuits located on its territory. All properties and revenues belonging to the various monastic orders, the Jesuits, and the Inquisition, were ordered sold on 10 May 1829.

^b Richard Exter (d. 1829), who married Doña Maria Dolores Soto in 1825, was a partner with Stephen Julian Wilson in a scheme contracted in 1828 with the State of Coahuila and Texas to settle one hundred families in the border areas. A stock company was begun to aid the settlement, but no colonisation took place. At his death Exter’s widow married John Charles Beales, who took Exter’s place in the contract in 1830.

in Mexico. He was much in the confidence of the government, – on good terms with the officials, domestic and foreign, – and much trusted and respected by all parties.

On the day of my arrival I called upon Mr Pakenham our ambassador, and presented my letters from our government to him. Upon opening these letters, he said – ‘I am instructed to give you all the aid in my power to forward your object with this government, and I am very willing to do whatever I can to expedite your proceedings.’ I said time was of importance to me, as I had an engagement to fulfil in the United States. He said he would see the President of the Republic^a that day, and would endeavour to obtain for me an early interview with him. At three P.M., on the same day, Mr Pakenham called upon me at Mr Exter’s, to say he had seen the President and arranged an interview for me with him at twelve o’clock the next day, and he added – ‘as the President does not speak English, and you do not know the Spanish language, I will accompany you, introduce you to the President, and, if you have no objection, will be interpreter between you.’ I said I was greatly indebted for so much kindness and attention.

The next day Mr Pakenham called upon me at the hour appointed, and upon our arrival at the palace we were immediately introduced to the President.^b Mr Pakenham opened the conference by a speech of considerable length, but which, being in Spanish, was while in delivery a blank to me. Mr Pakenham, after our interview, said that in this speech he had explained what I had done through my previous life to promote the best interests of society, and especially what I had done to educate and govern the population of New Lanark in Scotland, and added the strong recommendation of our government to the Mexican government, to grant the object of my application to it, and then added from himself more, I fear, than I was entitled to.

^a Guadalupe Victoria, President 1824–9, was shortly thereafter, in March 1829, succeeded by Vicente Guerrero (1782–1831). On Mexico’s plans for Texas, see William Forrest Sprague, *Vicente Guerrero, Mexican Liberator* (Chicago, Donnelly, 1939), pp. 97–108, and Raymond Estep, *Lorenzo de Zavala, Profeta del Liberalismo Mexicano* (Mexico City, Porrua, 1952). If this was the substance of Victoria’s offer (and Pakenham regarded him as treacherous: report to Aberdeen, Public Record Office, FO204/16, 19 December 1828), he may have been attempting to strengthen his hand against Poinsett, the Yorkinos and Guerrero by currying further British favour. (The British government had in fact urged Victoria to offer some concession respecting religious toleration in 1825–6: see C. K. Webster, ed., *Britain and the Independence of Latin America 1812–1830*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938, vol. 1, pp. 497–503). Possibly he also thought such a territory might provide a buffer zone to secure Mexico from both further American emigration and the threat of actual invasion. It seems more likely, however, that Owen misunderstood the nature of the ‘offer’, which Pakenham fails to mention in his detailed dispatches to Aberdeen. Probably this was no more than a statement of good intentions, beyond which Victoria had neither the power nor the authority to go. As Owen admitted in his 1829 account, Victoria was in a very weak position after the insurrection began. Moreover, Owen also knew that Texas and Coahuila were not ruled directly from Mexico City, but elected their own governors. Furthermore, previous land grants had been made to corporations, not to individuals.

^b Owen met Victoria on 9 and 17 January 1830.

The President replied, as Mr Pakenham then explained to me, that his government had received by the previous mail, a month before, my memorial and many letters of recommendation so strongly in my favour, that he and all the members of the government regretted they could not give me the government of the provinces of Cohahuila and Texas, because the governor was elected by the population of the provinces, – but the government had reserved to itself the full jurisdiction over one hundred and fifty miles in breadth along the whole frontier between the United States and Mexico, from the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico, about two thousand miles in length, and that his government, after due consideration, had ‘come to the determination to offer the government of this district to Mr Owen, for him to establish within it his government of peace, to be an example, as he says, to all other nations.’

When Mr Pakenham explained to me this extraordinary offer, I was certainly taken by surprise; but immediately recollecting myself, and at a glance seeing what would be essentially necessary at the commencement of such a task, I requested Mr Pakenham to thank the President and his government for their great liberality in making me so magnificent an offer, and for the trust and confidence in me which it indicated; but to state that one obstacle presented itself, which, if not removed, would prevent my success, and which, without its removal, would frustrate all my intended proceedings to establish a model peace government. This obstacle arose from the Catholic religion being the only religion permitted by law to be established in the Republic; and in the government which I knew could alone give peace to any population, there must be, not merely toleration, but full civil and religious liberty, – and unless that obstacle could be removed, it would be a failure, and would be useless for me to commence the task which otherwise I would willingly undertake.

This reply and explanation was given to the President by Mr Pakenham. – when, to my yet greater surprise, the President said – ‘We thought this would be an objection by Mr Owen, and we are prepared as a government to propose to the next Congress to pass a law to place the religion of Mexico upon the same base of liberty as it now exists in the United States of North America.’^a This being explained to me by Mr Pakenham, I replied ‘that when that law was passed I would willingly accept the government of the extensive district so liberally offered to me.’

After some general and complimentary conversation, this extraordinary conference terminated, apparently much to the satisfaction of the parties engaged in it.

^a The Texas settler Stephen Fuller Austin was at this time actively seeking religious toleration for American emigrants to the area, who were in a majority. In the meantime, Mexican colonisation projectors, like Guerrero’s friend Lorenzo de Zavala, were securing settlement grants for Catholic families. In April 1830, the Mexican government prohibited further emigration to Texas by North Americans.

I was now introduced to all the Mexican authorities as the future governor of this new kingdom of peace, – to the four ministers in the city, – and especially to Mr Poinsett, the American ambassador, and the celebrated American statesman, – and to the chief British residents and merchants. During my stay of five or six weeks in this capital, I received from all these parties kindness, attention, and hospitality, in which Mr Pakenham, the British legation, consul, and merchants, were unceasingly prominent.

I knew that up to this period there had been a disagreeable, distrustful, and most unpleasant feeling between the British and the American United States governments, and a consequent jealousy between the officials of both countries in whatever foreign country they might be accredited.^a My great desire was to terminate this feeling, and to create a good understanding, and, if possible, a well-founded cordial friendship between them, as I knew ought to exist when their interests were so united, their language the same, and their relationship so combined.

Finding Mr Poinsett to be a statesman of enlarged views, of high talents, great experience, ready to receive new ideas, and most favourable to my proposed establishment of a kingdom of peace between the two republics,^b – I stated to him what I thought a false and most injurious policy between his government and the British. They were evidently now secret and almost open enemies, while it was their interest to be good friends, and to be cordially united. He said he was fully aware of the false position into which the two governments had drifted, and he would much like to see it changed. I then said, – ‘As you see this subject in the same light as I have long viewed it in, – if you will give me letters to general Jackson and Mr Van Buren, your President and his Secretary, expressive of these views, I will return home by Washington, and will see what I can effect between the two governments, which ought to be one in feeling and interest, for then they could influence the world for good.’ He readily assented, and after interesting and confidential conversation he gave me the letters I had requested.

About the time I anticipated to finish the object of my visit to Mexico, I received a packet from Admiral Fleming, informing me that he had sent the ten gun brig *Fairy*, Captain Blair, to Vera Cruz, to wait my convenience, and

^a In this case, there were British complaints that Poinsett’s activities violated his diplomatic neutrality. See *Observations on the Instructions Given By the President of the United States [and] on the Conduct of Mr. Poinsett* (1829), pp. 16–18, and Pakenham’s complaint that the ‘American party’ of Yorkinos supported by Poinsett was anti-British (Public Record Office, FO50/44, June 1828). But Zavala in turn sought Pakenham’s removal for supporting Victoria too closely (Public Record Office, FO204/16, 19 December 1828). Commerce was the main source of Anglo-American rivalry in Mexico. See Arthur Wavell, *Notes on Mexico* (1827), pp. 52–3.

^b Poinsett had in fact been instructed to buy the border region from Mexico for \$1 million (raised to \$5 million by August 1829), and doubtless saw Owen’s proposals as a means of furthering American interests.

to carry me to New Orleans. The *Druid*, fifty gun ship, Captain Drury, also came at the same time; and there was an invitation from the captain for me to remain on board the *Druid* until I should sail from Vera Cruz.^a

Pending the meeting of the Mexican Congress to pass the bill for religious freedom throughout the republic, upon the passing of which I was to return to Mexico and commence my government, I had arranged with Mr Exter, my kind and most hospitable host, to take charge of my new affairs, – to aid him in which he had the promised assistance of Mr Poinsett and some other friends, in addition to Mr Pakenham, whose aid to me in this business was most valuable.

Leaving the city of Mexico, I proceeded to Puebla, being assured by the Mexican government that I should meet no obstacle on my journey to Vera Cruz.

On arriving at Puebla I called according to promise to visit the bishop, and was again cordially received. I was accompanied from Mexico by an interpreter, whom I had engaged to go with me to Vera Cruz, and I had by note asked the bishop if I should bring my interpreter with me on my second visit to him after my return, which was to be of a more confidential character than the first, which was more introductory and complimentary. He preferred to have my interpreter present. I told him of my proceedings in the city of Mexico, and of my intention to establish a kingdom of peace between the two republics, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean – (and this would have included the best part of Texas and California); that the government were to pass an act through Congress to put the religion of the country on the same liberal principles as it was placed upon in the United States; and that I much desired to reconcile the Heads of the Catholic and Protestant churches; and I requested to know if he knew the real character of the present Pope at Rome.^b

To all that I said he was most attentive and anxious to hear all I had to say, and he professed to be most desirous to assist me to the extent of his power, and said he not only knew the character of the Pope, but had been personally upon the best and most familiar terms of friendship with him, until he left the old world for the new, to be placed at the head of ecclesiastical affairs in Mexico. Hearing this, I asked him whether on my return to commence the government of the country which had been so unexpectedly offered to me, he would go from me, as a missionary and messenger of peace to Rome, and endeavour to persuade the Pope to agree to enter upon negotiations with the Church of England, to reconcile the two religions so far as to be on friendly terms, and not to oppose each other, but to allow each to proceed unmolested by the other, and neither to teach nor encourage feelings of repulsion between them, – and both to inculcate on all occasions the pure spirit of universal love and charity. The bishop seemed greatly pleased with this proposal, and said he

^a The *Druid* arrived at Vera Cruz on 25 February 1829 to pick up money being sent to Britain as a dividend for a loan to Mexico. Owen arrived on 28 February (Public Record Office, FO204/25).

^b Annibale Sermattei della Genga (1760–1829) was Pope Leo XII 1823–9.

would go, and would be highly gratified by being selected for so important and God-like a commission.

After much conversation on this and other subjects connected with these proposed changes, I left him apparently as well satisfied with our interviews as myself. I then proceeded on my journey to the coast, and on arriving at Jalapa found Santa Anna with his army, according to his promise to me when at Perote. I immediately called upon him, and was cordially received. He had been informed of my proceedings in the city, and wished me to explain fully the principles and practices which I intended to adopt. I told him I had written a manuscript the principles and practices in the most condensed form I could then put them, and if he wished I would bring them from my hotel at any time he would appoint, and we would consider them, principle by principle, and point by point in the practice; and he named an early hour the next morning.

On attending at the time appointed, he was prepared with three intelligent looking officers of his army, all of whom spoke the English language correctly and fluently, and were prepared to hear what I had to explain to them. I had prepared twelve principles or sections for our investigation and discussion.

The first was the necessity of our nature to believe whatever was made to produce the strongest conviction upon our mind, and that consequently there could be neither merit nor demerit in belief or disbelief, because these were not acts of our will.

This statement aroused all their faculties into lively action, and Santa Anna especially combated the principle with great talent and ingenuity for a considerable period, and he was well seconded by his companions in arms. But the facts in support of the statement were too strong to be ultimately resisted, and at length he said – ‘You are right. It is true. Proceed to the next.’ And we went with the same results through all the principles which I advocated.

By degrees this discussion created the deepest interest in Santa Anna and his friends, and at the conclusion their enthusiasm was at a great height, and Santa Anna said – ‘We have opposed you to the extent of our powers. We acknowledge you are right, and the great practical importance of what you have advocated. I wish those principles were printed in Spanish, and circulated throughout the republic. I am a thorough convert to them; and whether I shall be at the head of the army or of the government,’ (which he was afterwards,) ‘you may command me to aid you to the extent of my power.’ He then invited me to dine with him; but I was pressed for time to proceed to my engagement with Mr Campbell in Cincinnati; and the ship was awaiting my arrival on the day I had named. I therefore excused myself on that plea; but I was very much pleased with the frank, straightforward manner of Santa Anna, and am convinced that, could he have gained sufficient power to act independently of the church and of factions in the state, he would have governed the republic better than any other Mexican I had been introduced to while in the city of Mexico; and I was introduced to every prominent character there at the time.

On my arriving at Vera Cruz, the long boat of the *Druid* was waiting to take me to that ship. The surf was high, and our boat at starting was nearly swamped. Dinner was prepared on board the *Druid*. Captain Blair of the *Fairy* had been invited to be introduced to me, and all the officers said they had instructions from Admiral Fleming to attend in every particular to my wishes. Captain Blair then said – ‘I regret that the cabin for the captain in a ten gun brig, with seventy men, arms, ammunition, and provisions, is necessarily so small that it admits of very poor accommodation for two persons; but if you can put up with a hammock for your bed, and such day room as it will afford, you will be welcome to half the cabin accommodations during our voyage to New Orleans, where I am directed to convey you as early as possible.’ I was too happy to be so conveyed. Captain Drury, to whose kindness I was much indebted, put me on board the *Fairy* next morning early, and we sailed for our port, meeting on our way two severe north westers; but we passed the bar, and arrived in safety at New Orleans, where I took leave of Captain Blair and his officers, from all of whom I experienced the most considerate attention, and from whom I parted with reluctance.

I immediately set out for Cincinnati, and arrived there three days before the time which had been appointed just twelve months before. Mr Campbell was there one day before my arrival.

Great formal preparation was made for this discussion between us, which continued for eight days, morning and evening.^a I had to oppose all the prejudices of the day; but the audience, brought from all parts of the Union, conducted themselves in the most admirable manner during its continuance. I had nothing to complain of, – except that Mr Campbell, contrary to agreement, put the question unexpectedly at the conclusion, – whether they would continue to support Christianity. Every one knew what they must say; but I found throughout, day by day, that the feelings of the audience were much with me. The discussion fully answered all my purpose, and truth from that occasion, upon many important points, became widely spread abroad in the States and in Europe.

I remained several days afterwards in Cincinnati, to transact business, which occasioned me to pass daily from one extremity of the city to the other; and, considering the heterodox principles I had so openly advocated, it was surprising to me to experience the profound respect paid to me as I passed along the streets.

When this business was finished I hastened on to Washington, to commence my attempt to reconcile the two greatest nations in the world, who had been for years, up to this period, (1830,) opposing each other everywhere with very hostile, jealous, and rival feelings. I immediately waited on Mr Van Buren, the then secretary of state, who had been by Mr Poinsett’s letters prepared favourably to listen to me. I explained my views of the real interests of the two nations,

^a See Robert Owen, *Robert Owen’s Opening Speech, and His Reply to the Rev. Alex. Campbell* (Cincinnati, 1829) and *Debate on the Evidences of Christianity . . . Between Robert Owen . . . and Alexander Campbell* (2 vols, Bethany, Va., 1829).

and day by day for about ten days we met and talked over all the objects of difference then existing between the governments, and I endeavoured to point out how easily, both parties being willing, the whole might be finally settled to the benefit of both nations. Mr Van Buren said he had communicated my views to the President, and that now both agreed to the policy which I recommended, and that the General wished I would dine with him the next day. I did so, – meeting Mr Van Buren and several relatives of the President.

After dinner, at a signal from the General, his relatives withdrew, and left Mr Van Buren and myself alone with him. He then said – ‘Mr Owen, your government imagines I am opposed to them – but it is not so. I wish to be on friendly terms with them and the British nation, knowing how much the United States and Great Britain will be benefited by a well understood cordial union; and if your government will fairly meet us half way, we will soon adjust all differences now between us.’ I said – ‘I think I may promise on the part of the British government that it will frankly meet you half way, and I am sure the nation will be well pleased that it should be so.’ He then became very familiar – explained in the most open manner his home and foreign policy, often in the exact words used to explain his views in the succeeding annual President’s message to congress. It was then arranged that Mr Van Buren should give me letters to the United States ministers in London and Paris, instructing them to follow the advice which I should give to them after I had seen Lord Aberdeen,^a the then foreign secretary in England.

With these letters I returned to England, and asked an interview with Lord Aberdeen, which he appointed for the next day. I explained fully to him what I had done to prepare for a cordial reconciliation with the United States, and what I had promised on the part of our government. He promptly said – ‘Mr Owen, I highly approve of the policy you recommend, and of what you have done. If the American government will meet us half way, we will meet it in the same spirit.’ I said – ‘I have instructions with me to the United States’ minister, from his government, if I found you willing, to enter at once in this spirit to settle by immediate negotiation all existing differences.’ He added – ‘I am quite ready to meet Mr M’Lane on these conditions.’

I then went to Mr M’Lane, the then United States’ ambassador, – gave him the instructions from his government, – told him I had seen Lord Aberdeen, that the coast was clear for immediate proceedings, – and recommended him at once to commence negotiations, and to be sure to leave no point of difference unsettled, and if any difficulty arose that could not be settled between him and Lord Aberdeen, to inform me and I would endeavour to remove it. No difference of the kind did arise. Both governments became cordially friendly, and so continued from that time for several years, without any estrangement

^a George Hamilton-Gordon, 4th Earl of Aberdeen (1784–1860), who also negotiated the Oregon boundary question in 1845–6.

of feeling, and I believe until the dispute arose about the limits of Oregon.

On my arrival in England I expected Mr Exter, my kind and talented host while I remained in the city of Mexico, and who was to bring important dispatches and transact much preparatory business for the government I was to undertake. When I left him he was full of these matters, and in close connection with the Mexican government. My first news was, that shortly after I had quitted the city, the government despatches were given to him, and he rode on horseback hastily down to Vera Cruz, where he speedily took his passage to England; but during his short stay in Vera Cruz, being over-fatigued with his rapid travelling, he caught the fever of the place, and died of the black vomit on the third day of his voyage.

I also soon after received intelligence that the Mexican government, faithful to its promise to me, brought into Congress the bill for religious liberty over the Republic, – but the ecclesiastical powers, hearing what was intended, employed the priesthood to exert all its means to oppose this measure in congress, and they succeeded in obtaining a majority against it; and the liberal government, so friendly to me, was, in consequence of this defeat, out of power for eighteen months.^a

Thus were terminated the measures which had been taken to establish a kingdom of peace between the Republic of Mexico and the United States, and which, if they had come to a more successful issue, would have given a very different direction to the history of the Republics. The Texian war would not have occurred, nor the forcible dismemberment of the Mexican Republic.

It was my intention to have peopled this new and in many places wild district, with an intelligent and moral working class from the British Islands and Europe, – great numbers being anxious at this period to commence a true communistic life, which I intended gradually to introduce into this new social

^a Owen's chances of success in this measure would seem to have been slight. Mexican policy generally was to have Texas settled by Catholic Mexicans in order to avoid its absorption by the US. A con-servative faction led by Anastasio Bustamante rebelled in December 1829, and the liberal President, the Yorkino masonic Grand Master Guerrero, fled. He was captured and executed in 1831. Rocafuerte and Zavala called for religious toleration in 1831, when the six year prohibition on constitutional change imposed by the charter of 1824 expired. But they were opposed by Bustamante, who warned that it would be twenty years before the measure could be objectively discussed in Mexico, and Rocafuerte was briefly imprisoned for publishing his *Ensayo soave Tolerancia Religiosa* (1831). Official intolerance was however removed by the new liberal government in 1833, and the educational system secularised. See Charles A. Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821–1853* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 164–5, and Jaime E. Rodriguez, *The Emergence of Spanish America. Vicente Rocafuerte and Spanish Americanism 1808–1832* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975), pp. 201–9. Owen's reference may have been to debates accompanying the law of 6 April 1830 prohibiting further foreign colonisation of Texas, in which religion was an issue. See Jose Antonio Fernandez de Castro, *Vicente Rocafuerte. Un Americano Libre* (Mexico City, Secretaria de Educacion Publica, 1947), pp. 54–5. But there were also lengthy secret debates in the House of Deputies during the first half of 1830 on the issue of filling vacant ecclesiastical posts, in which considerable anti-clericism was manifested by Yorkino deputies facing a hostile administration. See Michael Costeloe, *Church and State in Independent Mexico. A Study of the Patronage Debate 1821–1857* (Royal Historical Society, 1978), pp. 120–3.

government of peace. These from Europe would also have been joined by multitudes from the United States, and by many from the old Mexican States.

It was my intention also to have made peace with all the Indian tribes, and to have invited them to settle, at first in their own way, within the new territory, and by degrees to accustom them to the true family commonwealth arrangements, for which they are already in some measure prepared.

It would have been a curious and interesting experiment for the world; for I should have created a new and superior character out of this heterogeneous mass, – with all of whom, under a system of strict justice and impartiality, administered in obvious kindness, to promote the happiness of all, I could not have failed of ultimate success.

However, it was not to be; and other and very different measures were opening before me.

My early acquaintance with the working classes enabled me to see the downward progress they were making, in proportion as chemical discoveries and mechanical inventions increased to diminish the general value of their labour.

I noticed the increasing power that wealth, especially in the manufacturing districts, was acquiring over them, and how, gradually, the mass of them were sinking into real slavery, while retaining the name of servitude.

I was conscious that these proceedings must increase the demoralisation of all classes, and lead to social convulsions; and often did I endeavour to forewarn the governments of Europe of the danger which must arise from the continuance of these sufferings of the working classes.

The smallest measures proposed for their relief, and to stay this downward course, were strongly resisted by the wealthy and master class.

My Bill to give some small amelioration to the children and others employed in mills and manufactories was resisted by the House of Commons, under the influence of mill-owners, for four years; and when it was passed, was so mutilated and altered from the original bill, which I had introduced through the first Sir Robert Peel, that it was of little or no value; and from 1819 to this day they have been contending about this ‘ten hours’ bill.^a

Seeing how little the true interests of society could be understood by any class or party in the state, I concluded that no permanent benefit could be attained until the mass of the people could be better instructed, and enabled to comprehend their own position, and to understand that the progress of new inventions would ultimately benefit all society permanently.

I then devoted the next fifteen years to instruct, by writings in newspapers and other periodicals, and by lecturing in Europe and America, the masses in the old and new world.

I was, however, much opposed in my progress in England by that warm-

^a Owen's abortive attempt to restrict child labour hours and conditions of work in 1816–19. See Owen, *Life*, vol. 1A (1858), pp. 21–32.

hearted, well intentioned, energetic, wrong-headed, late leader of the violent Democratic part of the working classes, Feargus O'Connor, M.P.^a He laboured to give them power, without the necessary knowledge to use it wisely; and I desired to give them power through knowledge, that they might make a right use of it; and I hope the fifteen years of such instruction have now given them power, through knowledge, sufficient to enable them to assist all classes to gain, in peace and with wise foresight, the rights of humanity for all of every rank and condition over the world. For all – prince and peasant – are grievous sufferers by the continuance of this false and evil system of society.

I published several works and wrote many articles for the newspapers, all bearing on the great change in society which I had ever in view.

During this period, and while Prince Metternich was the most experienced, influential, and leading statesman in Europe, I went to Vienna, in 1837, with strong recommendatory letters to him from Prince Esterhazy, the then Austrian ambassador in London, and who had known me and my proceedings from 1816, and was always kind and friendly to me.

On my way I visited Paris, and had friendly communications with the French government, under Louis Philippe, to whom in 1818 I had been introduced in an especial manner by His Royal Highness the late Duke of Kent.

While in Paris I gave a public lecture in the Hotel de Ville, to a crowded and most attentive audience, and as I proceeded in English, the well known and talented M. Considérant;^b a leading disciple of Fourier, translated what I said to the audience, and it was, even in Paris in those days, well received. I was made also a member of two of the public societies of Paris, and had the privilege of a sitting in the Royal Academy. But the government expressed some uneasiness at my increasing popularity in Paris.

From Paris I went to Munich, where Lord Erskine^c was then our ambassador, and to whom I explained the object of my journey, and who received me with great kindness and attention; and I had an opportunity of disseminating my 'New Views' among the leading men and authorities in that city.

The king^d was absent at the time, at the beautiful summer residence of the court, and I took it on my way to Vienna. The residence of Berchesgadden^e is in one of the most beautiful districts I have seen in any part of the world.

Immediately on my arrival at the hotel, I sent a note to His Majesty,

^a From the mid-1830s until the late 1840s O'Connor was the acknowledged leader of the Chartist movement.

^b Victor Considérant (1808–93): leading French Fourierist; deputy in 1848–9; attempted to establish communities in the US to 1869, notably in Texas, whose climate the social colonists found extremely inhospitable.

^c David Montagu Erskine (1776–1855): minister at Munich 1828–43.

^d Ludwig I (1786–1868): King of Bavaria 1825–48.

^e Berchtesgaden.

informing him of the object of my journey, and requesting an interview. This note was sent late in the evening. Early the next morning a messenger brought me an autograph from his Majesty, saying 'although he was very much occupied with state matters, he could not allow one so distinguished,' (an idea quite new to me,) 'to pass his residence without seeing him, and he would have pleasure from the visit.' No time for the appointment being mentioned in the note, I enquired of the messenger if he knew at what hour I should go to His Majesty. He said – 'Immediately, – and I have come to conduct you to him.' It was early morning – between seven and eight o'clock – and I was going to put on my hat to proceed with him, – but he said – 'You cannot see His Majesty in that coat' – (it was a morning frock coat), I had a dress coat in my portmanteau in the room near at hand, and I said I would change my coat and proceed to the palace. With great simplicity he said – 'I will wait until you make the change.' I opened the portmanteau, – took out the coat, – and effected the change while he was present; and then we proceeded to the chapel, where the king and his court were at mass.

We waited until the king returned to his apartments, and I was then introduced to him by the person who had brought the note, and who had come to conduct me to the palace. I was kindly received by His Majesty, to whom I explained my 'New Views,' and the benefits which would be derived by society from their introduction into practice. He requested I would put them in the form of a protocol, and send it to him before I left Berchtolsgaden for Vienna. After about an hour's conference I went to my hotel, – prepared an explanation of my views in what His Majesty called a protocol, – took it to the palace, – and enquired for the person who had brought me the note in the morning from the king. I was told he would come to me immediately, and I had not waited more than two minutes in the apartment to which I had been shown, when he came, and I gave him the paper for His Majesty. He said he would immediately take it to him, for he knew His Majesty wished to have it.

Observing the attendants paying, as I thought, extraordinary attention to this person, who had been so familiar and kind to me, I enquired as I was going out who and what he was, and to my great surprise the reply was – 'He is the Prince of Tour and Texas the King's Prime Minister.'^a

The next morning I set out immediately after breakfast towards the Austrian frontier, about ten miles distant. I was travelling alone in an open carriage, driven by a postillion from the hotel where I had stopt; and when about three miles on my way through a most enchanting district, I passed a gentleman on foot, who as I passed took off his hat, which salutation I returned, as to an unknown stranger; but I observed the driver make a most reverential and long

^a The President of the Bavarian Council of Ministers in 1830 was Georg Friedrich Freiherr von Zentner, who held this post from 1825–31. Maximilian Karl von Thurn und Taxis (1802–71) headed the house from 1827–71, and was also a minister at the Bavarian court.

continued obeisance, and I asked him who the gentleman was. He said it was the King: – and I immediately stopped the carriage, alighted, and walked back about two hundred yards, and apologised to his majesty for not knowing him alone on foot so early in the morning. He said the Queen^a would overtake him soon, and that he was enjoying the beauty of the scene around him on so fine a morning. He had received my protocol, which contained much that was important, and which he would study with interest. After we had walked and talked for some time, admiring the unique scenery around us, he said he would not keep me longer from my journey, for I should be long detained by the examination of my luggage on entering the Austrian territory. Thanking his majesty for the attention I had received from him, I proceeded.

I was stopped at the Austrian barrier, and the officials were about to take out my luggage and minutely inspect it. I requested them to stop, and took out my dispatch from Prince Esterhazy to Prince Metternich, which the officials took into the office to their superior, and immediately returned with it, and closing up the carriage, very politely requested me to proceed, which I did without an article being touched, and I soon arrived at Nuremberg where there was a great difficulty in finding any one who could speak English. At length, however, a very respectable inhabitant of this fine old city, a publisher of some English works was discovered, and he came to me, and I found him very intelligent, past the middle age, and well acquainted with all that was deserving of notice by a stranger, and he took me from place to place over the city, and never left me until my departure, except to go home for some of his own English publications, which, with great kindness of manner, he requested I would accept; and we parted like old friends, for I felt much indebted to him for the time he gave me, and the great interest he appeared to take in showing me everything worth seeing; and all parties seemed to pay him much attention. I cannot at this moment recall his name, although I have a lively recollection of his attentions to a mere passing stranger.

Arriving at Vienna over night, I had, according to Austrian regulations, to appear the next morning at the head police office, to say who I was, – where from, – what I came there for, – how long I intended to remain, – how much money I had with me to pay my way, – etc., etc., I accordingly went. I was asked my name, and then what I came for. I said I came to communicate with Prince Metternich. The official smiled, and said – ‘We know all about it. – You may stay as long as you like, and do as you wish.’ And thus pleasantly was this business over.

I then presented my letter to Prince Metternich, and was received in a friendly manner, and an early interview was appointed, when I was to explain my views and objects.

^a Therese Charlotte Luise Frederike Amalie (1792–1854), who married Ludwig in 1810.

It must be remembered that at this period Prince Metternich was considered the most experienced and influential statesman in Europe. It was on this account I now visited him, preferring at all times to apply at once to the highest supposed intellect in authority. And it has always been my impression, – and after much experience with all classes this impression is confirmed, – that it will be much easier to reform the world through governments, properly supported by the people, than by any other means. Let the governments of Europe and America be made to see that it will be for their permanent interest and happiness that the population of the world should be taught and governed on true principles and consistent practices, and be assured they will lend their willing assistance and powerful aid to accomplish this ever-to-be desired result. And if the public cannot demonstrate this all important truth to the governments, it has no right to expect their co-operation. The onus, then, is with the public, to give this knowledge in the spirit of kindness and good will to the governments; and if it fails to do so, whatever blame there is in the matter must be attributed to the public. As one of the public I went to Vienna to see and speak the truth to the leading statesmen of that day in Europe.

At the appointed interview, there were present with Prince Metternich, Baron Neumann the then secretary of State,^a and the Prince's private secretary. The Prince placed himself on one side of a narrow table, and myself immediately opposite to him, so that I could distinctly observe every emotion upon his countenance at the memorial which I read to him, and the effect which my conversation produced on his mind.

I commenced by saying that the memorial I was about to read to him was a continuation of the two memorials which I had presented through Lord Castlereagh to the Congress of Sovereigns assembled in Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818.^b The Prince immediately said to his private secretary, – 'We must have those memorials. Go and see for them, and bring them to me.' In about seven minutes the secretary returned with them. They were the originals, in my own hand writing, with a French translation. I requested to have the originals, and left the translation with the Prince.

I then proceeded, and stated –

That the present *Armies* of Europe required a greater expenditure and waste of valuable power, than, if applied differently and as wisely as they might be, would be sufficient to place Europe permanently in a state of peace and high prosperity.

That the *Ecclesiastical* expenditure, and its waste of valuable physical and mental power, would also, if differently and wisely applied, be sufficient to give high permanent prosperity to the entire population of Europe, and to insure a superior character to each.

^a Philipp Neumann (c. 1778–1849): at the Austrian Embassy in London in the 1820s; later Austrian minister at Florence.

^b See *infra*, vol. 1, pp. 253–67.

That the *Law* expenditure and waste of valuable talent and labour throughout Europe, would, if differently and wisely applied, be sufficient to produce the same results.

That even the *Medical* expenditure and waste of valuable intellectual powers and physical labour, would be sufficient, if differently and wisely applied, to give permanent progress and happiness in Europe.

That these professions, as now applied, were opposed to the well-being, well-doing, health, and happiness, of all of every class, including these professions; and were so contrary to the common feeling and common sense of humanity, that they could not be continued except by the continual action of force and fraud.

That it would be for the lasting benefit and advantage of all governments and peoples, that this system should be as soon as practicable superseded by the new principles and practices which I recommended.

As I proceeded to read this memorial, I watched the impression which it made upon the mind of the Prince, and every sentence seemed to produce the effect which I had intended it should. When I had finished, Baron Neumann arose, and said something little relevant to statements which I had read. The Prince immediately stood up, and with much true dignity in his countenance and manner said – ‘Gentlemen, I have listened with attention and deep interest to Mr Owen’s memorial, – and all which he has stated is perfectly true. It is also true that we govern by force and fraud – the only mode yet known to governments how to govern. Here, in Austria, we govern with force and fraud. – but with as little of both as is sufficient to keep the population of the different districts peaceable and quiet; and our population in Austria have as much enjoyment as this system of force and fraud will admit.’ This, at that period, was correct; for the Austrians appeared to me to enjoy themselves more than any population I had seen. The Prince proceeded to say that he knew not how to govern a people except by force and fraud; and requested me to give him in a written document my views as to the changes which I would recommend. Our conversation, then, became more general; but from my whole intercourse with the Prince, he left the impression strong on my mind, that he wished to govern in the best manner for the happiness of the people, with safety to the government.

I occupied myself in preparing the document requested by the Prince.

In the meantime Prince Esterhazy came from London to Vienna, and he immediately called upon me, and gave me an invitation to visit him in Hungary.

Mr John McGregor,^a now M.P. for Glasgow, was then in Vienna, commissioned by our government to make a treaty of commerce with the Austrian

^a John McGregor (1797–1857): MP for Glasgow 1847–57.

government. We were together in the same hotel, and with Mr McGregor, the American Consul,^a and myself, we formed a party to dine daily together. I received much valuable knowledge of detail from Mr McGregor, who possesses more accurate knowledge of the statistics of Europe and America than any one I ever met with, and I was much benefited by his varied communications, and gratified by the interest which this little party took in my proceedings.

After presenting my document to Prince Metternich, and seeing what could be seen in and near Vienna, I hastened to prepare for my departure on my mission to other Courts of Europe.

But in justice to Sir Frederick Lamb,^b afterwards Lord Bouverie, the brother of our then prime minister, Lord Melbourne^c I should have stated that immediately on my arrival in Vienna I communicated to him the object of my journey to Vienna, and he was frank, friendly, and hospitable to me while I remained in that city. I had often interviews with him, to explain more of the details of the change of system which I advocated. He made a dinner party for me, invited the French ambassador^d and his Lady, with other officials of the leading English families then in Vienna, to meet me, and his kindness far exceeded any expectations or claim I could have for it. He gave me letters on my departure to Lord William Russell,^e our ambassador then in Berlin, and to our minister then in Dresden,^f – as I intended to visit both these places.

Before quitting Vienna, and to prevent returning to these subjects, I left Mr McGregor in full treaty with Prince Metternich, with whom he had to negotiate many particulars of detail long after I met him, and I did not meet Mr McGregor again until we met by accident at the Board of Trade, of which he soon became the active secretary, – when he at once exclaimed – ‘What did you say or do to Prince Metternich while you were in Vienna? – for I was with him after your departure almost every day for many weeks, discussing details of our commercial treaty with Austria, and he always seemed quite impatient to get over our business, that we might talk about you and your New Views for governing society and giving a new character to the human race, and he seemed infatuated with these subjects.’

I regretted much when Mr McGregor informed me that he was going to retire from the Board of Trade to become a member of the House of Commons. It was to leave an office which few, if any one living, could fill with equal efficiency and knowledge of the statistics and trade of Europe and America, to enter a career for which his natural faculties unfitted him, and in which his

^a John George Schwartz.

^b Frederick James Lamb (1782–1853): 3rd Viscount Melbourne and Baron Beaurale (1839); Ambassador at Vienna 1831–41.

^c William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne (1779–1848): Prime Minister 1834, 1835–41.

^d François-Maximilien Gérard, comte de Rayneval (1778–1836).

^e Lord George William Russell (1790–1846): Ambassador 1835–41.

^f Edward Michael Ward (d. 1831), Minister Plenipotentiary 1828–31.

peculiar manner of speaking in public will ever be an obstacle to his progress and usefulness in parliament. It is to be regretted, as there are so few really practical men in the administration of this country, that his great experience should be so misapplied and lost to the nation. See his official report on the whole affairs of the United States, and others of his official documents respecting our commercial treaties with European states.^a

To resume my progress to make my views better known among the governments of Europe, – I went from Vienna to Dresden, where I was known by the officials of the court, and especially by the first minister of his Majesty the King of Saxony. Many years before this period I was visited by Baron Just, the long well known and highly esteemed Saxon Ambassador in London. He remained with me some time at Braxfield, my residence near New Lanark, and took much pleasure in minutely examining my proceedings there, and investigating the principles by which such satisfactory results had been produced as he witnessed in practice. He came and left, as many other distinguished foreigners did, expressing admiration at what had been seen, and which far exceeded any expectations they had previously formed of what could be done with such a population and such materials as I had to act upon and with, – and I thought no more of this visit from Baron Just than of hundreds of similar ones. But the Baron informed me before his departure that he was about to leave England and his post as ambassador to the court of St James's, which he had so long filled. He was now advanced in years, and appeared in all he said and did to be a good, just, and benevolent man, desiring the happiness of his fellow-men in every situation in life.

Some time after his departure, to my surprise I received a packet from the then King of Saxony, inclosing a large gold medal with the likeness of his Majesty on one side, and 'for merit' on the reverse, with complimentary letters from his Majesty, the Prime Minister, and Baron Just. These proceedings prepared me a favourable reception with the First Minister of the Crown, and we had several interesting communications. He agreed with me in the truth of the principles which I advocated, and as to the great benefits which they would produce if honestly and consistently carried into practice; but he said – 'I much fear governments are not yet sufficiently advanced to understand how to introduce the principles or to act upon them.' I agreed with him, but said – 'The fault is not theirs. As I desire the change; the onus is with me, to adopt measures to enable governments to perceive the interest which they have to make the change, and until I can do so I must continue to devise measure after measure until I can effect this object.' He approved of the course which I thus proposed to pursue, and heartily and kindly wished me full success in my life time, – but he thought the obstacles in my way were very formidable.

^a See John McGregor, *The Commercial and Financial Legislation of Europe and America* (1841) and *The Progress of America* (2 vols, 1847).

I then went forward to Berlin, – called upon our ambassador, Lord William Russell, – his brother Lord John^a being then a prominent member of the British cabinet, – but Lord William was at Potsdam with the King. It seemed my card and letters were immediately forwarded to our ambassador, – for the next day I had a note from him regretting his absence when I called, and appointing an immediate interview, as he had returned to Berlin. I explained the object of my visit to Berlin, with which Court I had had, through Baron Jacobi, the Prussian Ambassador in London in 1815–16 and 1817, interesting proceedings, which resulted in the Prussian national system of education.

I had previously published my four *‘Essays on the Formation of Character and New Views of Society.’* This work being on publication very popular among the higher classes, had attracted the Baron’s attention, and we became good friends and had frequent interviews. He sent from me a copy of this work to his Majesty the late King of Prussia, and after a short period I received an autograph from his Majesty, saying how much he was pleased with what I had written on the subject of national education and upon governments, and that in consequence he had given instructions to his Minister of the Interior to establish a national system of education for his dominions; and it was established the next year.

I proceeded to inform Lord William Russell that in consequence of this old intercourse with this court I had written to his Prussian Majesty on the evening of my arrival in Berlin, mentioning the object of my journey, and that the next morning before the King had sent my old and much valued friend Baron Alexander Von Humboldt to communicate with me on the business of my visit to Berlin, and that we were in friendly communication on these matters. Lord William expressed himself much gratified with this statement, and invited me to Potsdam, where Lady William^b and her family were, – which invitation I accepted, and was kindly and hospitably entertained, and was much pleased with the unaffected and frank manner of her Ladyship.

We returned together to Berlin, where he made a dinner for me, and invited the Prince of Prussia,^c who spoke English fluently, to meet me; and we had much conversation upon the subject of my visit.

With these proceedings and frequent visits to and from Baron Humboldt I spent several days most usefully in Berlin. Those only who have had opportunities of personal intercourse with Baron Humboldt can form any correct idea of the kindness, benevolence, and high intelligence with which he impresses all so favoured; and having known and witnessed his progress since we first met in Paris, in 1818, in the society of his friends Cuvier and Laplace, his progress has been observed with much interest by me, and I was on this occasion gratified

^a Lord John Russell (1792–1878): Home Secretary under Melbourne.

^b The former Elizabeth Anne Rawdon (1793–1874), who married Russell in 1817.

^c Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1795–1861): King of Prussia 1840–61.

to have once more, – and, as I concluded from the advanced age of both, for the last time, – the pleasure of free and uninterrupted converse with him.

At parting at our last interview he said, – ‘You are here opposed by the Jesuits.’ This I knew, – not only in Berlin, but in Vienna, Dresden, Munich, and wherever I remained for any time, – for they were anxious to counteract the impression which my ‘New Views’ seldom failed to make upon the minds of all seeking truth.

It had been my intention to visit St Petersburg, the Hague, and other Courts; but the approach of winter and my affairs in England made it necessary for me to hasten home.

After my return I continued, by regular lectures, public meetings, and publications, to instruct the people, and gradually to prepare them for a better and higher state of existence than the painful condition to which the progress of science, misdirected under a false and evil system, had reduced, and was still lower reducing them; – for the longer this system of error in principle and practice shall be maintained, the greater will be the demoralisation and misery of all classes.

To keep the subject of these New Views in the mind of the upper classes, I petitioned Parliament, session after session, with little intermission, from 1816 to the present time; and although these petitions were ably supported, often by Lord Brougham, sometimes by the Marquis of Lansdowne, and by Lord Monteagle,^a and by leading members in the House of Commons, they were always, although unopposed, ineffectual to stimulate an open and fair debate, since the administration of Lord Liverpool, who was a thorough convert to my views, and if he had not been on this subject strongly opposed by the church, then all powerful, he and his cabinet were ready and most willing that it should be thoroughly investigated and tested in practice.

The ‘*New Views*’ and ‘*The Formation of Character*’ had now become familiar subjects, even among the working classes, and although, for want of previous training in mental investigations, they took up these subjects imperfectly, and with little or no practical experience, – yet a new mind and new feelings were growing up among them, and the working classes of this generation have a very superior class of mind to those of former generations.

Leaving England now for a time, I went to sojourn with my family in the United States, of which I had made them citizens, – knowing that liberal views, good moral conduct, talent, and industry, would there meet encouragement and reward, which could not be expected under a false and evil system as it existed and was supported in the old world. I was not mistaken in these conclusions; and it was fortunate that I returned to the United States at this period.

My eldest son, Robert Dale Owen, had now become a member of the House

^a Thomas Spring-Rice (1790–1866), 1st Baron Monteagle: Whig MP 1820–39, Chancellor of the Exchequer under Melbourne 1835–9.

of Representatives in the Congress of the United States, after having been a member of the Legislature of his own state, (Indiana,) – and a subject of much interest to me and also my son, had been for sometime before the House, and unsuccessful, although brought in and supported by the talent and interest of two highly respected and influential members. This was the establishment of the Smithsonian Institution, for which Mr Smithson^a had left by his will a large sum in England, but which, if certain conditions were not fulfilled in England, should be applied as he directed in the United States.

Mr Richard Rush,^b – son of the celebrated Dr Rush, a signer of the act of Independence, and long United States' Ambassador in London, – came to England in virtue of this will, to claim the funds, and obtained them for the United States, with interest, – the whole sum to be applied according to the will. The principle and interest of these funds remained some years unused and unnoticed in the Treasury of the United States, until John Quincy Adams, ex-president, who knew all about the transactions connected with this affair, became a member of the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States, and he introduced a bill to apply the funds, as directed, to establish an institution 'to increase and extend knowledge among men;' – but with all his extraordinary industry, high talent, and great experience, he failed.

Sometime after, the subject was again introduced by Governor Tallmadge^c of Wisconsin, – a then talented and popular member of the House of Representatives – or of the Senate, I forget which, – at Washington. He consulted much with my son upon the bill while it was in progress, and my son communicated freely with me on the subject, and we gave Mr Tallmadge all the assistance in and out of Congress that was in our power; but again it was without success: – the bill, like Mr J Q Adams's, was lost.

Being thus made familiar with the subject, it appeared to me far too important to be lost sight of. Could the bill be passed, and the institution established and conducted according to the will of the liberal and far seeing donor it might be made of great permanent value, not only of the United States, but to the population of the world.

On pondering over the matter I considered its success deserving every effort, and I said to my son – 'This affair is too important to remain as it is. The government will lend no aid to take this large sum out of its hands, and a strong effort will be required to obtain it for its intended and proper use. You stand pretty well with all parties in both Houses. You can well defend such a

^a James Smithson (1765–1829): founder of the Smithsonian Institution, though he had never visited the United States.

^b Richard Rush (1780–1859): Ambassador 1817–25.

^c Nathaniel Pitcher Tallmadge (1795–1864): Senator from New York 1833–44, governor of Wisconsin territory 1844–6.

cause in your own House of Representatives, and under these circumstances there is some chance that, with unflinching energy, industry, and perseverance in such a cause, you may succeed. I know it is a most formidable task, especially for a young member, – but the satisfaction of success, if attained, will be so much greater.’

After some consideration he said – ‘I will attempt it, and will do all I can to deserve success.’

He introduced his bill. It was at every stage strongly opposed, and on the last day but one of the session he had almost given up hope of success, – when on that morning he received a letter from me, (I had left Washington for a few weeks,) strongly urging him to strain every nerve among his friends to the last, and never to despair. This, he told me, aroused all his energies. He went immediately among his most-to-be-confided-in friends: – the bill had passed through every stage with almost a death struggle to the third reading in the Senate, and only now required to be passed; but there is on the last day of the session such a crowd of bills to pass, and all are so eager to pass their own, that to pass one on that day is most uncertain, and cannot be done without an arduous struggle. His friends were there, true to their previous day’s engagement, – and the bill was passed. A great victory certainly for a young member.

Having so far succeeded, he applied himself with great industry to make the funds available to the greatest extent for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men.

My son’s mind had been trained and educated to be extended beyond class, sect, or party, – and he desired that the Smithsonian Institution should not be tintured with either, as was evidently the intention of its founder. He took great care in preparing the Institution itself, its plan, its building, and the materials to be employed in the latter, as well as in the symmetry of its architecture.

He was also most anxious, (and I would say over anxious,) to obtain for it the best and most competent secretary, – knowing how much depended upon this official, for the ultimate success of the object for which the Institution was established. He had been strongly impressed, I know not how, that the Rev. Mr Henry,^a president of the Princeton College, or University, was the best choice that could be made for this office. Not knowing Mr Henry, and well knowing Mr Richard Rush, formerly Ambassador to London, and who had succeeded in obtaining in England the funds under the will of Mr Smithson, and being conscious of his business habits, great talents, and high integrity, I strongly recommended him as the most fit person in the United States for secretary to that Institution. My son had the full influence of the appointment, and he used it to the utmost in favor of Mr Henry, – and he was elected. He was and is, no doubt, well suited to preside over one of the old Institutions of

^a Joseph Henry (1797–1878): physicist; first director of the Smithsonian Institution. He was not a clergyman.

the old, ignorant, and prejudiced system of society, as governed by the priesthood of this day in the United States; but not so well suited by his education and position to increase and diffuse superior knowledge among men. I therefore considered his appointment a great check to the progress of the most valuable knowledge among men; and I believe my son had soon reason to discover the mistake which he had made.

The building as it stands was decided upon by my son.

While this matter was in progress, the difference between the British government and the United States arose respecting the territory of Oregon,^a and a war spirit to a great height was created in the States, – but particularly in Congress, – supported by the press of all parties.

Seeing this, and that no party, on account of its great unpopularity, would venture in Congress or through the press to advocate peace between the two countries on reasonable terms, – I wrote and published in the leading Washington Journals a letter strongly advocating peace, and stating terms which I declared to be just to both parties, and that the government which refused them would be the cause of a war which all good men would regret, and which both nations would long have cause to lament.^b

The day previous to this publication, *The Union*, the Government Journal, and the speeches in Congress, were all for war. The following day, however, *The Union* came out in favour of peace, and the war spirit gradually diminished in Congress.

I was in communication daily with the government respecting my proposals, and finding a spirit in the Cabinet not unfavourable to my views, I came to England, – had an interview with Lord Aberdeen, still the Foreign minister, – and finding it would require but an impartial friendly interference to bring the two governments to terms of peace, I hastened back to Washington, where I found the parties in Congress nearly balanced between peace and war on the terms I had suggested. There was ever a difference between the two Houses upon the subject, and three members were appointed by each House to confer, and if possible agree upon this now all engrossing subject.

My son Robert Dale Owen was one of the three selected by the House of Representatives. He had now imbibed my views; and he strongly urged them at the conference between the two houses, and was successful in his advocacy for peace upon the conditions which had been stated.

I again immediately returned to England, where I remained until I learned that the points of difference had been finally agreed upon by our government and the United States' minister, and then I returned to Washington, – thus

^a Between 1844–6, Britain and the United States disputed the border between Oregon and Canada, which was finally fixed at the 49th parallel in 1846.

^b See Owen, *The Problem of the Age Solved* (New York, 1847), and 'Who Are the Parties Interested in the Continuance of Peace?', Washington DC, 23 March 1846, in University of London MS. 578.

crossing the Atlantic to endeavour to keep peace between the two countries in which I had so deep an interest, four times in less than five months.

In 1847 I returned to this country – the climate much better agreeing with my constitution than that of the United States.

Since my return I have endeavoured by lectures and various publications to prepare the public for an entire change of system, without which I have long known no permanent change for the happiness of the human race could be effected. These preparations have been increased year by year, until in May of last year I thought the public mind of this country was sufficiently developed to listen to the introduction of those principles and practices which, when adopted by society, will produce the Millennial State of Existence upon Earth.

I was not disappointed. The meeting which I called in May last^a was most gratifying and eminently successful, and gave me full evidence that when the governments of the civilised nations of the world can be convinced that the present system is based on falsehood and is necessarily productive of evil continually, and when they shall be therefore united in agreeing to change it for the true, good, and happy system of the human race, the people are preparing to second their efforts, and thus to give a New Existence to Man upon the Earth, and to introduce and maintain in practice the long promised Millennium.

That meeting prepared the public for the Congress of the Reformers of the World, which is to be held in St Martin's Hall, Long Acre, to commence at noon on the 14th May next, and to continue until the subject shall be fully and fairly discussed. For the time is come when a great revolution for good or evil is at hand; – for good if right reason and sound common sense can be made to prevail; – for evil if the prejudices of falsehood, fraud, and despotism shall continue to be supported. And which of these results shall be the victor at this period in the history of the world, will depend upon the degree of development of the public mind.

This must be patiently observed. Nature requires its own time to mature all things, – whether mineral, vegetable, animal, or mind and spirit. She will not be prematurely urged on, before her due order in time. Therefore, if the mental faculties of man are now sufficiently developed, practical measures will be now adopted by governments and people, in cordial union, to commence the New Existence of Man upon the Earth, and thus to introduce the true Millennial state into the practice of the population of the world.

But if the mental powers of the advanced men of the world are yet too undeveloped for the entire gradual change from the system of falsehood and evil to the system of truth and good, then must nations yet wait the arrival, in the due order of time, of the period when nature shall have prepared the human race for this change, which sooner or later must come.

^a See *Robert Owen's Address, Delivered at the Meeting in St. Martin's Hall (1855)*.

I have also at all times freely communicated my publications and proceedings to our own and the other governments of the civilised world, and while the Peace Conference was sitting in Paris^a I addressed the following letters to the Earl of Clarendon,^b and supplied each member of the Conference with copies of the *Millennial Gazette*, in which reference is made to the permanent advantages to be obtained by federative treaties between nations.

I am conscious that no great change for the permanent benefit of nations can be made without a union of these governments, and they must now so unite, or the people will unite against them, and thus again violence will be organised, and progress in knowledge, peace, and happiness will be delayed for a long season, and the reign of repulsive feelings over the attractive will be continued.

During the proceedings thus briefly and imperfectly sketched, of the continued agitation which I have excited to prepare the population for an entire change of system in principle and practice, – three subjects of more or less interest have occurred, to which it may be useful to refer, as they have been hitherto misunderstood by the public.

The first is the building of Orbiston, in Lanarkshire, in 1825.

The second is the establishment of the Labour Exchange in Gray's Inn Road, in 1832.^c

The third is the establishment of the community at Harmony Hall, in Hampshire, in 1839.^d

The first was commenced and finished while I was absent in the United States, by two of the most faithful and honest of my disciples, both over anxious for the improvement of society on the principles I had advocated and on the practice I had exhibited partially at New Lanark. These two were Mr Hamilton of Dalziel, and Mr Abraham Combe,^e the elder brother of Andrew^f and George Combe,^g but in many respects superior to both. Mr Hamilton expended, I believe, upwards of twenty thousand pounds in this experiment, and destroyed his health, – for he died at an early period of life. Abraham Combe sacrificed his life prematurely to this well-intentioned, but ill-judged experiment.

^a The Treaty of Paris of 6 March 1856 ended the Crimean War.

^b George William Villiers, 4th Earl of Clarendon (1800–70): Whig politician.

^c Owen's labour exchange, at Gray's Inn Road, London, was active in 1832–3, where it involved as many as five hundred artisans trading their wares on the basis of labour time and cost of materials.

^d Founded in 1839, the Queenwood community was Owen's last great effort to found a co-operative establishment.

^e Abram Combe (1785–1827), originally a tanner, devoted his fortune and life to co-operation at Edinburgh and the community at Orbiston. With A. J. Hamilton of Dalziel (1793–1834): Lanarkshire landowner, son of General John Hamilton, he had previously set up the first Edinburgh co-operative or 'Practical Society'.

^f Andrew Combe (1797–1847), physiologist and phrenologist.

^g George Combe (1788–1858): phrenologist and educational reformer, who occasionally attacked Owen's environmentalist view of personality.

Neither of these self-devoted men possessed practical knowledge equal to the task which they hastily and rashly undertook in my absence and without my knowledge. The building which they erected, and all their general arrangements, were constructed to prevent their success, and upon my return from the United States I told them they could never succeed with such arrangements; and I was never at this establishment for one day, and never interfered with it in any way. Yet this was said to be one of my failing establishments.

Respecting the second experiment, – the Labour Exchange in Gray's Inn Road. I had published in my official report to the county of Lanark an outline theory of the society which I advocated, and in this report I explained the principle of exchanging labour for labour, by means of the labour note, – and that on this principle and by this practice wealth might be increased without the aid of metal money to an illimitable extent, even to saturate the world with wealth of the most useful and valuable description.^a

After my return from the United States in 1830, I commenced lecturing weekly on the Sunday, to explain in more detail my 'New Views on Society,' and to form a new and superior character for the human race.^b It was at these lectures I introduced music at their commencement and termination, and by degrees a social tea party to precede the lecture. This I did, knowing that tea, music, and a lecture explanatory of valuable practical knowledge, were calculated to create more moral results than drunkenness in public houses. And soon these lectures, so accompanied, created a large congregation; and the two first places in which these lectures were given soon became too small, and Gray's Inn Road Institution, with its extensive accommodation for lectures to large audiences, and for various other purposes, was offered and strongly pressed upon my acceptance for occupation.

Soon the large lecture room, sufficient to accommodate an audience of two thousand, became regularly filled every Sunday, and disciples and apostles of the system increased week by week; and it became necessary to form a committee from among these, to assist in the management of these increasing arrangements; and by degrees an association was formed, on pure democratic principles, to promote in all ways the progress of the New Views towards their introduction into practice.

The committee elected as the executive organ of the association, who had studied my writings and attended my explanatory lectures, thought the time had arrived when the Labour Note system could be introduced into practice; and they became daily more urgent that I should, as president of the association, give my consent for them to commence this change, in the buildings so convenient for the purpose of forming part of this establishment.

I told them, as a practical man, being accustomed to large practical arrange-

^a See *infra*, vol. 1, pp. 302–3.

^b See *infra*, vol. 2, pp. 125–65.

ments, and knowing the necessity for an extended preparation before such a new mode of business could be commenced with order and under a well organised system, that it would require at least two years of continued attention to have the requisite arrangements completed to open such a business as this would be if properly conducted.

The committee could not understand the necessity for such preparation, and so many seemed to know everything that would be required, that it was decided by a majority of votes that the practice should be commenced with the least possible delay.

I said – ‘You will destroy or greatly retard your success for want of due preparation on a scale sufficiently large for the business which will arise to be transacted.’ And so it occurred. The rush on the first day of opening the establishment was such as to endanger the lives of the parties on entering the establishment, and it was found necessary to put up strong barriers to be opened by guards stationed to admit only a certain number until they were attended to and dismissed.

The experiment, although thus introduced with great defects, was sufficient to show what could be done by experienced men of business on this principle. It continued gradually to overcome the great disadvantage of its premature commencement, and there was a fair prospect that eventually it would be very successful. But unfortunately the building was the property of an eccentric individual, almost bordering on a state of insanity,^a and we had also among us one who had been a dissenting minister, and who occasionally was permitted to lecture to our audience.^b The lectures were so popular as now to be profitable beyond covering their necessary expenses, and the business showed every sign of great success as it and the lectures were now conducted.

When matters were in this state, the dissenting minister, having no regard to the engagements to the cause in which he was permitted to become a member, secretly stimulated the proprietor of the building, (who had strongly pressed me to occupy it as I did,) to a state of real madness, by telling him that if he would take the building out of my hands, *he* could carry on the lectures, while both together, they could conduct the Labour Exchange and make ten thousand a year profit.

This was too strong a temptation for the madman to withstand, and he and the minister got a number of ruffians together, and blocked up over night the entrance, and kept forcible possession of the premises. Some of my committee, without my knowledge, and contrary to my wishes, opposed force to force; but

^a William Bromley, whose exorbitant demands for rent Owen finally refused to pay in 1833. See *The Crisis*, vol. 2, no. 1 (12 January 1833), p. 7, no. 4 (2 February 1833), pp. 25–7.

^b Rev. Thomas Macconnell lectured frequently at the Gray’s Inn Road establishment, which opened in September 1832.

when I heard of it, I prevailed to them to desist. And I took a larger lecture room in premises in Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square.^a

In preference to leaving the Gray's Inn Road Institution I offered the mad proprietor a thousand a year for a long lease, which the minister advised him to refuse – their prospects, as he said, being so great from the lectures and business. The result in a short time was to reduce the lecture audience from 2,000 to twenty, and to ruin the proprietor to such an extent that he lost the building altogether.

But this was afterwards called one of my failing experiments.

The third proceeding was the establishment of a community at Tytherley and Queenwood, in Hampshire.^b

My disciples and apostles in 1838–9 were becoming clamorous for the commencement of a community on the principles which I advocated. They thought they could raise sufficient funds to commence one, and that they possessed sufficient practical knowledge to conduct it. I was of a very different opinion; and would not commence until there were funds sufficient lodged in bank for that purpose.

My advice was disregarded. The parties commenced; – went forward without any practical knowledge of what they had to do; – came to a stand; – and then applied to me to relieve them out of their difficulties. I did so for that time; and as the first governor whom they selected had destroyed his health under a task for which he was unequal, they appointed another, and proceeded with his inexperienced assistance, until they again could proceed no further.

A second time they applied to me, – and then I went to the establishment, which, from want of the knowledge of governing qualities, had arrived at so much confusion as to make it impracticable to put it in the state in which it should be for ultimate success.

It was a Democratic establishment, governed at stated meetings; and there were several self-willed inexperienced members among them, who formed a party and out-voted some of the measures which I proposed, and which I knew were necessary for its success, – and I resigned all connection with it.

In less than two years they again brought it to a stand, and they could proceed no further with it, and gave up.^c

It has since been applied, as I intended it should be, for the formation of character for young persons, under the direction of Mr Edmondson,^d who

^a See *The Crisis*, vol. 2, no. 11 (11 May 1833), pp. 136–44.

^b Owen faced considerable opposition from working class members of his Association of All Classes of All Nations over the government of the Queenwood community. For details see Gregory Claeys, *Citizens and Saints. Politics and Anti-Politics in Early British Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 247–60.

^c The democratic faction seized control of Queenwood in the summer of 1844 at the Rational Society's annual congress. The community collapsed about a year later.

^d George Edmondson (1798–1863): a Quaker who had earlier superintended agricultural institutions in Russia. On the school, see D. Thompson, 'Queenwood College', *Annals of Science*, vol. 11 (1955), pp. 246–54.

APPENDIX

conducts the institution, from all reports, in a manner to give general satisfaction to the parents of all the children committed to his charge.

The outline of this establishment of Harmony Hall, on the estate of Queenwood, is favourable in many respects for the formation of a family commonwealth, when society shall be prepared for one on its true and only principles, which alone can ensure success.

INDEX

The bold figures indicate the volume; the roman numerals not preceded by bold figures refer to the General Introduction in Volume 1; the page numbers refer to the folios at the foot of the page in this Pickering Masters edition.

- Aberdeen, 4th Earl of (George Hamilton-Gordon), 4 317, 329
- Accounts, of model communities, 2 32, 86
- Action
- freedom of
 - as condition for happiness, 3 182–4, 307
 - and injury to others, 3 183
- Adams, John, 4 256–7, 304
- and United States constitution, 3 244–5
- Adams, John Quincey, 4 165, 256, 304–5
- and establishment of Smithsonian Institute, 4 329
 - and United States constitution, 3 244
- Addington, Henry, 1st Viscount Sidmouth *see* Sidmouth
- Affections
- absence of creating prostitution, 2 293
 - and chastity, 2 293, 310–11
 - disappointment of
 - and disease, 2 315, 349
 - effect on children, 3 136–7 - disappointment of unknown under rational system of society, 3 294
 - and elevation of character in new moral world, 3 174
 - marriage dependent on in new moral world, 2 227
 - of neighbours and friends, as condition for preserving organization in best state of health, 3 160–1
 - not subject to will, 3 54, 305, 322–4, 353
 - only motive for uniting under rational system of society, 3 290–1
 - of parents, effect of disappointment on children, 3 136–7
 - of parents for children, 3 318
 - permanent nature of marriage based on, 2 52–3, 262
 - relation to qualities of character, 2 271–2
 - state of under rational system of society, 3 305, 356
- After-life, belief in, 4 11n., 17
- Age
- classification by under rational system of society, 2 80; 3 339, 342–3, 371–2, 408
 - and government of communities, lii–liiii, liv
 - and status under rational system of society, liv; 3 283, 285–97
- Agriculture
- communities to be based in, 1 160–1
 - condition of small freeholders, xxxvi
 - current separation from manufacture, trades and professions, 3 96
 - development of in new state of society, 3 98
 - effect of communities on national trade, 1 164–5
 - employment in, 1 299
 - benefits of, 1 305 - making consumption keep pace with production, 1 294
 - merits of spade cultivation, xxxv, xxxviii; 1 294–9
 - in model communities, xxxv; 2 69–70, 85
 - as only way of providing sufficient employment, 1 203
 - present degradation of workers in, 1 165
 - training in, 1 187
- Agriculture *see also* Spade cultivation
- Agriculturists
- address to, 2 105–13, 145–8
 - increased competition among, 2 145
- Air, pure, as condition for preserving organization in best state of health, 3 141–2
- Aix-la-Chapelle, Congress of Sovereigns (1818), Owen's memorials presented to, xxxii; 1 257; 2 127; 4 226, 240–2, 303, 321
- Albemarle, Earl of, 4 277
- Alcohol, distillation of at New Harmony, Indiana, 2 47
- Alexander, Claud, of Ballochmyle, 4 112, 130
- Alexander I, Emperor of Russia, 4 201, 239–40

- Alison, Dr William Pulteney, statistical research, 2 355–6, 411n.
- Alison, Sir Archibald, statistical research, 2 356, 411n.
- Allen, William
 character, 4 148, 195
 interference in running of New Lanark, 4 291
 meeting with Emperor Alexander of Russia, 4 201n., 290–1
 partnership with Owen in New Lanark, xx–xxi, xxxii; 4 142, 148, 195–6
 sectarian ideas of, 4 298
- Alliances, after Napoleonic Wars, 3 4
- Ambition
 disappearance of under rational system of society, 3 207, 231, 293
 of Napoleon Bonaparte, 1 36–7
- America *see* United States
- America, South, revolution in, 3 379–80
- Anger
 at differences of opinion and feeling, 2 181
 disappearance of under rational state of society, 3 207, 323
- Animal propensities of mankind, 3 38–9
- Animals
 change in character in rational state of society, 3 208
 chastity among, 2 288, 300, 306–7, 315
 destruction of those harmful to man, 3 208
 hunting of by wealthy, 3 326–7
 man's difference from, 2 327
 natures of, 2 58–9
 necessarily subservient to humans, 3 207
 and non-violence, lviii
 study of improving qualities of, 3 203
 treatment of in rational state of society, 3 190, 208
- Anxiety
 of parents about health and welfare of children, 3 137–9
 resulting from insufficient exercise of faculties, 2 229–30
- Architecture, mental science of, 3 267
- Aristocracy
 address to, 2 163–5
 interest in Owen's views, 4 265–6
 oppression by means of civil professions, 3 252–3
 of priests, lawyers and wealthy in United States, liii
 religious attitudes of, 2 170–1
- Aristotle, 3 45; 4 45
- Arkwright, Sir Richard, 1 1, 258, 298, 336; 3 251, 259–60; 4 267
 on child labour, xxvi
 cotton mill in Manchester, 4 77–8
 and factory system, 4 77n.
 introduction of cotton spinning machinery, 4 77
 inventions of, 1 143
 partnership with David Dale, xvii
 and Peel's Factory Bill, 4 281
 wealth of, 2 368
- Army
 address to members of profession, 2 158–61
 advantages of union and co-operation for, 2 79
 republican opposition to existence of standing armies, li–lii
 unnecessary under rational system of society, 2 196; 3 376
- Association of All Classes of All Nations to form a New Moral World, 2 334–5; 4 336n.
 address from, 3 7–8
see also Rational Society
- Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor, 4 176n.
- Association for Removing the Causes of Ignorance and Poverty by Education and Employment, xl
- Associations *see* Model Communities
- Atcheston, Nathaniel, 4 122
- Atheism, 2 170, 171, 173
- Athens, educational system, 1 83
- Atkinson, John
 as partner with Owen in New Lanark, 1 13n., 14–15, 173; 4 94–5, 105, 138–41
 and sale of New Lanark, 4 144–5
- Atkinson, Thomas, assistance to Owen, 4 95
- Attwood, Thomas, 4 268
- Austin, John, friendship with Bentham, 4 148
- Austin, Sarah, friendship with Bentham, 4 148
- Austria, government of, 2 411n.; 4 323
- Babbage, Charles
 statistical research, 2 356
On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures, 2 366
- Bacon, Francis, 3 45
- Bacon, Richard N. (ed.), *Report on the Transactions at the Holkham Sheep-shearing*, 1 333n.
- Baines, M. T., 4 258
- Baines, Sir Edward, visit to New Lanark, 4 258–9, 282, 297–8
- Baines, Sir Edward, *et al.*, 'Report of a Deputation from the Township of Leeds', 2 29n.

- Baines, Thomas (minister and educational reformer), 4 87-8
- Balfour, Rev. David, performs marriage of Owen and Caroline Dale, 4 107-8
- Bank notes
as means of distributing wealth, 3 104
redemption in gold, 4 269
as standard of value, 1 290-1; 2 72, 144; 3 259; 4 183
use of under rational system of society, 1 326
- Bankers
address to, 2 143-5
disappearance under rational system of society, 2 140; 3 261
urged to use wealth for more just arrangements, 2 144-5
- Banking, profession founded on erroneous notions, 2 331-3
- Banks, of real wealth under new state of society, 3 106
- Banks, George, and Owen's visit to Leeds, 4 258, 282
- Bannatine, Dugald, 1 1n.
- Bardsley, Samuel Argent, as member of Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, 4 89
- Barrington, Shute, 4 157
- Barter, system of, 1 302; 3 259
- Barton, Henry and James, partnership with Owen, 1 173
- Barton, John, partnership with Owen, 1 13n.; 4 105
- Bathurst, Henry, Bishop of Norwich, friendship with Owen, 4 176
- Beauty, in lay-out of land and buildings, 3 98
- Bedford, Duke of, 4 274
- Belief
causes of, understood in rational system of society, 3 223
and compulsion of religion, 2 176-7; 3 52
dependent on early impressions and circumstances, 1 68-71
forced denial of, 3 71
forcing of under irrational system, 1 208; 3 135-6, 356
influence of birthplace on, 2 60-2
irrational notions concerning, 2 16-17
laws of God concerning, 3 88-9
not subject to will, 1 129; 2 139; 3 223, 310-11, 320, 330, 353
punishment for, 2 9, 185-6, 191-2; 3 356
religious, 2 141-3
strength instilled at early age, 1 139-40
- Bell, Andrew
educational system, xxxiii; 1 37, 86, 88, 90; 4 137, 141
Owen's patronage of, 4 160, 246, 303
- Bell, Henry, 4 123
- Bellers, John, 1 204
on co-operative schemes, 1 167
Proposals for Raising a College of Industry, xlix; 1 167n.; 4 296
- Bentham, Jeremy, 4 267-8
character, 4 148-9
partnership with Owen in New Lanark, xx, 4 142, 148-9, 183
and Utilitarianism, 2 151n.
- Bentley, Joseph, *The State of Education Contrasted with the State of Crime*, 2 356
- Bereavement, effects of under individualism and unified systems, 1 181, 206-7
- Bernard, Sir Thomas, 4 157
- Bestor, A.E., *Backwoods Utopia*, 2 121n.
- Bethmann, Simon Moritz, 4 237
- Bible
New Testament
Corinthians, xxxii; 1 135, 140, 207, 227-8; 2 16n., 74n., 227n., 271n., 289n., 302n.; 3 110, 157; 4 208n., 229, 231
Hebrews, 2 147n.
John, 2 222n.
Luke, 1 228; 2 38, 186n., 285n., 314n., 349n.; 3 406n.
Mark, 1 92; 2 273n., 285n., 298n., 349n.; 3 264n., 268; 4 218n.
Matthew, 1 228; 2 54n., 120, 195, 268n., 280n.; 3 116n.; 4 55n., 231, 238n., 270n.
Revelations, 1 231
Romans, 2 301n., 302n.
Timothy, 3 15, 91
Old Testament
Daniel, 2 243n.; 3 191n.
Ecclesiastes, 2 144n.
Exodus, 1 328; 3 312n., 369n., 380n.
Ezekiel, 2 186n.
Genesis, 1 188n., 228; 2 40, 108n., 131n., 243n., 314n., 360n.; 3 276n.
Isaiah, 1 124, 186n., 226, 266; 2 99-100, 186n., 363n.; 3 398n.; 4 41n., 43n., 228
Jeremiah, 1 215, 228
Job, 1 27; 2 222n.; 3 32
Kings, 1 227
Leviticus, 1 349n.; 2 75n.
Psalms, 1 227; 2 222n., 354n.; 3 219n., 275n., 280n.
Samuel, 1 266
Timothy, 1 290; 3 260
publication of, 3 386
Bible Society, 3 385-6
Bigotry, 1 36
and religious doctrine, 1 68

- Bigotry – *continued*
 unfavourable to health in children, 3 136
- Birch, Edward, *Remarks on Socialism*, 2 318n.
- Birley, John, 4 95
- Birth
 differences at, 2 60
 helplessness of man at, 2 57
 human organization at, 3 128
 infant powerless to determine circumstances of, 2 60–1, 152
 inferiority from, kindness given to those afflicted, 2 70
 influence of circumstances at on character, 4 20–1
- Birth control, lv–lvi
- Birthplace, influence on character, 3 45–6
- Boarding schools, for infants, 4 231
- Body, healthy alternate occupation of with that of mind, 3 153–7
- Boissy d'Anglas, Françoise Antoine, Count de, 4 223–4
- Bonaparte, Napoleon, 4 224
 effects of government, 1 36–7
 proposals for peace, 4 166
 receives copy of Owen's *Essays*, 4 165–6, 257
 visit of Captain Hall to, 4 227
- Bone, John, influenced by Owen, xxxiii
- Books
 education of younger children without use of, 4 194, 230
 necessary for education under rational system, 2 162
 suppression of those of Owen, 4 255–6, 273
- Borrodaile, William, partnership with Owen, 1 173; 4 94–5
- Borrowing, to build communities, 1 168
- Bosgemens ('Hottentot' tribe), 1 96
- Bowring, Dr John, friendship with Bentham, 4 148, 183
- Bradford, Lord, 4 274
- Bradlaugh, Charles, on acceptance of Owen's view of circumstances influencing character, lix
- Braxfield, Lord (Robert Macqueen), 4 152
- Bray, John Francis, and co-operative economics, xxxix
- Bribery, in elections, 4 285–6, 292
- Bright, John, and Free Trade and Peace Party, 4 29n.
- Britain
 address to British nation, 2 129–33
 address to Parliament (1830), 2 134–7
 annual production of wealth, 3 250
 capability for change in society, 3 275–6
 civil and religious liberty, 3 177, 3 181
 control of opinions, 3 311
 dawning of new age of truth, 2 132–3
 establishment of infant schools, 2 29–30
 evil effects of religion in, 2 187; 3 235
 expenditure on education, 3 315–16
 expenditure on war, 3 316
 foreign relations, 2 219
 government
 controlled by religion, 2 192
 future measures necessary, 2 197–9
 and moral teaching, 2 297–9
 power of public opinion over, 2 130
 proposals for change of system submitted to, 2 236–52
 hypocrisy of society, 4 158
 imperial parliament, 3 256–9
 importance of national character, 2 250
 increased prosperity and poverty, 1 258–9; 2 129–30, 133; 3 137
 irrationality of conduct of population, 2 297, 299
 maintenance of national power, 2 216
 manufacturing system, evil consequences of, 3 255
 monarchy and court, 2 297
 monetary system, 3 104–5
 no longer commanding foreign monopoly, 2 250
 peace agreement with France (1815), 1 334n.
 poor laws, 3 387
 population of, 3 251; 4 179–80
 powers of production, 2 164; 3 4–5
 public opinion, 2 137
 punishment for crimes resulting from poverty, 3 387
 readiness for mental revolution, 3 235–6, 281
 relationship with United States, 4 311–12, 315–16
 Oregon dispute, 4 329–30
 scientific advances and increased production, 1 288; 2 128
 starvation in, 3 365
 statistical research into, 2 355–6
- British and Foreign Bible Society, 1 341; 3 367
- British and Foreign Philanthropic Society
 foundation of, 4 294–5
 subscriptions to, 4 294–5
- British and Foreign School Society, 4 137n., 142n.
- Bromley, William, and London Labour Exchange, 4 335n.
- Bronterre O'Brien, James, xxxix, xlv
- Brougham, Henry, Baron of Brougham and Vaux, 2 29, 281–2; 4 45, 186, 283–4
 attempt to found infant school in London, 4 196

- and Edinburgh Review, 1 300n.
 friendship with Bentham, 4 148
 on Owen's address at City of London
 Tavern, 4 218-19
 support for Owen, 4 175, 326
- Broughton, Sir Thomas, 4 64n.
- Brown, John, Remarks on the Plans and
 Publications of Robert Owen Esq. of
 New Lanark, 2 29n.
- Brown, Lieutenant General Sir Thomas, 4 166
- Buchanan, Archibald (cotton manufacturer),
 4 86-7
- Buchanan, James
 attempts to found infant school in London,
 4 196-7, 206-7
 as schoolmaster at New Lanark, 4 193-5
- Buchanan, Mrs, 4 193
 treatment of children, 4 207
- Buchanan, Robert (Owenite), xlv
- Building
 improvement and maintenance work, 3 346
 plans of, 2 24-5
- Bunyan, John, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 1 229n.,
 2 51n.; 4 25, 53
- Burdett, Sir Francis, 4 268, 274
- Burgess, Thomas, Bishop of St David's, 4 156
- Buyers, classes of, 3 100
- Calhoun, John, 4 306
 and United States constitution, 3 244
- Cambridge University
 disadvantageous effects on character, 4 270
 teaching of, 3 94-5, 109-10
- Campbell, Archibald, of Zura, 1 1n.
 entrusts Owen with money for investment, 4
 139-40, 146
- Campbell, Catherine, 4 134
- Campbell, Christian, 4 134
- Campbell, Colin
 as partner with Owen in New Lanark, 1
 13n., 14-15; 4 138-41
 and sale of New Lanark, 4 144
- Campbell, General, 4 134
- Campbell of Hallyards, Alexander, and New
 Lanark, xlv; 1 13n., 14-15; 4 138-46
- Campbell, John, 4 134-5
- Campbell, Major General Sir Neil, on visit to
 Napoleon, 4 257
- Campbell, Mary, 4 134
- Campbell, Rev Alexander, religious discussion
 with Owen, 4 308, 316
- Campbell, Rev. James Thomas, 4 154
- Campbell, Sir Guy, 4 134-5
- Campbell, Sir Neil, 4 166
- Cannibalism, 1 238
- Capitalists, ignorance of, 4 182
- Capo d'Istria, Giovanni Anton, Count, 4 240
- Carlile, Richard, blasphemy trial, xxiii
- Carter, William George, 4 216n.
 and philanthropic enterprises, 1 195
- Cartwright, Major John, 4 268
- Cash payments, government efforts to force
 return to, 1 293
- Castlereagh, Viscount (Robert Stewart), 2
 127, 4 241
- Catechism of new moral world, 2 327-35
- Catholic Church, 4 229, 235
 opposition of Jesuits to Owen, 4 328
 and Owen's proposed settlement in Mexico,
 xxxvii; 4 307, 312-13, 316
- Causes of evils, tracing and preventing, 1 52-3
- Cawood, John, 4 258-9, 282
- Cecil, Henry, Lord of Burleigh, 4 64n., 65
- Celibacy
 as crime against nature, xlv; 2 230, 269
 evil consequences of, 2 230
- Census, kept at New Lanark, 1 338n.
- Central Council of the Church for Religious
 Education
 and Archbishop of Canterbury, 1 245
 school run by, 1 245
- Centralisation of wealth, xxxix
- Chalmers, Dr Thomas, statistical research, 2
 356
- Chaos, society perceived as, 3 243
- Chaptal, Jean-Antoine (chemist), 4 90
- Character
 of animals, 3 208
 belief that formed by individual, evil
 consequences of, 1 134, 330; 2 56; 3
 203-5
 commercial, 1 74-5
 complicated nature of, 2 274
 distortion of in early years, 3 114-15
 durability of recognition of truth, 1 58
 effect of unfavourable circumstances on good
 nature, 3 66-7
 efforts to ensure best circumstances for, 4
 159-60
 elevation of by affection, 3 174
 endless variety of, 4 25
 formation of, 1 14, 17, 41-2, 56-7, 175; 4
 229
 based on error, 3 225
 and communal upbringing, 3 318-19
 general theory of, 3 26-37
 government responsibilities, 1 77
 influence of servants on, 1 66
 mistaken belief concerning, 3 330
 and need for punishment, 4 230-1
 in poor, 1 33
 role of religion, xxxii
 science of, 3 247
 training teachers in science of, 3 165-6

Character – *continued*

- formed for man not by him
 - consequences of realisation, 3 47–9, 206–8, 221–4
 - four classes of, 2 170–4
 - and happiness, 2 252
 - and individual difference, 3 407
 - influences on
 - combination of individual differences and circumstances, 3 25–7, 44
 - current system of marriage, 2 287
 - external circumstances, xlvii–xlviii; 1 261–2; 2 39, 151–3, 217–18, 220; 3 16, 24, 26
 - factory system, xxiv
 - language, 1 262
 - misinstruction, 1 65–6
 - national laws, xlvii
 - private property, 3 328–9
 - profit motive, 3 254
 - religion, 2 169
 - retail trade, 3 261–2
 - local, 3 43–4
 - measures adopted to ensure virtue and wisdom in, 4 10
 - medium, 3 66–7
 - mistaken beliefs on formation of, 1 318–19; 3 42
 - national
 - effect of manufacturing on, 1 112–13
 - Scottish, 4 114
 - national plan for formation of, 1 54
 - of native Americans, 1 83–4
 - plan to improve that of poorest, 1 335–6
 - power of over circumstances, 4 81
 - present unsatisfactory state of, 2 169–70
 - prevention of formation of inferior character in new moral world, 3 80
 - qualities of, and strength of affections, 2 271–2
 - rational
 - constituents of, 3 267–8
 - forced to live among irrational beings, 3 272–3
 - formed by Normal School, 3 273
 - government of, 3 284–5
 - re-creation of in new generations, 3 80
 - relationship of natural elements and external circumstances in, 3 25–7
 - superior, 1; 3 68–9, 115–16; 4 31–2
 - terms good and bad, 3 64–5
 - uniformity of feared, 1 163–4
 - in unison with laws of human nature, 3 207
- Charity
- adoption of in preparation for Millennium, 2 352–3
- cannot be commanded, 3 206, 264
 - communities overcoming need for, 1 154
 - as condition for personal happiness, 3 134
 - as condition for preserving organization in best state of health, 3 159–60
 - current ignorance of, 3 159, 173
 - extent of under rational system of society, 3 159–60
 - foundations of, 1 126
 - as greatest good, xxxi
 - incompatible with belief that man responsible for formation of own character, 3 42–3, 89, 170, 205–8, 266
 - nature of, 1 227–9
 - power to overcome prejudice, 3 391–2
 - and provision of housing, 3 365
 - and religion, 2 251
 - resulting from true understanding of nature, 3 72–3, 264
 - under rational system of society, 3 266, 332–3
- Charles X, King of France, 2 169n., 2 195
- Chartism, xlii; 3 258; 4 318
- and Queenwood community, Hampshire, xliv
- Chastity
- and affection, 2 293; 310–11
 - among animals, 2 288, 300, 306–7, 315
 - definition of, 2 268–9
 - difference between that of Nature and that of church and law, 2 310–12
 - double standard applied to, 2 278
 - effect of current system of marriage on, 2 288
 - and ignorance, 2 288–90
 - impossible before beginning of new moral world, 2 312
 - regulation of by priesthood, 2 292–3
- Chateaubriand, Francois Rene, questions on position of women in new state of society, 2 262–3
- Chemistry
- and end of individualism, 3 314
 - study of, 4 89–90
- Cheshire, Peter Drinkwater's cotton factory at, 4 91
- Children
- affection for Owen in New Lanark, xix; 4 192
 - age at starting work, 1 105, 113–16
 - at New Lanark, 1 45–6
 - attractiveness of good character in, 4 203
 - benefits of kind treatment from birth, 3 140–1
 - capacity for formation, 3 23
 - capacity for inferiority or superiority, 3 37
 - character forming, 1 35

- character of those training, 1 181
 character-forming before school age, 1 17
 choice of earliest teachers for, 3 114-15
 circumstances affecting character, 1 261-2
 classification and occupation of, 3 287-90
 clothing of in model communities, 2 88-9
 communal upbringing of, lv; 2 35-6, 45, 208, 318-19, 356
 competition between, 4 55, 60
 conditions in manufacturing towns
 contrasted with proposed villages, 1 179-81
 desire for expression, 3 31
 desire for knowledge, 1 349-50; 2 75-6
 dexterity of, 1 272-3
 differences from birth, 3 39
 dormitories for, 1 149-50
 education of, 1 18, 1 7-9, 106
 in accordance with nature, 3 166
 at New Lanark, 1 50; 2 6
 early instruction in practical work, 3 269
 early training in good habits, 1 38
 effective methods of teaching, 4 24
 in new moral world, 1 205, 306-7, 348-50; 2 47; 3 13-14, 263-73
 and rights of humanity, 2 255-6
 employment of
 Bill concerning (1818), xxxiii; 1 237-8
 harmful effects of, 1 46, 240-4
 and health, 1 272-3
 hours of work, 1 241-3; 4 168
 Parliamentary consideration of, 4 169-75
 sent from public charities to industry, 1 46
 work-related injuries and deformities, xxv
 working conditions, 1 114-15
 working conditions of in mills, 4 170-1
 enforcement of beliefs, 3 367
 equality of treatment desirable, 3 318
 formation of character, 1 41-2, 56-7, 84
 distortion of in early years, 3 114-15
 early influences on, 1 317, 348-9
 effect of circumstances on, 3 303
 effect of current system of marriage on, 2 278-86
 influence of early circumstances on, 1 341-2; 3 24, 43-4
 influence of parents on, 3 46, 56-7, 136
 influence of servants on, 1 66
 government of without punishment, 4 32
 happiness of at New Lanark, 4 286
 happiness of parents in well-being of, 3 216
- illegitimate
 Owen's fines for parents of, xix
 treatment of under poor laws, 3 387
 instruction of parents in care of, 1 18-19; 2 93
 maintained at parish expense, 1 217
 malformed or of inferior organization, 3 136
 effect of parents' relationship on, 3 137
 as result of poverty, 3 137
 natural capacities for, 2 294
 parental disputes concerning, 2 275
 parents' affection for, 3 56, 137-9, 318
 parents not best persons for upbringing of, 1 58, 150; 2 284-6, 294; 4 136
 playgrounds for, 1 57
 potential for producing wealth, 1 262
 powerless to determine circumstances of birth, 2 152-4
 sleeping arrangements for in model communities, 2 24, 34, 45
 spoiled, 3 328
 standards of truth, 3 47
 taught military exercises, 2 28, 47
 taught precepts of ensuring happiness of others, 1 ?, 64, 65
 training in deception, 1 323
see also Infant schools
- China, religious belief in, 2 62
 Chorlton Hall, Owen living at, 4 100-1
 Chorlton Twist Company, 1 173
 formation of, 4 94-5
 sale of Chorlton Mills, 4 116
 Christian Socialism, lix
 Christianity, 3 369
 entailing tolerance for differences and defects of others, 1 141
 and individualism, 1 204
 and marriage *see* Marriage, current system of
 of
 Owen's personal rejection of, 4 67
 and publication of Bible, 3 386
 and punishment for beliefs, 2 185
 and 'rational Dissent', 2 20n.
 table of various sects and parties, 1 223-5
 and treatment of 'savages', 3 259
 see also Catholic Church; Church of England; Priesthood; Quakers; Religion
- Church building, movement for extension of, 3 258
 Church of England
 Educational Conference (1857), 4 296-8
 end of monopoly demanded, xxii
 and national system of education, 1 89-90
 and Rational Society, xliii
 and religious revivalism, 2 172n.
 support for Andrew Bell's educational system, 4 137n.

- Circumstances
 character formed by, xlvii–xlvi; 2 7–8, 39, 96–9, 152–4; 3 116–17, 263–5; 4 81
 and individual's capacity for inferiority or superiority, 3 37
 government of to form character, 2 8
 man powerless to determine, 2 60–2; 3 45–7
 of married life, 2 274
 of working classes, and rights of humanity, 2 257
- Circumstances, external, individual powerless to determine, 3 45–7
- Cities, disadvantages of, 3 332
- City of London Tavern meetings (1817), 4 56, 176–7, 209, 243–4
- Civil Marriage Act (1836), 2 322
- Clapham Sect, 2 172n.
- Clarendon, George William Villiers, 4th Earl of, 4 333
- Clarkson, Thomas, 4 157, 267
- Class
 as cause of disunion, 1 216
 differences in marital disputes, 2 276
 and education, 3 110
 emanating from false beliefs about human nature, 2 125
 evil consequences of system, 4 19
 government currently based on, 3 373–4, 394
 influence on character, 1 176; 3 46
 injurious nature of present system, 3 307
 nature of under rational system, 3 285–97, 306
 prejudices and opposition between each, 3 396
 present division of, 3 227–8
 qualities and defects particular to each, 3 394–7
 significance under current scheme of society, 3 283
 in transition colonies, 2 377–85
 various arrangements for three classes to affect change in British Empire, 2 244–6
- Classics, evil consequences of teaching, 3 267–8
- Classification, by age under rational system of society, 3 339, 342–3, 357, 371–2
- Clay, Henry, 4 306
 and United States constitution, 3 244
- Cleanliness, standards of in model communities, 2 35, 47, 89; 4 174
- Clothing
 effects on health and mind, 1 315
 in model communities, xxxv–xxxvi; 1 314–15; 2 88–9
 production of, 1 316
 and sexual delicacy, 1 315
 utility and comfort main considerations, 2 70
- Cobbett, William, opposition to Owen, 1 213n.; 4 215n., 268
- Cobden, Richard, and Free Trade and Peace Party, 4 29n.
- Coercion *see also* Force; Punishment, 1 185
- Coke, Thomas William
 gives prizes for agricultural inventions, 4 276–8
 hosts gathering at Holkham, 4 274–8
 invitation to Owen, 4 274
 republican views, 4 274, 276
 second marriage, 4 279
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor
 compliments Owen on plain style, 4 88
 discussions with Owen, 4 88, 123
 and William Godwin, 4 88n.
The Grounds of Sir Robert Peel's Bill Vindicated, 4 88n.
Remarks on the Objections Which Have Been Urged Against the Principle of Sir Robert Peel's Bill, 4 88n.
- Colonies
 foreign, independence for, 2 216
 home *see* Home colonies
- Colour, persons of, subordinate status in model communities, 2 42
- Colquhoun, Patrick
 on amount of manual power superseded by machinery, xxxvi; 4 179–82
Treatise On the Population, Wealth, Power and Resources of the British Empire, xxxiv; 4 179, 181, 206
- Combe, Abram
 founds consumer co-operative society, xxxviii
 and Orbiston community, xxxviii; 4 333–4
- Commerce
 and avarice, 1 243
 evils arising from current practice, 1 346–7, 404–5
 habits of, 1 74–5
 propositions demonstrating necessity of change, 2 240–2
 succeeding barter, 1 302
 transactions of model communities, 2 34
see also Profit motive; Retail trade
- Committee of the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor, Owen's report to, 1 195, 217; 2 135–7
- Committee of General Investigation, proposed, 1 193–4
- Committees
 for investigation of proposed villages, 1 210

- and management of communities, 1 209, 218, 323, 353
- Common interests, industriousness when working for, 1 162
- Common sense
absent from present system of society, 4 35
levels of under rational system of society, 4 20-1
science of, 4 23
true religion in accordance with, 3 231-4
- Communications
between England and Scotland, 4 97-8, 108
effect of introduction of penny post, 2 387; 4 100
improvements in, 2 387
languages as barrier to, 2 216
and rights of humanity, 2 254
telegraph system, 4 100
toll-bars, 4 104
- Compassion, call for extension to priesthood, 3 230
- Competition
abolition of not advocated at New Lanark, xviii
based on error, 3 225
belief of political economists in, 2 78-9
between children, 4 55, 60
disappearance of under rational system of society, 2 228; 3 92, 98, 106, 216, 247, 305, 326, 337
ending of, and rights of humanity, 2 258
evils of, 3 136
limits of accomplishments now reached, 3 374-5
miseries arising from in middle classes, 2 164
model government of Texas to put an end to, 2 120
and mutual deception, 3 155-6
nature of in transitional state of society, 3 337
promoting selfishness, xlix
trading system based on, 2 141
- Condorcet, 1 96n.
- Confucius, 1 128, 140, 223, 262; 2 62
- Congress of the Reformers of the World, 4 332
- Conscience
liberty of, 1 208, 234, 247; 2 45, 94, 207; 3 177-9
and rights of humanity, 2 254-5
- Consciousness, and role of senses, 3 29-30
- Considerant, Victor, translation of Owen's address in Paris, 4 320
- Constitutions
British, 1 80, 202
Mexican, 2 122
- of Preliminary Society of New Harmony, Indiana, 2 42-6
of rational government, 3 301-2
United States, 3 243-5
- Consumers, costs of distribution paid by, 3 101
- Consumption
and production, 1 335, 344, 346-7
of wealth by retail trade, 2 140
- Control, of beliefs of others *see* Belief
- Convictions
conflict with physical feelings, 3 31-2
relation to will, 3 23, 27-30, 51-3, 196, 223
religious, 2 141-3
- Cook, James, *A Journal of a Voyage Round the World*, 4 25n.
- Co-operation, replacing individual interest in new social system, 2 12-13
- Co-operation *see also* Union
- Co-operative economics, development of, xxxviii-xxxix
- Co-operative movement, lix
- Co-operative societies
Brighton, xxxviii
in Edinburgh, xxxviii
London Co-operative Society, xxxviii
Owen's relationship with, xxxviii, xlv
- Copernicus, Nicolaus, 1 61-2
- Copper, intrinsic value of, 3 259
- Corn Bill (1815), 1 113
- Corn Laws, movement for repeal of, 3 258
- Costs
of communities, 1 164
of distribution of wealth, 3 117-18
of domestic arrangements of model communities, 2 24
in home colonies, 2 378-80, 402
of New Harmony community, xxxvi-xxxvii
of not investing in education, 3 316
- Cottage system of ameliorating poverty, 1 204-5
- Cotton industry
development of, 1 1-4, 101-2, 111-12
discussion of at Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, 4 89-90
economic benefits of, 1 102-3
effect of war with France on, 4 86, 91
employment of children in *see* under Children
employment in, 1 2, 273
evils arising from, 1 105-6
foreign competition and, 1 4, 102-3
French, 1 4-6
imports of cotton from United States, 4 83-5
duty on, 1 2-4, 101-7; 4 168-9
embargo on, 4 116, 132

- Cotton industry – *continued*
 Owen's early career in, xvi–xviii
 political aspect, 1 102
 procuring labour for, 1 44–5
 quality of cotton under Owen's
 management, 4 83–4, 86–7
 sources of cotton, 4 83
 spinning process, 4 74, 76, 91
 value of, 1 2
- Country, influence on individual, 1 176
- Courage
 moral, 2 131, 148, 180; 4 14
 need for to overcome evils of religion, 3 238
- Courts of justice, unnecessary under rational
 system of society, 3 376
- Cowan, Robert, *Vital Statistics of Glasgow*, 2
 356
- Cowper, William, *The Task*, 4 40n.
- Craig, James, and manufacture of American
 cotton, 4 84–5
- Crawford, William Harris, 4 305
 and United States constitution, 3 244
- Creation
 laws of *see* Nature
 in perpetual motion, 2 57
 power behind, 2 96
- de Crespigny, Sir William, 4 267, 280
- Crichton, Thomas ('The Admirable'), 4 57
- Crighton, Sir Alexander, visit to New Lanark,
 4 199–200
- Crime
 amongst poor, 1 33
 as consequence of ignorance, 1 54
 disappearance of under rational state of
 society, 3 304, 323
 effect of environment on, 1 43–4
 and idleness, 1 95
 and ignorance, 3 368
 increase of in irrational society, 3 368
 resulting from current marriage system, 2
 265–6
- Crisis, *The* (Owenite journal), xl; 2 232n.,
 233n., 253
- Cultivation of faculties, as condition for
 preserving organization in best state of
 health, 3 145–8
- Cunning, implicit in present system of
 government, 2 178
- Curwen, John Christian, 4 299
- Customs, abolition of, 2 253–4
- Cuvier, Georges, Owen's visit to Europe with,
 4 220–4
- Dale, Anne Caroline (*nee* Campbell, David
 Dale's wife), 4 98n., 102, 134
 death of, 4 151
- Dale, David, 1 122; 4 84n.
 character, 4 123–4
 death of, 4 135–6
 early life, 4 98n.
 establishment, 1 44–7
 as head of 'Old Independents' sect, 4 108
 initial opposition to daughter's marriage to
 Owen, 4 105–7
 ownership of New Lanark mill, xvii–xviii
 philanthropic efforts at New Lanark, xvii–
 xviii
 relationship with Owen, 4 107, 123–5, 133–
 4
 religious discussions with Owen, 4 124–5
 sale of mills (1802), 4 130
 spinning establishment, 1 13
 wish to sell New Lanark, 4 103
- Dale, James, 4 99, 105
 leaves New Lanark, 4 111
- Dale, Jane (Jean Maxwell, Owen's sister-in-
 law), 4 151n., 152–3
 marriage to James Thomas Campbell, 4 154
- Dale, Julia Johnston (Owen's sister-in-law), 4
 152–4
- Dale, Margaret (Owen's sister-in-law), 4 152–3
 death of, 4 153, 165
- Dale, Mary (Owen's sister-in-law), 4 152–3
 marriage to Rev. James Haldane Stewart, 4
 154–5
- Dalton, John, 4 123
 friendship with Owen, 4 87–8, 90
Meteorological Observations and Essays, 4
 87n.
A New System of Chemical Philosophy, 4
 87n.
- Dancing, provision for at New Lanark, 1 60,
 66, 125; 4 195–8, 287–8
- Death
 attitudes to, 3 47
 conjectures on existence after, 3 231–2
 fear of, 3 129
 absence of as condition for happiness, 3
 134, 307
 absence of in new moral world, 3 177–9,
 350
 premature, and inferior quality of goods, 3
 101
- Deception
 in belief that individual forms his own
 feelings and will, 3 34
 children trained in, 1 323
 created by current system of marriage, lv; 2
 265–6, 277, 286–7
 in current system of production, 1 113; 2
 234
 disappearance under rational scheme of
 society, 1 323, 326; 3 320
 professions based on, 3 155–6

- replaced by sincerity under rational system of society, 2 150
 and sexual ignorance, 2 288-90
 system based on error, 3 226
- Decoration and ornamentation, resources for under rational system of society, 3 261
- Defects at birth, care of those afflicted by, 3 304
- Defence
 children taught military exercises for, 1 58, 72-3; 2 28
 measures for at New Harmony community, 2 47
- Defoe, Daniel, *Robinson Crusoe*, 4 53
- Deism, 2 170-1, 173
- Democracy, disadvantages of universal representation of uneducated, 2 200
- Denham, Sir James Stewart, and *Report to the County of Lanark* (1820), 1 287
- Denison, Albert Denison, 4 304
- Dennistoun, Robert
 as partner with Owen in New Lanark, 1 13n., 14-15; 4 138-41
 and sale of New Lanark, 4 141-6
- Derby Infirmary, heating system, 1 314
- Derby, Lord (Edward Smith-Stanley), 4 304
- Desires, universal, 2 327
 for union and mutual aid, 3 264
- Dessalles, Jean, Prime Minister of France, Owen's meeting with, 4 222
- Diet
 individual adaptation of, 3 144
 influence on preserving organization in best state of health, 3 142-5
 in workhouses, 3 387
- Differences
 adjustment of, 2 209-10
 in transitional state of society, 3 352-4, 358-9
 arbitration of, 2 94
 at New Harmony, Indiana, 2 47
 between all things in creation, 2 57
 between individuals, 3 40-1, 215
 from birth, 2 7; 3 23, 34-6, 39, 78, 266
 between old and new moral worlds, 3 17
 disappearance of need for resolution under rational system of society, 3 352, 354
 of opinion, arbitration of under rational system of society, 3 188
 of opinion with current system of marriage, 2 275-6
 of opinion and feeling, and generation of anger and violence, 2 181
 in treatment of children not desirable, 3 318
- Dining-rooms, and large-scale catering in model communities, 1 18, 20, 58-9n.
- Diplomacy, evils of present system, 2 216
- Disbelief, on practicality of Owen's reforms, 1 278
- Discovery, treatment of by authorities, 3 71-2
- Disease
 causes of, 2 349-50
 disappearance of in new moral world, 3 94
 effect of diet on, 3 142-5
 mental, treatment of, 3 188, 311, 350-1, 358
 moral, treatment of, 3 358
 organic, only cause of failure of rational system, 3 228
 physical, treatment of, 3 358
 prevention of, 2 349-50, 407
 profit of medical profession from, 3 143
 treatment of in model communities, 2 35; 3 188
- Disputes
 about division and possession of common property, 1 162
 see also Differences
- Dissatisfaction, with government, 3 370-2
- Distinction
 personal desire for, disappearance of in new moral world, 2 231
 rights to, 3 337-8
- Distribution, science of, 3 247
- Distributors, classes of, 3 100-2
- Divorce
 equality of access for rich and poor, 2 322
 in model communities, 2 93
 when marriage does not produce happiness, lv; 2 52-3, 320-1
 when only one party desires separation, 2 321
- Domestic arrangements, plans for model communities, 2 24-5, 32, 69-71
- Donations, land for experimental community, 1 194
- Donne, James, friendship with Owen as a child, 4 55-6
- Douglas, Sir William, 4 112, 130
- Drake, Rev. Samuel
 interest in Owen as a child, 4 25
 personal attacks in sermons, 4 55
- Drinkwater, Eliza, 4 91-3
- Drinkwater, John, 4 83n.
- Drinkwater, Margaret, 4 91-3
- Drinkwater, Peter
 cotton factory at Northwich, Cheshire, 4 91
 employs Owen as manager, xvi-xvii; 1 172-3; 4 58, 78-83
 establishes cotton mill in Manchester, 4 78
 and Samuel Oldknow as prospective son-in-law, 4 92-4

- Drinkwater, Peter – *continued*
 termination of agreement with Owen, 4 93–5
- Drinkwater, Thomas, 4 83n.
- Drunkenness, 1 79, 185; 4 80, 110
 control of at New Lanark, 1 48
 evil effects of, 1 80
 extent of in British cities, 2 365
 extent of in Manchester and Lancashire, 4 78–9
 removal of temptations to, 1 159
- Dublin, poverty and destitution in, 2 365
- Dusseaux, General, visit to New Lanark for Duke of Kent, 4 250
- Duties
 abolition of, 2 253–4
see also under Cotton industry
- Duty, concept of not natural to man, 2 58
- Dyce, Mrs Frederick, 4 166
- Eagles, Owen attacked by in Highlands, 4 127
- Earth, early beliefs concerning, 2 62
- Edgeworth, Maria, 4 164, 267
- Edgeworth, Richard Lovell, 4 164
- Edinburgh Review*, and classical political economy, 1 300
- Editors of newspapers, as instructors of human race, 4 9
- Edmondson, George, educational establishment at Queenwood, 4 336–7
- Education
 in accordance with nature, 3 166
 of adults for own enjoyment, 2 67; 3 292–3
 advantages of in home colonies, 2 388–90, 399–400
 of all to use and enjoy wealth, 3 292
 application of reward and punishment in, 2 74
 at New Lanark *see under* New Lanark
 avoidance of confusion and dogma in rational system, 2 76
 based on facts, 1 180, 320, 350
 of children in model communities, 2 35–6
 of children under rational system of society, 3 263–73
 and class, 3 110
 common understanding of, 3 106–7
 components of in Owen's plan, 1 18
 as condition for happiness, 2 22; 3 134, 292, 307
 current debate on nature of, 3 368–9
 desire of priesthood for control of, 4 22
 development of in preparation for Millennium, 2 352
 and discipline, 1 9
 effective methods of, 4 24
 effects of, 1 7–9
 equality of, 3 308, 356
 and scientific advances, 3 378–9
 in under rational system of society, 3 290, 293
 establishment of infant schools *see* Infant schools
 evil consequences of teaching classics, 3 267–8
 exclusion from, 1 37, 54, 86
 failings of current system of, 1 84, 92; 2 184; 3 138–9, 226
 as first object of society, 2 66–7
 and general constitution of rational government, 2 207–8
 government through in rational system of society, 2 66–7
 importance of, 3 163–4; 4 136–7
 improved level of in new moral world, 1 8–10; 3 14
 instruction of children in foreign language, 3 188
 in interests of all, 2 373
 known difference between educated and uneducated man, 3 161–2
 and liberty of mind, 2 92
 manufacturing towns contrasted with proposed villages, 1 181–2
 methods of, 1 86–7
 boarding schools for infants, 4 231
 conversation and questioning, 4 287
 discussion of with Father Giraud in Switzerland, 4 228–31
 flexibility, 4 287
 geography lessons, 4 197–8
 in infant school at New Lanark, 4 189, 193–6
 lectures for adults, 1 18–19
 Madras system of, 4 137n.
 outdoor observation, 4 288
 Pestalozzi, 4 231–2
 physical exercise, 4 287
 punishment avoided, 4 286–7
 reading, 4 199
 singing, dancing and military discipline, 4 195–8, 287–8
 use of kindness, 4 287
 writing and accounting, 4 199
 of middle and upper classes, 3 94–5
 in model communities, 2 90–2
 'monitorial' systems, 1 37n.
 national expenditure on in Britain, 3 315–16
 national plans advocated, 1 38
 national system of
 and Church of England, 1 89–90
 effects of, 1 85–6

- outline provisions for, 1 93-4
- for the poor, 1 86-7, 92-4, 117-18
- nature of in new moral world, 2 227, 244-5
- necessary before universal representation, 2 200
- necessary to secure permanent relief to working classes, 1 343
- necessity for books of instruction under rational system, 2 162
- and necessity for removal of ignorance, 3 383-4
- need for Normal School for formation of rational character, 3 273
- opposed to idleness, 3 269
- and optimum size of associations, 1 345
- organisation of, liv
- Owen's proposals before Parliament, 4 174
- and pauperism, 1 186-7
- physical and mental health cultivated, 2 76
- of poor, opposition to, 3 258
- preceding employment, 1 106
- present system controlled by religion, 2 195
- proposals for, 1 317-18
- right system never yet seen, 1 316; 2 156
- and rights of humanity, 2 255-6
- so that each can be his own priest, physician and lawyer, 2 246
- and study of mysteries, 3 158
- to be based on actual operations of society, 3 164-6
- under rational system of society, 3 187-8, 348-50
- and union of churches and schools, 1 245-9
- uselessness of much current learning, 3 267-8
- value of, 1 7-8
- widest definition of, 2 58
- of women
 - equal system under rational system of society, 3 227
 - as family slaves, 3 225
 - in household duties, 4 174
- Effeminacy, banished from new moral world, 2 229
- Efficiency, in production and distribution of wealth, 3 117-18
- Elderly
 - maintained at parish expense, 1 216
 - provision for at New Lanark, 1 73-4
- Elections
 - and bribery, 4 285-6, 292
 - disadvantages of government based on, 2 121
 - and government of New Harmony community, 2 43, 46
 - opposition to, lii
- unknown under rational system of society, 3 342
- Emigration, and policies of government, 2 4
- Enmity, and tolerance of difference, 1 42
- Employment
 - in agriculture, 1 111, 203
 - in army and navy, 1 111
 - of children, 1 237-44
 - Bill concerning (1818), 1 237-8
 - harmful effects of, 1 240-4
 - and health, 1 272-3
 - hours of work, 1 241-3
 - under rational system of society, 3 269
 - conditions of under union of masters and men, 2 234
 - in cotton trade, 1 103-5
 - enjoyment found in, 2 71
 - fair distribution of, 2 235
 - general lack of, 1 287-8
 - government urged to provide reserve of, 1 54
 - hours of work, 1 113-17, 240, 243, 271
 - and health, 1 272-4
 - regulation of, xxiv-xxvi, xli
 - in manufacturing and health, 1 238
 - numbers, 1 238
 - necessary for production of wealth under new social system, 2 13
 - necessary to secure permanent relief to working classes, 1 343
 - need for government intervention to increase, 1 288
 - and need for regular occupation, 1 150
 - peaceful and warlike compared, 3 269
 - provision of for those superseded by mechanism, 1 145-55, 160-1; 2 219
 - and rights of humanity, 2 255-6
 - sources of, 1 97-8
 - ties between employers and employees, 1 114-15
 - in trade and manufactures, 1 111
 - of women in communities, 1 150
 - see also* Labour; Unemployment
- Engels, Friedrich
 - influence of Owen on, lix
 - membership of Rational Society, xlii
 - on Owen, xlix
- Envy
 - absent from rational state of society, 3 207
 - individual differences no justification for, 3 36
- Equality
 - among members of associations, 1 346
 - and marriage, 2 52-3
- Error
 - all previous systems based on, 3 389-90

- Error – *continued*
 causes of, 3 386
 removal of, 3 385–6
 criteria for, 2 148
 exposure of, 1 99–100
 removal of necessary for creation of rational state of society, 3 385
 replaced by truth under rational system of society, 2 150
- Esterhazy, Prince Pal Antal, 4 188, 318, 322
- Etzler, John Adolphus, *The Paradise Within the Reach of All Men*, 3 208n.
- Europe, proposal for government of elected by universal suffrage, xlvii
- Evangelical movement, 2 172
 and morals of poor, xxi
- Evil
 arising from false notions, 1 71
 based on belief that character formed by will, 2 56
 causes of, 3 11, 330
 man's investigation of, 3 209–16
 removal of, 2 8
 fundamental errors in which originates, 2 329–30
 and ignorance, 3 260, 304
 proceeding from errors of education, 1 84; 3 64; 4 27
 resulting from government, 3 273–6
 resulting from religion, 3 273–6
 and 'trinity' of marriage, private property and religion, 2 51–3
 universal system for prevention of, 3 65
- Evil *see also* Wickedness
- Examiner, *The*, on Owen's proposals, 1 284–6
- Exchange of goods, 1 347–8
 between communities, 2 72–3
- Exchange of labour, xl–xli, 1; 2 248–9, 280; 4 334
- Exclusion
 educational, 1 54
 religious, 1 54
- Exercise
 as condition for preserving organization in best state of health, 3 145–8
 and health, 1 272
 organisation of dancing for, 1 18
 of physical and mental powers, 3 33, 62–3
 and production of wealth, 3 14
 for recreation, 3 14
 and training of children, 1 327
- Exeter, 9th Earl of, 4 64n., 65
- Experience
 and acquisition of knowledge, 3 270–1
 and government of communities, lii–liii
 ignored by social theorists, 1 121
 of married life, 2 277
 as parent of wisdom and knowledge, 1 184
 status of under rational system of society, 3 285–97
 as teacher of mankind, 3 397–8
- Expression
 freedom of, 3 356
 as condition for happiness, 3 307
 as fundamental law under rational system of society, 3 309
- Exter, Richard, 4 310–11
 death, 4 310n., 318
- Fabians, influence of Owen on, lix–lx
- Factory Act (1802), xvi, xxv; 1 241; 4 157n., 169–71, 175, 180–1, 246, 256, 269–70, 317
- Facts
 advance in knowledge of, 3 146–7
 education based on, 1 180, 350; 3 320
 investigation of, and acquisition of knowledge, 3 270–1
 knowledge based on, 2 91
 necessary to decide future of religion, 2 169
 relationship to will, 3 29
- Faculties
 full development of in new moral world, 2 229–30
 of imagination, 3 270
 influence on character, 3 270–1
 moral and intellectual, 2 170–1
 original
 desire to benefit others, 2 10
 love of truth, 2 10
 superior
 future of individuals possessing, 2 160
 not brought out by profit motive, 2 140–1
 temperate exercise of, 3 232
 of veneration, 3 236
- Faith, replaced by charity as basis of religion, 1 228–9
- Falla, William, and spade husbandry, xxxv; 1 296, 299
- Falsehood
 abandonment of, 3 74
 in preparation for Millennium, 2 353–4
 disappearance under rational scheme of society, 3 113, 320
 enforcement of on others, 3 74
 evils resulting from, 3 16, 181–2
 only alternative to truth, 3 221
 religion founded on, 4 260–3
 system based on error, 3 226
 training teachers of causes of, 3 165
- Fame
 attitudes to, 1 253
 based on ignorance of others, 1 204

- desire for, 1 234
- Family
- arrangements of inferior to those of home colonies, 2 388
 - attitudes to under current and rational systems of society, 3 277-8
 - current system of, evil consequences of, 2 247-8, 263, 267, 271, 278-9, 280-6
 - in new state of society, 3 331-2
- Family size, and virtue, 2 281
- Famine, 1 165, 205-6; 3 137
- relief of, 1 342
- Farmers *see* Agriculturists
- Fashion, absurdity of, xxxv; 4 76, 225
- Fear
- of death *see* Death
 - of poverty, 2 111
 - supernatural, 3 177-9
- Feebleness, protection of, 1 346
- Feelings
- conflict between physical and mental, 3 31-2, 58
 - lack of secrecy concerning under rational system of society, 3 290-1, 293
 - not subject to will, 2 139, 271-3; 3 23, 27-30, 53-5, 196, 322
 - sympathy of, 3 36
- von Fellenberg, Phillipp Emanuel
- educational methods, 4 232
 - Owen advises to start infant school, 4 233
 - Owen places sons with, 4 233-4
- Feminism, extent of in Owen's programme, lvi
- Ferguson, Adam (economist)
- Essay on the History of Civil Society*, xxvii, li, lii
- Ferriar, John
- as member of Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, 4 89
 - paper on attainment of genius by effort, 4 90
 - Medical Histories and Reflections*, 4 89n.
- Feudalism, and value of labour, 1 239
- Fielden, John
- and Peel's Factory Bill, 4 281
 - The Curse of the Factory System*, 4 281n.
- Finlay, Kirkman (merchant and mill owner), 1 1n.; 4, 86-7, 144-5, 161
- Fish Association, 4 216n.
- Fitzgerald, Pamela, 4 135
- Fitzgerald, Sir Edward, 4 135
- Fleming, Admiral Charles, 4 307, 312
- Fleming, George Alexander
- editorship of *New Moral World*, 2 263n.
 - private life, 2 263n.
- Fletcher, Andrew, of Saltoun, *An Account of a Conversation Containing a Right Regulation of Governments for the Common Good of Mankind*, xxvii-xxviii
- Flint and Palmer (haberdashers), Owen's employment with, 1 172; 4 69-71
- Fo, doctrines of, 2 61-2
- Food, desire for, as natural propensity of human nature, 3 148
- Food supply
- fluctuations in, 1 205-6
 - and population increase, 1 165-6
 - storing against times of shortage, 1 166, 325-6
- Force
- human nature governed by, 2 5
 - necessary to maintain present system of society, 3 376, 379
 - system based on error, 3 225
 - use of by government, 2 410; 4 324
- Foreign affairs, age-group selected for management of under rational system of society, 3 294-6, 344-7
- Foreign competition, in cotton industry, 1 4
- Foster, Joseph
- character, 4 148
 - partnership with Owen in New Lanark, xx, 4 148, 195-6
 - support for Owen's measures at New Lanark, 4 142
- Fourier, Charles
- and 'attractive' association, 3 407n.
 - on deferring to investors, lii
 - on division of labour, li
 - plans for small-scale communities, 3 121; 4 289
- Fox, Joseph
- character, 4 149
 - partnership with Owen in New Lanark, xx, 4 149
 - support for Owen's measures at New Lanark, 4 142
 - A Comparative View of the Plans of Education of Dr Bell and Mr Lancaster*, 4 142n.
- France
- address to men and women of (1848), 2 419-21
 - contest of old and new systems (1830), 2 195-6
 - cotton industry, 1 4-6
 - government of Napoleon Bonaparte, 1 36-7
 - Napoleonic wars (1793-1815), 2 107
 - Owen's visit to (1817), 4 220-5
 - peace agreement with Britain (1815), 1 334n.; 4 176
 - political parties, 1 310
 - Revolution (1830), 2 169n., 195-6
 - revolutionary war, 2 128

- Frankfurt, Owen's visit to, 4 237–40
- Franklin, Benjamin
and American Constitution, 2 49
spiritualist communication with Owen, 4 254
- Fraud
disappearance of under rational system of society, 2 249
necessary to maintain present system of society, 2 5, 410; 3 332, 376, 379
system based on error, 3 225
- Frederick Augustus I, King of Saxony, presents medal to Owen, 4 205, 324
- Frederick William III, King of Prussia, support for Owen's views on education, 4 188, 325
- Frederick-oord pauper colony, Netherlands, 1 39; 2 136
- Free Church of Scotland, 3 258
marriage rites, 4 107–8
- Free trade, 2 223
economics of, 2 108n.
effects of expansion of, xxxix–xl
see also Political economists
- Free Trade and Peace Party, 4 29
- Free will
debates on relation to necessity, xliii–xliv
doctrine of, 3 28
and cultivation of animal passions, 2 224–5
ignorance resulting from, 2 98–100
as origin of evil, 2 130, 132–3, 142, 148
principles incompatible with those of rational society, 2 81–2
results of infant schools demonstrating fallacy of, 2 156
underlying all religions, 2 142
evil consequences of belief in, 2 128–9
as restraint, effects of withdrawal, 2 103–4
and temptation, 2 98–9
- Freedom *see* Liberty
- Freemasons
Duke of Sussex as Grand Master of, 4 280
Owen invited to join, 4 280
- French Revolution, 1; 1 197, 310n., 379–80
- Friedrich Wilhelm IV, King of Prussia, Owen's meeting with, 4 327
- Friendly societies, xlv
- Frost, John, 4 268
- Fry, Elizabeth, 1 156, 169–71, 179
- Fulton, Robert, Owen's friendship with, 4 117–23
- Funding
of communities, 1 150–4, 189–91, 219
for support of elderly, 1 73
- Furniture, in model communities, 2 44, 88
- Future state of society, communication of, 3 210–11
- Galileo, 1 61; 2 62; 3 71
- Gambling, 1 79–81, 185
controls demanded on, xxii
- Garden, Francis, 1 1n.
- Gardens, in model communities, 2 47, 70, 245
- Genius, encouragement of, 1 163–4
- Genz, Friedrich, 4 237–8
- George IV, King of Great Britain, dedication to, 1 30–2
- Germany
Owen's visit to, 4 237–41
political parties, 1 310
- Gibbs, Michael
character, 4 149
partnership with Owen in New Lanark, xx; 4 149
support for Owen's measures at New Lanark, 4 142
- Gilbert's Act (1782), 1 191
- Gin-shops, 1 79–81, 105, 185
controls demanded on, xxi–xxii
- Giraud, Father, school for poor, 4 228–31
- Glasgow, poverty and destitution in, 2 365
- Glasgow Chronicle*, letter to concerning duty on cotton, 1 101–7
- God
laws of, 3 88–9, 114
desire for happiness, 3 131
- Godwin, William
Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, xxiii; 3 183n.
influence on Owen, xxii, xxiii, xxxin.; 4 157
and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 4 88n.
The Enquirer, 1 161n.
- Gold
intrinsic value of, 3 247, 259
as means of distributing wealth, 3 104
re-introduction of gold standard (1819), xxxiv
as standard of value, xxxiv; 1 290–1; 2 144
- Goldsmid, Lady Isobel, 4 205
- Goldsmid, Sir Isaac Lyon, 4 266–7
application of Owen's principles to own family, 4 204–5
- Gordon, Colonel, and Report to the County of Lanark (1820), 1 287
- Gould, Nathaniel
and proposals on improving working conditions in mills, 4 175
Information Concerning the Children Employed in Cotton Factories, 4 175n.

- Government
 able to call on specialist skills and knowledge, 3 351
 age-group selected for administration, 3 293-4, 339, 342-3, 357
 attempts to return to cash payments, 1 293
 based on class, 3 373-4
 based on error, 3 225
 blame for past failures of, 3 377
 Britain
 Owen's report to Cabinet, 2 152
 power of public opinion over, 2 130
 by those only professing religious belief, 2 172, 174, 178
 and changes in standards of value, 1 290-2
 common interests with those governed under rational system of society, 3 189
 of communities, lii-liv
 compared to management of family estate, 3 118
 conditions affecting, 2 329
 controlled by cunning, 2 178
 controlled by religion, 2 192-6
 current universal dissatisfaction with, 3 370-2
 division of governed into classes, sects and parties, 3 394-5
 duties of, 1 170-1; 2 3-4
 effect of realizing truth on, 3 381-2
 effects of reducing revenues of, 1 201-2
 of Europe, address to (1830), 2 127-9
 evils of present system, 3 273-6, 380-1
 of family under rational system of society, 3 332
 and formation of character, 1 77; 3 116-18
 and fundamental errors in which evil originates, 2 330-2
 general constitution of, 3 301-2
 hereditary, 3 341
 home department, membership and duties, 3 357-8
 ignorance of, 3 256
 inconsistency in, 3 373-4
 influence of educational system on, 1 92
 influence of public on, 1 202
 inquiry into conditions of poor criticised, 1 188, 197
 judged by effectiveness of actions, 1 171
 of model communities, 2 25, 28, 79-81, 86-8
 of New Harmony community, 2 43-4
 obedience to, 1 141-2
 often by those of inferior talents, 3 67
 opposition to independence of masses, 4 238
 Owen urges to put questions to human race, 2 343-5
 paternalistic, liii
 persuasion of need for rational system, 3 392-3
 and prevention of evils, 4 191
 purpose of, 1 77
 of rational characters, 3 284-5
 rational system
 foreign department, 3 294-6, 344-7, 357-8
 funding of, 1 168, 190
 home department, 3 343-4, 346-7, 354, 358
 rational system of, 2 202-11, 3 273-6, 382-9
 general constitution and code of laws, 2 207-10
 responsibilities for education of children, 1 118-19
 role of women in, lv
 science of, 3 247
 as source of pleasure, 3 308
 support for Owen's opposition to political reform, xxi
 support for reform, 1 178-9
 through education in rational system of society, 2 66-7
 in transitional state of society, 3 340-1
 in unison with laws of human nature, as condition for personal happiness, 3 134
 United States
 address to (1830), 2 127-9
 Owen's proposal of new social system to, 2 41-2
 power of public opinion over, 2 130
 universal code of laws, 3 303-6, 355-9
 urged to adopt measures to reform conditions of working class, 1 54-5
 world, lvi-lvii
 Granaries, for storing of food supplies, 1 326
 Grand National Consolidated Trades' Union
 and democratic proposals, lvi
 Grant, Charles, 4 266
 Grant, Sir Robert, 4 266
 Granville, Lord (Leveson-Gower), 1 197
 Gray, John
 Lecture on Human Happiness, xxxviii-xxxix
 The Social System: A Treatise on the System of Exchange, xxxviii-xxxix; 2 256n., 417n.
 Gray, Sir Charles, 4 267
 Greaves, James Pierrepont, and 'Sacred Socialist' community, 4 231n.
 Greece
 exercise of physical and mental powers, 3 62
 laws of, 1 82
 Greed, and treatment of workers, xxiv

- Grey, Sir Charles, Owen's meeting with, 4 283
- Guyon, Emilie-Honorine, 4 45
- Habits
- acquisition of through early circumstances, 2 153–4
 - alteration of, 2 140
 - influence of early circumstances on, 1 342
 - of luxury and self-importance in aristocracy, 2 163
 - of middle classes, 3 50
 - prevention of viciousness, 3 51
 - training and acquisition of, 3 50–1, 128
- Hall, Captain Basil, on Napoleon, 4 227
- von Hamel, Dr Joseph, visits to New Lanark, 4 204
- Hamilton, 10th Earl of (Alexander Hamilton Douglas), 4 290
- Hamilton, J.A., and Orbiston (Motherwell) community, 4 295, 333–4
- Hamilton, Robert, and *Report to the County of Lanark* (1820), 1 287
- Happiness
- as aim of rational system of society, 3 301, 306
 - arising from education, 3 108
 - arising from union and agreement, 3 13
 - attained through knowledge of laws of human nature, 2 151
 - attainment of, 3 127
 - conditions for, 3 128, 131–91
 - of children in New Lanark infant school, 4 196–8, 202
 - conditions requisite for, 1 174–5; 2 154–5, 205–6, 328; 3 307–8; 4 158–9
 - as criteria for continuance of marriage, 2 52–3
 - current lack of progress towards, 1 176–7
 - desire for, 4 285
 - and diversity of human race, 3 40–1
 - entailing tolerance for differences and defects of others, 1 140–1
 - extension to all living things, 3 190–1, 207
 - and freedom of action, 3 182–4
 - and freedom of thought, 2 11
 - of greatest number, 1 57; 2 65–6; 3 134, 167–9, 232–7, 307
 - as aim of human life, 2 5; 3 91
 - circumstances necessary for, 2 22–3
 - importance of subject, 2 22–3
 - as purpose of New Harmony community, 2 42
 - taught to children, 1 60–1
 - and true religion, 2 410
 - union and co-operation of all essential for, 2 63
 - and utilitarianism, 2 151
 - human capacity for, 3 386
 - incompatible with ignorance, 1 215; 3 184–6; 4 236
 - incompatible with war, 3 304
 - incompatible with wealth, 3 372–3
 - and individual accumulation of wealth, 3 120
 - and inferior quality of goods, 3 101
 - and insincerity, 1 177
 - and knowledge, 1 70; 2 154; 3 135
 - laws of nature producing, 2 314n.
 - limits of, 3 208
 - and means of travelling at pleasure, 3 175–6
 - and need for security, 3 336
 - not necessitating revolution, 1 38
 - object of rational government, 2 207
 - of parents in well-being of their children, 3 216
 - present incapacity of man to imagine, 3 295
 - replacing misery under rational system of society, 2 150
 - resulting from overthrow of evils caused by religion, 3 238–9
 - scientific advances used for increase of, 2 164
 - of self and community, 1 36
 - of society in unison with laws of human nature, 3 186–9
 - and superior character, 2 252
 - and temperance, 3 60–1
 - and truth, 3 5, 16, 217–21
 - universal desire for, 3 119, 131–3, 184–5, 232–3
 - as virtue, 2 278; 3 149
 - and wealth, 1 244; 3 134

Hare, John, 4 156

Harmonite Society, 2 12–13, 26

Harmony Hall (Queenwood) community, Hampshire, 4 333, 336–7

Harney, George Julian, and Red Socialists, 4 28

Hase, Henry, 4 266

 - and attempt to found infant school in London, 4 196
 - on systematic order of New Lanark, 4 189

Hastings, Marquis and Marchioness of, 4 266

Hatred

 - absent from rational state of society, 3 207
 - between masters and men, 2 234
 - as instinct rather than act of will, 3 54, 305

Hazlitt, William

 - on Owen as 'man of one idea', xxii; 4 128
 - Table Talk, 4 128n.

Health

 - of all under rational system of society, 2 159–60; 3 128, 292–3

- as condition for happiness, 3 134
 and early training of children, 1 38
 effect of current system of marriage on, 2 315
 and employment of children, 1 272-3; 4
 171, 174
 and employment in manufacturing, 1 238
 and exercise, 1 272; 3 33
 and inferior quality of goods, 3 101
 of inhabitants of New Harmony, 2 27
 in interests of all, 3 91
 manufacturing towns contrasted with
 proposed villages, 1 181
 means of preserving organization in best
 state of
 charity, 3 159-60
 as condition of happiness, 3 139-61
 esteem and affections of neighbours and
 friends, 3 160-1
 exercise of natural propensities, 3 148-53
 kind treatment from birth, 3 140-1
 occupation of body and mind, 3 153-7
 pure air, 3 141-2
 regular outdoor exercise, 3 145-8
 self knowledge, 3 157-9
 wholesome food, 3 142-5
 mental
 influence of superstition and bigotry on, 3
 136
 maintenance of under rational system of
 society, 3 188
 in model communities, 2 86, 89-90
 neglect of for pursuit of wealth, 1 174-5
 of physical and mental powers, 1 350; 2 76;
 3 62-3, 144
 and temperate use of faculties, 3 148-53
 Heating, arrangements for in model
 communities, 2 24
 Heaven, as state of monotony, 3 295
 Hell, doctrine of, 2 185
 Henry, Joseph, as first director of Smithsonian
 Institute, 4 330-1
 Henry, Patrick, and United States
 constitution, 2 49; 3 245
 Henry, Thomas 'Magnesia', as member of
 Manchester Literary and Philosophical
 Society, 4 89
 Heptinstall, Robert (haberdasher), 4 62, 71
 Hereditary office, disappearance of under
 rational system of society, 3 341
 Heretics, treatment of, 3 52
 Herschel, Sir John Frederick (astronomer), 4
 82, 93
 Hervey, James, *Meditations Among the Tombs in
 a Letter to a Lady*, 4 25, 53
 Heywood, Samuel, 4 82
 Hibernian Philanthropic Society, 1 340n.
 Hinduism, 3 369
 History, benefits derived from, 2 243-4
 Hoare, Samuel, 4 157, 266
 Holidays, frequency of, 1 113-14
 Holkham estate, Norfolk, 4 274-5
 Holme, Edward, as member of Manchester
 Literary and Philosophical Society, 4
 89
 Holyoake, George Jacob
 convicted of blasphemy, xlv
 development of Owen's ideas into
 'secularism', xlv
 Home colonies
 classification of, 2 377-80
 educational advantages, 2 388-90, 399-400
 employment of inhabitants, 2 392-5
 Family Club, 2 384-5, 402
 general arrangements of, 2 374-7, 383-8,
 398-9
 management of, 2 392-5
 occupations in transition state, 2 380-2
 plan for establishment of, 2 339-415; 3 164
 rules and regulations for, 2 395-401
 second stage of, 2 378-80
 transition stage, 2 377-85
 advantages accruing, 2 383-6, 391-2
 see also Model communities
 Home Colonization Office, establishment of, 2
 412
 Hone, William, opposition to Owen, 1 213n.
 Honesty, moral, 2 171
 Honours
 loss of desire for, 1 324
 pursuit of, 2 310
 Honyman, Sir William, and *Report to the
 County of Lanark* (1820), 1 287
 Hornby, John, 4 95
 Horner, Francis, and *Edinburgh Review*, 1
 300n.
 Hospitals, under rational system of society, 3
 350-1, 358
 Houldsworth, Henry, attempts to discredit
 Owen, 4 172-4
 Houses of correction, unnecessary in new moral
 world, 2 231
 Housing
 affecting upbringing and education of
 children, 4 136
 at New Lanark, 1 50
 for elderly, 1 73-4
 charitable associations for, 3 365
 in model communities, 1 337-8, 345
 proposals for, 1 306-7, 313
 Howley, William, Bishop of London and
 Archbishop of Canterbury, 4 156
 Hull, Dr John, 4 88n.
 Human nature
 and charity, 3 42-3

- Human nature – *continued*
 as compound of qualities, 3 69
 effect of circumstances on *see* Circumstances
 effect of current system of marriage on, 2
 313–17
 effects of ignorance of, 1 60–3
 essential similarity of, 1 84
 false beliefs about
 incompatible with happiness, 3 184–6
 society based on, 2 21; 3 3, 13, 133, 145–
 8
 force of habits on, 3 128
 future capabilities of unknown, 3 287
 ignorance of, 4 9–10
 as cause of misery, 2 5–6
 enforced by priesthood, 2 309–10
 and inherent evil, 2 59; 3 172
 instincts *see* Instincts
 knowledge of, benefits of in dealing with
 others, 4 81–2
 laws of
 2 152–4, 203–4; 3 23–5, 38–69, 114
 happiness of society in unison with, 3
 186–9
 knowledge of necessary to happiness, 2
 151; 3 86–9
 man forced to act contrary to, 2 102
 natural propensities of, 2 327–8
 potential of, 3 76–7
 science of, 2 371, 3 83
 variety of, 3 78–9
 von Humboldt, Alexander
 character, 4 223, 325–6
 as good and great man, 4 27–8
 Owen's friendship with, 4 325
 Owen's meeting with, 4 223
 Hume, Joseph, 4 183, 268, 274
 Humphreys, Robert
 joins New Lanark, 4 111–12
 as Owen's successor at Drinkwater's mill, 4
 95
 tempted away from management of New
 Lanark, 4 145–6
 Hunt, Henry, 4 268
 opposition to Owen, xxix; 1 213n., 215n.
 Hunter, Col. Samuel, and sale of New Lanark,
 4 145
 Hunting, Owen's experience of, 4 95–6
 Hutton, Mr, 2 23
 Hypocrisy
 and attitudes to sexual intercourse, 3 151
 of current social system, 2 131
 disappearance of under rational system of
 society, 3 293
 in education of middle classes, 2 283
 effect of on upper classes, 2 164–5
 and forcing of belief, 1 208
 incompatible with virtue and rationality, 3
 136
 and religion, 1 68; 2 170–2, 179; 3 52–3,
 200
 and Sabbath observance, 1 59
 and suppression of private judgement, 1 126
 Idleness
 abandonment of in preparation for
 Millennium, 2 351–2
 absent from new moral world, 3 15
 bad habits produced by, 1 146
 as consequence of ignorance, 1 54
 and crime, 1 95
 disadvantages to, 3 188
 discomforts of, 4 57
 no place for in education, 3 269
 support of, 1 95–7
 of those living on efforts of others, 3 74
 Ignorance
 bad habits produced by, 1 146
 of best modes of producing wealth, 3 91
 caused by current system of marriage, 2 272
 of causes of good and evil, 3 209–16
 causes of, 3 386
 and chastity, 2 288–9
 and crime, 1 129; 3 368
 disappearance of under rational system of
 society, 3 83, 122–3, 304
 enforcement of by class legislation, 3 374
 evil consequences of, 1 78–80, 131; 3 260,
 304; 4 183
 extent of, 2 81; 3 214, 233
 of government and churches, 3 256, 274
 happy consequences of removal of, 1 137
 of human nature, 1 60–3; 3 162, 222–3; 4 9–
 10
 and shaping of circumstances, 3 263–5
 incompatible with happiness, 1 215
 and irrationality, 3 77–8
 of learned, 1 132
 measures to remove, 2 220
 of men concerning women, 2 273
 as mental bondage, 3 179
 as object of religion, 2 193, 198; 3 72
 opposition to Nature, 1 229–30
 of political economy, 1 290
 popularity and fame based on, 1 204
 and poverty, 1 149; 2 218; 3 222, 254–5,
 304
 protection of infants from, 3 385
 punishment as instrument of, 1 205
 and removal of error, 1 78; 3 383–6
 resulting from belief in free will, 2 98–100
 and selfishness, 3 397
 and superstition and fear, 3 177, 201

- of upbringing of children, 4 136
 and violence, 1 282
 world-wide extent of, 4 219
- Illinois, state government of, and company for
 establishment of new social system, 2
 13-14
- Illness, treatment of in model communities, 2
 35, 88-9
- Imagination
 cultivation of, 3 158
 society emanating from fundamental errors
 of, 3 3, 13
 strength of, 3 270
- Immorality
 among early workers at New Lanark, 1 45
 control of at New Lanark, 1 49
 linked to poorest, xlvi
- Impossibility, nature of, 4 23
- Impressions, repetition of, 3 60-1
- Imprisonment, for crimes resulting from
 poverty, 3 387
- Inconsistency, in current state of man, 3 162-3
- Independence
 for foreign colonies, 2 216
 intellectual, and division of labour, lii
 mental, declaration of (1826), 2 48-55
 and omniscience, 2 96-7
 and relationship between the sexes, 2 258
 requested for Texas, 2 119
- Independence, American Declaration of
 (1776), 2 49, 54
- Indiana, state government of, and company for
 establishment of new social system, 2
 13-14
- Indians, North American, 3 259
- Indifference, as instinct rather than act of will,
 3 54, 305
- Individual
 organisation of, 3 23-5
 as prototype of society, 3 306
- Individual interest, concept condemned,
 xxxiv-xxxv
- Individual ownership, disappearance of under
 rational system of society, 3 247
- Individualism
 abandonment of under rational system of
 society, 2 369-71
 and attitudes to others, 1 204
 celebrated by classical political economists,
 1 308
 contrary to truth, 1 308-9
 and current system of education, 3 138-9
 end hastened by machinery and scientific
 advances, 3 314
 and fluctuations in food supply, 1 205-6
 incompatible with laws of nature, 3 331-2
 and necessity for law, 1 209
- and necessity for taxation, 1 209
 persuading society of evils of, 2 370-3
 replaced by union and co-operation in new
 social system, 2 12-13
 resulting from ignorance of human nature
 and society, 3 120
 under current system of society, 3 277
- Individuality, 1 175
 and attitudes to others, 1 177
 benefits of in new moral world, 3 73
- Individuals, differences between from birth, 3
 34-6, 215, 266
- Industry, houses of, 1 161-2
- Inequality
 abandonment of in preparation for
 Millennium, 2 352
 in transitional state of society, 2 40-1, 373-
 4
- Infant school, established at New Lanark, xix
- Infant schools
 achievements of under present system of
 society, 3 383-4
 address concerning (1830), 2 155-8
 as anomaly in present social system, 2 155-
 6, 158
 at New Lanark, xix; 2 155-8; 4 151, 189
 boarding schools, 4 231
 establishment of in Britain, 2 29-30
 irrational nature of under present social
 system, 2 156, 158
 origins of Owen's plans for, 4 136-7
 purpose of, 2 156-7; 3 115
- Infants
 care and training of under rational system of
 society, 3 265-7
 differences between at birth, 2 7
 early care of in model communities, 2 36
 lack of accountability, 1 41
 protection from ignorance, 3 385
 responsibility for actions discussed, 2 59
see also Children; Education
- Infidels, treatment of by authorities, 3 71
- Infirm, maintained at parish expense, 1 216
- Infirm *see also* Disease; Illness
- Information, collection of under rational
 government, 3 118
- Injustice, 1 34; 3 364
 of current treatment of poor, 1 152
 teaching of in classics, 3 267-8
- Insanity
 attempts to cure, 3 272
 and belief that man forms own character, 3
 150, 205
 caused by disappointment of affections, 2
 315
 caused by religion, 3 136-7
 current state of, 3 87, 218, 349-50

- Insanity – *continued*
 of irrational beliefs, 3 311–12
 of monetary system, 3 372–3
 and religion, 2 177, 195; 3 400–1
- Insincerity, 1 134
 and forcing of belief, 1 208
 and happiness, 1 177
 production of in society, 1 33
 see also Hypocrisy
- Instincts
 acknowledgement as natural in new moral world, 3 16
 affections as, 3 305
 creating will, 3 76
 false division into virtues and vices, 3 150–1
 feelings and convictions as, 3 28
 physical under control of mental and moral, 3 31
 rejection of as error, 3 69
 unity of in rational beings, 3 31
- Institutions
 based on error, 2 331–2; 3 225–6
 under rational system of society, 3 225–8
- Insurance, system of at New Lanark, xix
- Intellect, and religious belief, 2 170–1
- Intellectual faculties of mankind, 3 38–9
- Intelligence *see* Reason
- Interests
 community of, 2 85
 separation of, 3 119
 system based on error, 3 225
- Inventions
 communication of, 1 344, 346
 good and evil consequences of, 2 368
 and increase in wealth, 3 251–2
 and reduction of labour, 3 363–4
- Investment
 in communities, 1 164
 influence gained by, lii
- Ireland
 co-operative farm at Ralahine, xlii
 evil effects of religion in, 3 235
 movement for repeal of union with England, 3 258
 Owen's visit to (1822–3), xxxv; 4 295, 303
 political conflict in, 4 295
 population, 3 251
 poverty in, 2 131; 3 137
 reception of Owen's views in, 4 164–5
 recommendations for improving conditions of peasantry, 1 345–53
 relief of current distress by application of rational principles, 2 247
- Irrationality
 arising from error respecting human nature, 3 13
 and false ideas, 3 48–50
 formation of in character, 1 175
 and ignorance, 3 77–8
 most marked in man of all animal creation, 3 349–50
 as product of training and culture, 1 177; 3 49–50
 soon to disappear, 3 350, 363
- Irresponsibility of man, 2 57–8
 and general constitution of rational government, 2 207
- Isolation
 absent from new moral world, 3 98
 and individual family arrangements, 3 138
 not conducive to health and happiness, 3 97
- Jackson, Andrew, 4 257
 and United States constitution, 3 244, 3 245
- von Jacobi Kloest, Baron, 4 188, 325
- Jamaica, Owen's visit to (1828), xxxvii; 2 110n., 146n.
- Jardine, George, Professor of Logic, 4 161
- Jealousy
 disappearance of under rational system of society, 3 207, 293, 323
 individual differences no justification for, 3 36
- Jefferson, Thomas, 2 19; 4 257, 304
 spiritual communication with Owen, 4 254
 and United States constitution, 3 244–5
- Jeffrey, Francis, and *Edinburgh Review*, 1 300n.
- Jesuits, opposition to Owen, 4 36, 326
- Jesus Christ, 4 45
 as medium and social reformer, 4 303
- Jews, 1 223
- Johnson, James, correspondence with Owen on Plan for amelioration of the poor, 1 189–91
- Joint stock companies, and establishment of new social system, 2 13–14, 360–412
- Jones, Ernest, 4 268
- Jones, John
 business failure, 4 77
 partnership with Owen, 1 172; 4 73–4
- Jones, John Gale, on Owen's 'Plan', xxx
- Jordan, Camille, 4 224
- Judgement
 incompetence of under present system, 2 104
 and memory, 3 30
- Judgment, and balance of impressions, 3 30
- Juggernaut, worship of, 1 128, 140, 262; 2 61, 100
- Julian de Paris (Marc-Antoine Jullien), visit to New Lanark, 4 220

- Just, Baron, Saxon Ambassador, 4 326
 visit to New Lanark, 4 205, 326
- Justice, incompatible with war, 3 304
- Kelly, William, management of New Lanark
 for David Dale, 4 105, 111
- Kennedy, John, and cotton industry, 4 76-7
- Kent, Duke of
 as chairman of meetings considering relief of
 poor, 4 270-1
 character, 4 249-52
 death, 4 279, 284, 291-2
 gives Owen letters of introduction, 4 221
 spiritual communication with Owen, 4 248,
 253-5, 284-5
 support for Owen, xxxiii; 4 247-9
 visits Owen, 4 206
- Kindness
 characteristic of true religion, 3 221
 as condition for preserving organization in
 best state of health, 3 140-1
 effectiveness of, 2 74
 in overcoming bad habits, 1 170-1
 in treatment of children, 1 181, 349
 power to overcome prejudice, 3 391-2
 resulting from true understanding of nature,
 3 72-3
- Kitchens, and large-scale catering, 1 17-18,
 20, 58n., 306-8, 313
- Knowledge
 acquisition of, 3 270-1
 by lower classes, 2 149-50
 by young people, 3 289-90
 advances in, 3 146-7
 all concentrated into one family, 3 339-40
 barriers to, variety of languages, 2 77
 based on facts, 2 91; 3 195, 199
 of best modes of producing wealth, 3 90-9
 of causes of good and evil, 3 209-16
 charity and love resulting from, 3 264
 children's desire for, 1 349-50; 2 75-6
 desire to increase, 3 169-70, 195
 experience as parent of, 1 184
 and happiness, 1 70; 2 154
 incompatible with war, 3 304
 loss of under irrational systems of society, 3
 342-3, 397-8
 means of increasing, 3 169-70
 as condition for happiness, 3 134, 157-9,
 307
 of Moral science, 3 76
 necessary to form character, 3 108-9
 neglect of for pursuit of wealth, 1 174-5
 as power, 2 161
 power to overcome prejudice, 3 391-2
 producers of, address to (1834), 2 232-5
 and production of wealth, 3 92-3
 public meetings for spread of, 2 200-1
 and relationship between sexes, 2 289-91
 rendering peaceful revolution irresistible, 3
 8
 repressed by power of religion over
 government, 2 193, 198
 scientific outstripping moral and political, 2
 130-1
 specialised or superior used by government,
 3 351
 spread of among lowest classes, 3 366
 through reading and reflection, 2 4-5
 and travel, 3 175-6
 and truth, 3 31-2
 and understanding of charity, 3 170
 united body of, 3 214
- Kossuth, Lajos, 4 28
- Krudener, Baron Paul, 4 239
- La Place, Pierre-Simon, Owen's meeting with,
 4 222-3
- Labouchere, Henry, Baron Taunton, 4 304
- Labour
 as basis of value, 1 302-3
 costs of in cotton trade, 1 103
 dangers of 'sudden advances', 1 20
 decline in value of manual labour, 1 143-5,
 193, 239
 difference in value between individuals, 1
 146
 division of
 disadvantages of, 4 19-20
 end of necessity for, 3 146-7
 evil consequences of, 2 78
 gender-based, lvi
 and intellectual independence, l-1ii; 1
 320, 334
 and 'mutilation' of man, 1 351-2
 necessity for, 2 108-9
 reversed in new moral world, 2 230-1
 exchange of, xl-xli, 1; 2 227-8, 248-9, 280
 as foundation of all value, xxxiv
 as foundation of wealth, 2 148
 hours of work, 2 111-12
 increasing numbers, 1 259
 manual, as source of wealth and prosperity, 1
 288
 and means of consumption, 2 127-8
 minimum for production of wealth, 3 102-3,
 283
 national revenue based on, 1 81-2, 94
 as natural standard of value, 1 292-4
 nature of in proposed communities, xxxiv-
 xxxv

- notes of for transacting business, 2 110–11, 227–8, 249
 and productive power, 1 258–61
 quarterly returns on state of, 1 94
 reduced costs of under rational system of society, 3 189
 reduction of need for through scientific advances, 2 33; 3 332, 346, 363–4
 repetitive, dehumanising effects of, li as standard of value, 1 164, 347–8
 war demands for, 1 202–3
 waste of, 1 94–6
 wealth created by, xxvii
see also Employment
- Labour Exchange, London, 4 331–4
 Labour notes, 2 110–11, 227–8, 249
 Labourers, address to, 2 148–50
 Lamb, Sir Frederick (later Lord Beaurale), hospitality to Owen in Vienna, 4 325
 Lanark, County of, report to (1820), 1 287–332
 Lancaster, Joseph
 educational system, xxxiii; 1 8–9, 37, 86; 4 88, 90, 136–7, 141, 142n.
 Owen invites to Scotland (1812), 4 160–1
 Owen's patronage of, 4 160, 246, 303
 Owen's speech in honour of, xxi; 1 7–10
- Land
 ability to support population, 2 211; 3 400
 requirements of associations of families, 3 336–7
 as security for borrowing on model communities, 2 25
 surrounding model communities, 2 69–70
 undercultivation of, 2 230
 use of in new moral world, 2 244–5
- Landowners and capitalists, associations founded by, 1 323
- Language
 as barrier to communication, 2 77, 258
 effect on character, 1 262
 establishment of common language, 2 216, 258
 and inconsistency, 3 373–4
 instruction of children in, 3 188
 of party of married persons, 2 287
 plainness of true religion, 3 217
 of truth, 3 227
- Lansdowne, Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 3rd Marquis of, 2 29
 attempt to found infant school in London, 4 196
 support for Owen, 4 328
- Lascelles, Lord Henry, 2nd Earl of Harewood, support for Owen, 4 169, 211–12
- Lauderdale, Lord, 4 266
 and Owen's plans for improvements in condition of working classes, xxxiii; 4 271–3, 293
- Lavoisier, Antoine (chemist), 4 90
- Law
 in accordance with principles of nature in rational system of society, 3 308
 bringing more pain than pleasure, 2 332
 and civil and religious liberty, 3 181
 contrary to nature, 3 15
 courts of, disappearance of in new moral world, 2 229
 current laws founded in error, 3 309
 evils arising from, 3 154–5
 of man contrasted with laws of Nature, 3 89, 94, 274–5
 necessary evil under individualism, 1 209
 obedience to, 1 141–2
 profession unnecessary under rational system of society, 2 159
 transition, 3 309–13
 universal code of rational government, liv; 3 303–6, 355–9
 unnecessary in new moral world, 2 229; 3 92, 183, 188, 276–7
 waste caused by, 3 402–3
- Lawson, Archibald, 1 In.
- Lawyers, profession founded on erroneous notions, 2 331–2
- Leadership, religious attitudes of, 2 170–1
- Leaf and Co (warehousemen), 2 139
- Learning
 and ignorance of human nature, 1 132
 uselessness of much current learning, 3 267–8
- Lectures
 provision for at New Lanark, 1 66
 of Rational Society, xlii–xliii
- Lee, Ann, and Shakers, 2 12–13n.
- Lee, George, as manager of Drinkwater's mill, 4 78, 80, 83–4
- Leeds, Owen's visit to, 4 258–9
- Leisure
 of members of model communities, 2 71
 in new villages, 1 346
- Leo XII, Pope, and Owen's proposed settlement in Mexico, 4 314–15
- Letters
 concerning benefits of villages of Unity and Mutual Co-operation (1817), 1 174–82
 conveyance of before introduction of penny-post, 4 100
- Leveson-Gower, Lord Granville, 1 197
- Liberty
 of action, 3 182–4, 307
 as condition for happiness, 3 134, 182–4, 307

- and injury to others, 3 183
- civil and religious, 3 177, 181
- of conscience, 1 234, 247; 2 45, 94, 177-9, 207
 - and rights of humanity, 1 208; 2 254-5
- of expression, 3 134, 179-82, 356
 - as condition for happiness, 3 307
 - as fundamental law under rational system of society, 3 309
- lack of understanding of, 4 209
- mental, 2 48-55
 - never yet enjoyed, 2 76; 3 179-81
 - resulting from education, 2 92
 - religious, never yet enjoyed, 2 76
 - and safety of state, 1 210
 - of thought, and happiness, 2 11
- Licentiousness, 1 123-4
 - and Sabbath observance, 1 59
 - see also Immorality; Vice
- Lindsay, John, 1 1n.
- Linen trade, 1 102
- Liston, Sir Robert, 4 267
- Literary persons
 - adaptation and remodelling of earlier works recommended, 2 161-2
 - address to, 2 161-2
- Literary pursuits, of little benefit or happiness to public, 2 161
- Liverpool, Lady, interest in Owen's views, 4 163, 256
- Liverpool, Lord, 1 111n., 142n.; 4 252
 - address to on the employment of children, 1 237-44
 - administration of, 1 197
 - interest in Owen's views, 4 162-3, 212, 256, 271, 273, 326
 - Owen's meeting with (1817), 4 212-13
- Living conditions
 - manufacturing towns contrasted with proposed villages, 1 180-2
 - superior state of under rational system of society, 3 188
- Locke, John, 3 45
- Lockhart, Norman, and *Report to the County of Lanark* (1820), 1 287
- Lodging-houses, in plan for communities, 1 149-50
- London
 - foundation of infant school in, 4 196-7, 206-8
 - Owenite community in, xxxviii
 - poverty and destitution in, 2 365
- London Co-operative Society, xxxviii
- London Corresponding Society, xxxiii
- Longueville, Peter, Peter Quarll, 4 53
- Loss, financial, in model communities, 2 84
- Loudon, Lady Flora Mure Campbell, Countess of, 4 266
- Louis-Phillipe, Duc d'Orleans (later King of France), 4 221-2
- Love
 - as instinct, 3 305
 - not controlled by bidding, 3 264
 - resulting from knowledge, 3 264
- Lower classes
 - children of, 2 282-3
 - education of, 3 110
 - effect of acquisition of knowledge on, 2 149-50
 - and immorality, xlviii
 - perceived ignorance and narrow-mindedness of, 3 396
 - as producers of nation's wealth, 2 149
 - qualities and defects of, 3 394-7
 - sufferings of, 3 394
 - threatened by poverty, 2 131
- Lowther, Lady Augusta, 4 64n.
- Lowther, Sir William, 4 64n.
- Luddites, xxv
- Ludwig I, King of Bavaria, Owen's meeting with, 4 320-2
- Lunatic asylums
 - Bedlam, 2 279
 - management of, 3 341
 - world made one by religion, 2 195
- Luxury, habit of in aristocracy, 2 163
- Lycurgus, 1 83, 285; 3 107
- Lynch law, in United States, 3 181
- Macauley, Zachary, 4 157, 266
- McConnel, James, and cotton industry, 4 76-7
- Macconnell, Rev Thomas, and London Labour Exchange, 4 335-6
- McCulloch, John Ramsey, statistical research, 2 99n., 108n., 356
- Macculloch, John Ramsey, *Statistical Account of the British Empire*, 2 366
- McGregor, John
 - and British trade in Austria, 4 324-6
 - The Commercial and Financial Legislation of Europe and America, 4 326n.
- McGrigor, Alexander (Owen's solicitor), 4 143
- McGuffog, James
 - 1 172; 4 92
 - character, 4 63, 4 71-2, 64
 - offers Owen share in business, 4 75
 - Owen learns methods of, 4 80, 81
 - Owen's employment with, xvi; 4 62-9
 - religious beliefs, 4 66-7
 - skill as buyer, 4 72
- McGuffog, Mary, 4 63
 - religious beliefs, 4 66-7

- Machinery
 care of, 1 29
 effect on division of labour, li
 and end of individualism, 3 314
 and fall in wages, xxiv
 introduction of and treatment of labour
 force, 1 29
 making life of greater leisure possible for
 majority, xlix
 and manual division of labour, 3 147
 and reduction of labour, 3 332
 and rush to accumulate wealth, xxiv
 spinning mules, 4 74
- Mackintosh, George
 as Owen's travelling companion in Scottish
 Highlands, 4 125–8
 partnership with David Dale, 4 125, 127
- Mackintosh, Lady Catherine, 4 158
- Mackintosh, Sir James, 4 157–8
- Macnab, Dr Henry Gray
 visit to New Lanark for Duke of Kent, 4 250
*The New Views of Mr Owen of Lanark
 Impartially Examined*, 2 29n., 4 250n.
*Observations on the Political, Moral and
 Religious State of the Civilized World*, 4
 250n.
- McNiven, Charles (engineer), 4 121
- Macqueen, Lady Lilius, 4 152
- Macqueen, Robert Dundas, 4 152
- Madison, Dorothy, 4 304
- Madison, James, 2 19; 4 257, 304
 and United States constitution, 3 244–5
- Madness
 caused by religion, 3 136–7
see also Insanity
- Mahomedanism, 1 128, 140, 223, 262; 3 369
 on truth and God, 3 73
- Malice, absent from rational state of society, 3
 207
- Malthus, Harriet, 4 158
- Malthus, Thomas Robert, 4 157–8, 177n.,
 183, 267
 influence on thinking about poor relief, xxix
 on population, 1 53n., 96; 2 358–60
 theories of, 2 281–2
Essay on Population, xxxii; 1 96n., 165n.; 2
 68n.; 4 157n.
- Man
 animal propensities of, 3 38–9
 aversions of, 2 328
 as compound being, 2 274, 3 23, 26–7
 desires of, 2 327
 difference from animals, 2 327
 helplessness of at birth, 2 57
 intellectual faculties, 3 38–9
 irresponsibility of, 2 57–8, 207
 moral feelings, 3 38–9
 needs of, 4 40–1
 origins of, 2 327
 progressive nature of, 2 327; 3 133
- Management, of model communities, 1 162–3;
 2 32–7
- Manchester
 changes in, 4 116
 employment of Owen as Drinkwater's mill
 manager, 4 78–87, 91, 93–5
 ideas put into practice in, 2 113
 Owen's employment with John Satterfield, 4
 71–4
 partnership with John Jones, 4 73–4
 Manchester College, 4 87–8
 Manchester Lectures (1837), 2 318–19
 Manchester Literary and Philosophical
 Society
 Owen invited to join, xvii; 4 88–91
 Manners-Sutton, Charles, Archbishop of
 Canterbury, 4 156, 176, 177, 180
 correspondence with Owen, 4 162–3
 report to, 4 209
 support for Owen's early views, 4 162–
 3
- Manufacture, *see* Cotton industry;
 Employment; Labour
- Manufacturers
 address to, 1 271–7; 2 105–13, 145–8
 appeals to, 1 27–30
 attempts to discredit Owen, 4 171–4
 and Bill concerning employment of
 children, 1 237–8
 effect of upbringing and habit on, 1 238–
 9
 increased competition among, 2 145
 interest in education of workers, 1 274–
 5
 investment in technical improvements, 1
 243–4
 opposition to Owen's proposals on child
 labour in mills, 4 170–5
 and profit motive, 1 243, 274–5
 rewards of union with employees, 2 234
 union of proposed, 2 233–4
- Manufacturing
 arrangement of in new moral world, 2
 245
 effect of communities on national trade, 1
 164–5
 evil consequences of current system, xxiii–
 xxvi; 1 1 65; 3 255
 and war of wealth, 3 251
- Maria Feodorovna, Empress of Russia, interest
 in New Lanark, 4 199–200
- Market fluctuations, conditions in
 manufacturing towns contrasted with
 proposed villages, 1 181

- Markets
 creation of, 1 293-4
 and ever-increasing wealth, 1 289
 expansion and contraction of, xxxiv
 overstocking of, 1 275
- Marriage
 address on proposed changes in law of
 (1833), 2 320-1
 based on affection
 2 52-3, 227; 3 322-4
 permanent nature of, xlv; 2 262
 as cause of crime, 2 265-6
 as cause of prostitution, 2 265-6
 Church of Scotland rites, 4 107-8
 Civil Marriage Act (1836), 2 322
 criticism of Owen's views on, xliii
 current system of
 advocates of, 2 287-8
 among chief institutions of evil, 2 263-4
 as cause of ignorance, 2 272
 chastity and truth incompatible with, 2 299-300
 contrary to laws of nature, 2 300; 3 225
 and creation of mystery, 2 309
 differences of opinion within, 2 275-6
 double standard of sexuality, 2 278
 effect on children, 2 278-86
 effect on health, 2 315
 effect on human nature, 2 313-17
 effect on husband, 2 272-6
 effect on society, 2 286-91
 effect on wife, 2 276-7
 and enforcement of chastity, 2 293
 evil consequences of, lv; 2 51-3, 93, 304-5; 3 291
 husband seeking distraction from, 2 276
 incompatible with rationality, 2 296-301
 maintenance of forced associations, 3 173-4, 291
 and moral degeneration, 2 266-7, 271
 origins of, 2 292
 and promiscuity, 2 295-6, 311-12
 struggle for superiority, 2 274-5
 suffering caused by, 2 319
 wealth as motive, 2 282
 dissolution of when affections fail, lv; 2 52-3, 93, 319-21; 3 291
 and enslavement of women, 2 52
 and equality, 2 52-3
 lectures on (1834-5), 2 261-319
 appendix, 2 318-19
 criticism of, 2 318
 editor's preface, 2 261-2
 object of, 2 320
 opposition to open discussion of, 2 263-5, 308
 performance of by Rational Society, xliii
 polygamy, 2 304-6
 and prostitution, lv; 3 325
 system of in model communities, 2 92-3
 under rational system of society, 2 92-3, 227, 258, 269-70, 318-20; 3 136, 290-1, 325, 356
 unequal, 3 328
 unhappy, evil consequences of, 2 261-2
- Marshall, M.C., buys Greenheys with Owen, 4 101-2
- Marsland, Peter, 4 82, 267
- Marsland, Samuel, 4 267
 offers partnership to Owen, 4 94
- Martyrs, and attitudes to religious belief, 2 170-1
- Marx, Karl
 ideas anticipated by Owen, l-li, lviii-lviii
 influence of Owen on, lix
 and Red Socialists, 4 28
- Materials, reduced costs of under rational system of society, 3 189
- Mather, Joseph, *Socialism Exposed*, 2 318n.
- Mathew, Father Theobald, advocacy of temperance, 2 353
- Mazzini, Giuseppe, 4 28
- Mechanics, address to, 2 105-13
- Mechanism
 and creation of wealth, 1 255, 258-61
 effect of introduction on labour, 1 143-5, 346; 2 109
 exceeding manual power, 4 180-1
 expansion of stimulated by war, 1 202-3
 need for careful study of effects of, 1 203
see also Labour; Science
- Medical profession, 2 405
 acting in opposition to interests of human race, 3 143
 dependent on falsehood, 3 155-6
 not necessary if society governed by laws of God, 3 94
 prestige in Manchester, 4 88
 profit from disease, 3 143
- Medium characters, 3 66-7
- Meek, Ronald, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, 1 300n.
- Meetings
 advertisement of, 1 213
 disorder created by political opponents, 1 198, 201
 in Ireland, 1 340n.
 and Plan to Relieve the Country etc (1817), 1 183-94
- Melbourne, William Lamb, 2nd Viscount, 4 325

- Memorials
 to Allied Powers at Aix-la-Chapelle (1818),
 1 257–67
 to governments of Europe and America, 1
 253–6
- Memory
 and judgement, 3 30
 and role of senses, 3 29–30
- Mental feelings, conflict with physical feelings,
 3 58
- Mental liberty *see* Liberty
- Menzies, Rev. William, opposition to Owen, 4
 172–4
- Merchants
 address to, 2 139–41
 disappearance under rational system of
 society, 3 261
- Merit, ideas of to disappear when belief in free
 will broken, 2 65
- Metropolitan Association for Improving the
 Dwellings of the Working Classes, 3
 365n.
- Metternich, Prince, Owen's meeting with, 4
 320, 322–4
- Mexico
 abolition of slavery in, 2 122
 Constitution (1824), 2 122
 decree of religious freedom in land granted to
 Owen, 4 313–14, 318
 grants land to Owen for new mode of
 government, xxxvii; 4 312–13
 Owen's expedition to (1829), xxxvii; 4 307–
 15
 Owen's Memorial to Republic of, 2 117–22
 relationship with United States, 2 119
- Middle classes
 associations founded by, 1 323
 children of, 2 283
 difficulty of recruiting to support of rational
 scheme, 3 396
 education of, 3 94–5, 110
 financial difficulties, 3 137
 gradations of wealth, 2 281
 miseries arising from competition and
 contest, 2 164
 qualities and defects of, 3 394–7
 threatened by poverty, 2 131
- Military exercises, training of children in, xix,
 li; 1 327; 2 28, 47; 4 195–6, 198, 287–8
- Military profession, 3 156–7
 bringing more pain than pleasure, 2 332
 founded on erroneous notions, 2 331–2
- Mill, James, 2 108n.; 3 99n.; 4 177n., 183,
 267
 and attempt to found infant school in
 London, 4 196
 friendship with Bentham, 4 148–9
- Mill, John Stuart, 2 108n.
 and industrial co-operation, lix
- Millennialism, xxxin.
- Millennial Gazette*, 4 331
- Millennium, coming of
 and knowledge of human nature, 4 10
 not to be introduced through patronage, 4
 279–80
 preparation for, 2 347–9
- Miller, Henry, *Papers Relative to the State of
 Crime in the City of Glasgow*, 2 356
- Milton, John, 3 45
Paradise Lost, 4 25, 4 53
- M'Ilwham, John, 1 1n.
- Mind
 diseases of, treatment of, 3 188, 311, 350–1,
 358
 health of
 alternate occupation of with that of body,
 3 153–7
 influence of superstition and bigotry on, 3
 136
 independence of, 2 48–55
 liberty of, 3 179–82
 currently unknown, 3 179–81
 need for re-forming on fundamental
 principles, 1 121
 phrenological categorisation of, 3 236n.
 state of, influence on health, 3 144
 table of various compositions of, 1 221–
 5
- Mining, and future creation of wealth, 3
 256
- Mirror of Truth, The* (journal), 2 297n.
- Misery
 arising from false notions, 1 71
 capability of man to inflict, 3 190–1
 causes of, 3 133–4
 introduction of by attempts to regulate
 instincts, 3 150–1
 replaced by happiness under rational system
 of society, 2 150; 3 304
- Model communities
 accommodation of travellers, 2 45; 3 176
 accounts, 2 86
 adjustment of differences, 2 209–10
 alliances between, 1 353
 cannot succeed if composed of married
 couples, 2 308
 and class, 1 323
 cleanliness in, 2 47, 89
 clothing, 2 88–9
 committees for running, 1 218
 communications between, 3 338, 345–6,
 357
 concentration of all knowledge into, 3 339–
 40

- costs of building, 1 337-8
 development of Owen's plans for (1817),
 xxviii
 dismissal from, 2 94-5
 domestic arrangements, 2 69-71, 85-90
 drawings of, 1 147-9
 education in, 2 90-2
 and financial loss, 2 84
 formation and superintendence of, 1 321-
 4
 furniture, 2 88
 gardens, 2 47
 government of, 2 86-8, 208-9, 248
 health in, 2 86, 89-90
 housing, 1 337-8, 345
 initial financing of, xxvii
 lay-out of, xxvii
 links between, 2 72-3
 lying-in arrangements, 2 89
 management of, 1 353
 marriage system in, 2 92-3
 offices for those wishing to join, 1 226,
 234
 optimum size of population, 1 147, 337,
 345; 2 69, 247; 3 284-5, 331-2
 Owen's personal experience of, xxxvii
 police arrangements, 2 86-7
 population of, 2 208
 privilege in, 2 88
 proposed division of members, 1 216-19
 proposed for entire unemployed population,
 xxvii
 provision for visitors, 2 45
 recreation in, 2 93-4
 rights in, 2 88
 rules and regulations of, 2 82, 84-95
 seeing gradual end of national prejudices, 1
 353
 selection of balance of trades and
 occupations, 2 248
 spread of plan to all classes, 1 220
 subordinate status of persons of color, 2 42
 suitability for large kingdoms and empires, 3
 334-5
 travel by members, 2 95
 treatment of illness, 2 88-9
 unions between, 3 335-6
 and upbringing of children *see* Children
- Moncrieff, Robert and Jean, support for
 Owen's marriage to Caroline Dale, 4
 107
- Money and monetary system
 abandonment of in preparation for
 Millennium, 2 351
 advantages to wealthy, 3 259-60
 based on error, 3 225
 as cause of insanity, 3 372-3
- differences in between England and
 Scotland, 4 104
 disappearance of under rational system of
 society, 3 293, 334
 evil consequences of, 3 15, 259; 4 270, 288-
 9
 and exchange of wealth, 3 104-6
 and expansion and contraction of market,
 xxxiv
 injurious to poor, 3 259-60
 and labour notes, 2 110-11, 227-8
 origins of, 3 259
 as root of all evil, 3 91
 in transitional state of society, 2 228
- Monroe, James, 4 257
 and United States constitution, 3 244-5
- Monteagle, Thomas Spring-Rice, 1st Baron,
 support for Owen, 4 328
- Monteith, Henry, Lord Provost of Glasgow, 1
 101
 opposes Owen in Burghs election, 4 285-6
- Moral science, knowledge of, 3 76
- Moravians, 2 12
- More, Sir Thomas, Utopia, lii; 1 285
- Morgan, John Minter, 4 267
 Hampden in the Nineteenth Century, 4
 267n.
- Morgan, John Minter ('Christianus')
*Mr Owen's Proposed Villages for the Poor
 Shown to be Highly Favourable to
 Christianity*, 2 29n.
*Remarks on the Practicability of Robert Owen's
 Plan*, 2 29n.
*A Vindication of Mr. Owen's Plan for the
 Relief of the Distressed Working Classes*, 2
 29n.
- Morning Post*, *The*, and Owen's letter
 concerning benefits of Villages of Unity
 and Mutual Co-operation (1817), 1
 182
- Morris, William, influence of Owen on, lix
- Morrison and Co (tailors), 2 139
- Morrison, Francis, *The Influence of the Present
 Marriage System*, 2 318n.
- Mortlock, John, 4 177-8
- Moses, 1 128
- Mosman, Hugh, and *Report to the County of
 Lanark* (1820), 1 287
- Moulson, Richard Percival and Jonathan
 Scarth, 1 173
- Mudie, George, establishment of Owenite
 community in London, xxxviii
- Munich, military-style workhouse, 1 39
- Music, provision for at New Lanark, 1 125; 4
 195-8
- Muslin
 manufacture of, 4 76, 92

- Muslin – *continued*
 popularity of, 4 76
- Mutual benefit, social system offering, essential
 for produce happiness for greatest
 number, 2 22
- Mylne, James, Professor of Moral Philosophy,
 4 161
*Plan of a Course of Lectures on Political
 Economy*, xxviii.
- Mynshull, Barbara, 4 100n.
- Mystery
 caused by current system of marriage, 2 309
 invention of by priesthood, 2 302–3
 maintained by organised religion, 3 93
 of Power acting through universe, 3 76–7,
 201–2
 religion as, 3 52, 154
- Mythology, causes of, 2 63
- Napoleon *see* Bonaparte, Napoleon
- Napoleonic wars (1793–1815), 2 107; 3 4
- National Debt, 1 203
- National Equitable Labour Exchange
 lvi
 public meeting at (1833), 2 224–31
- National prosperity, contribution of model
 communities to, 2 28
- Nationalism, gradual end of with rise of
 associations, 1 353
- Natural propensities, exercise of as condition
 for preserving organization in best state
 of health, 3 148–53
- Nature
 code of government proposed in line with
 laws of, 1 230–1
 consistency with truth, 3 214–15
 contemplation of and religious feeling, 3
 228–31
 differences between individuals existing in,
 3 35
 education in accordance with, 3 166
 enforcing of obedience from man, 3 322–3
 error in opposition to, 3 69
 and Eternal Cause, 3 132
 everything emanating from, 3 397
 as God, 3 73
 incomprehensibility to man, 3 398
 laws of
 and attitude to death, 3 178–9
 believers in, 2 170
 contrast with laws of man, 3 89, 94, 274–
 5
 and current system of marriage, 2 277,
 300
 evils consequent on opposing, 3 348
 and happiness, 2 314n.; 3 131
 individualism incompatible with, 3 331–2
 intercourse of sexes directed by, 2 303–6
 and marriage, 2 227
 and punishment, 3 15
 and regulation of reward and punishment,
 3 330–2
 religion based on, 2 175–6, 186–7, 206,
 322–4; 4 264–5
 understanding of when mankind taught
 truth, 2 271–2
 wisdom of, 2 304; 3 391
 opposition to ignorance, 1 229–30
 producing desire to combine or unite, 3 55
 religions in opposition to, 3 75
 time needed for maturity of purposes, 4
 332
 universal principle of, 3 131–2
 vice associated with actions in accordance
 with, 3 139
- Naval profession, 3 156–7
- Navigation, discoveries in, 1 309
- Navy
 address to members of profession, 2 158–61
 unnecessary under rational system of society,
 3 376
- Necessaries, supply of, 2 33
- Necessity, doctrine of, 2 68
- Neckar, Madame, 4 226–7
- Neighbour, love of
 impossible under single-family system, 2
 285–6
 natural to those educated under rational
 system, 2 75
 in new moral world, 3 98, 174
 as original faculty, 2 10
- Neighbourhood, effect of model communities
 on, 2 27–8
- Nesselrode, Count Karl Robert, 4 238–9
- Netherlands, Frederick-oord pauper colony, 1
 39; 2 136
- Neumann, Philipp, Austrian Minister of State,
 4 323–4
- New Harmony
 advantages of site, 2 26
 health of inhabitants, 2 27
- New Harmony community, Indiana, 2 13n.,
 14, 26–7
- New Harmony Gazette*, *The*, 2 38n.
- New Harmony, Indiana
 address to members of new community, 2
 38–42
 alcohol distillation, 2 47
 arbitration of differences, 2 47
 collapse of community, 2 121n.
 defence measures, 2 47
 dismissal of members from, 2 46–7
 efforts at self-sufficiency, 2 47

- establishment of community at, xxxvi-xxxvii; 2 113
 military exercises for children, li; 2 47
 objects of association, 2 30-1
 Owen purchases, 4 303
 Preliminary Society
 constitution of, 2 42-6
 management of, 2 46-7
 temporary nature of, 2 40
 New Lanark, 1 39
 acquired by Charles and Henry Walker from Owen, 4 306
 alternatives to punishment, 4 189, 190-1
 burning of one of mills (1819), 4 284
 census kept, 1 338n.
 changes in human nature effected at, 2 6-7
 children, condition of prior to Owen's management, 4 113
 condition of people before Owen's management, xviii-xix; 1 122-3; 4 109-10, 114-15, 131-2
 costs of, 1 337-8
 David Dale's ownership of, xvii-xix; 1 44-7, 4 98-9, 103, 109-10, 113
 domestic arrangements, 1 50-1, 307
 economic costs and benefits of, 1 15-17, 20
 education
 1 50; 4 32
 open to those outside establishment, 1 127
 schools for older children, 2 157-8; 4 189
 effect of government by charity and love on population, 4 32-3
 improvement of living-standards, 4 115
 infant school, 4 195-202, 207-8
 closure of, 2 157
 establishment of, xix; 2 155-8; 4 189, 192
 interest in, 4 243
 methods of, 4 286-8
 punishment not necessary in, 4 230-1
 singing, dancing and military discipline, 4 195-8
 treatment of youngest children, 4 229-30
 visitors to, 4 197-202
 instruction of teachers, 4 192-5
 management of, 1 13-14
 as model of charitable institution, 1 17
 New Institution for the Formation of Character, 4 56-9, 172-4
 address on opening of (1816), 1 120-42
 drill exercises, li; 1 58, 72-3
 hope for national influence, 1 130-1
 objects of, 1 120
 school, lecture room and church, 1 17, 58n., 63-7, 124-5
 opposition to Owen's reforms, 1 158-9; 4 110, 113, 115-16
 by partners, 4 137-41
 organisation into 'neighbourhood divisions', xix
 Owen sells interest in (1828), 2 125
 Owen's efforts to enforce social discipline, xix
 Owen's first visit to, 4 98-9
 Owen's management of, 1 122, 157-9, 263; 2 6-7; 4 130-2
 Owen's objectives for, xviii-xix; 2 113; 4 133, 301-3
 Owen's partners in, 4 138-51, 191-2
 Owen's purchase of, 1 13; 4 104-6
 payment of workers during cotton embargo, 4 116, 132
 playground, 1 17, 57, 64, 337
 population brought to, 1 14
 profits of, 4 151
 provision for elderly, 1 73-4
 provision for recreation, 1 60, 64
 reform of shops, 4 189
 silent monitor, 4 132-3, 191-2
 and Society of Friends, 2 158
 success of, xix-xx; 1 56, 332; 4 130-2
 system of insurance, xix
 systematic order of, 4 189, 199
 teacher from sent to newly-established infant school in London, 2 30
 theft, Owen's measures to prevent, 4 110-11, 132, 190
 visitors to, from Leeds, 4 258-9, 282
 New Lanark Twist Company, xviii; 1 13n.
 New Moral World (newspaper), xlii
 Newgate Prison, 1 179
 Elizabeth Fry's application of Owen's principles to female prisoners, 1 156, 169-71
 Newspaper editors
 addresses to, 2 125-6, 137-9, 165
 power over public opinion, 2 137-9
 Newspapers, sent out by Owen to publicise views, xxviii, xxx; 4 210-12, 244
 Newton, Isaac, 3 45
 Newtown, Montgomeryshire
 as Owen's birthplace, 4 51-2
 Owen's visit to, 4 69
 Owen's wish to see again, 4 69
 Nicholas I, Emperor of Russia
 offer to set up communities in Russia, 4 200
 visit to New Lanark, 4 199-200
 Noel, Thomas, 2nd Viscount Wentworth, 4 64n.
 Norfolk, increase in wheat production, 4 274-5
 Normal Schools, for formation of rational character, 3 273

- North American Indians
 character of, 1 83–4
 family life of, 2 284
 model of social harmony, lviii
 Notes for labour, xxxix–xl; 2 249
 Nurses, care of infants under rational system of society, 3 265–7
- Oastler, Richard, and proposals on improving working conditions in mills, 4 175
 Oastler, Robert, 4 258–9, 282
 Obedience
 expected from wife to husband, 2 274, 276–7
 and rationality, 1 136
 to government legislation, 1 141–2
 Oberlin, Johann Friedrich, school for poor, 4 228–31
 O'Brien, James Bronterre, and co-operative economics, xxxix, xlv
 Occupation of body and mind, as condition for preserving organization in best state of health, 3 153–7
 O'Connor, Feargus, 4 268
 and Chartism, 3 258
 opposition to Owen, 4 319–20
 Oldenburgh, Grand Duchess of, interest in New Lanark, 4 200–1
 Oldknow, Samuel, xvii; 4 267
 commercial success, 4 92
 courtship of Miss Drinkwater, 4 92–3, 111
 muslin manufacture, 4 76
 Oliver, W.H., 'The Labour Exchange Phase of the Co-operative Movement', 2 228n.
 Omniscience, of universal power, 2 96–7
 Operatives, address to, 2 148–50
 Opinion
 differences of, arbitration of under rational system of society, 3 188
 right to control those of others absent under rational system of society, 3 309–10
 Opposites, union of, 3 73
 Oppression of weak
 system based on error, 3 226
 teaching of in classics, 3 267–8
 Orbiston community, xxxviii; 4 295
 establishment of, 4 333–4
 Organization, health of necessary for happiness, 3 134–9, 307
 Osgood, Mr, and public meeting concerning true religion, 2 186
 Otway, Sir Robert, 4 292
 Owen, Anne Caroline (Owen's daughter), 4 123
 Owen, Anne (nee Williams, Owen's mother), 4 51–2
 Owen, Anne (Owen's sister), 4 52
 marriage to Thomas Davies, 4 69
 Owen, Caroline (nee Dale, Owen's wife), 1 13; 4 203
 courtship by Owen, 4 98–107
 family connections, 4 134–5
 marriage to Owen, xvii
 religious beliefs, xxii
 Owen, David Dale (Owen's son), 4 123
 Owen, Jane Dale (Owen's daughter), 4 123
 Owen, John (Owen's brother), 4 52, 4 55
 Owen, Mary (Owen's daughter), 4 123
 Owen, Matthew (Owen's brother), 4 52
 Owen, Richard (Owen's brother), 4 52
 Owen, Richard (Owen's son), 4 123
 Owen, Robert, 1 1n.
 at New Lanark *see* New Lanark
 books
 reception of in United States, 4 256–7
 suppression of by religious opponents, 4 255–6, 257, 273
 career
 apprenticed to James McGuffog, xvii; 4 63–9
 birth and family, 4 51–2
 as Drinkwater's mill manager, 4 78–87, 91, 93
 early success in cotton industry, xvi–xviii
 employment in neighbours' shop, 4 59–60
 with Flint and Palmer (haberdashers), 4 69–71
 forms new partnership in New Lanark, 4 138–41
 forms new partnership of sympathisers (1813–14), 4 165
 with John Satterfield, 4 71–4
 as judge of cotton quality, 4 84
 management of Drinkwater's Cheshire factory, 4 91
 management of Manchester factory, 4 13
 methods for improving performance in workplace, xix
 offered partnership by Drinkwater, 4 83
 partnership with John Jones, 4 73–4
 refuses partnership offer from Samuel Marsland, 4 94
 reputation as first fine cotton spinner in world, 4 86, 167
 sets up Chorlton Twist Company, 4 95–6
 starts own cotton spinning business, 4 75–8
 termination of agreement with Drinkwater, 4 93–5
 character
 anger contrary to principles, xxvi
 athletic abilities, 4 54
 attitude to fame, 1 253

- attitude to political opponents, 1 198
 attitude to wealth, 4 16-17
 childhood interest in religion, 4 24-5,
 54-5
 confidence in truth of principles, 1 123-4;
 4 14, 245-7
 development of character, 4 30-1
 lack of social graces, 4 82-3, 85, 100-1,
 200
 paternalistic style of management, xli-xlii,
 liii
 personal ambitions, 1 192
 as prophet, xxx-xxxii
 and public speaking, 4 178
 wish to continue work despite advancing
 age, 4 7-8
 and education *see* Education; Infant schools
 friendships
 with Bishop of Durham, 4 176
 with Bishop of St Davids, 4 176
 with David Dale, 4 107, 123-5, 133-4
 with Duke of Kent, 4 247-9
 with fellow cotton-manufacturers, 4 267
 with Henry Bathurst, Bishop of Norwich,
 4 176
 influential friends, xxxiii
 with John Dalton, 4 87-8, 90
 with John Quincey Adams, 4 304-6
 with Lieutenant General Sir Thomas
 Brown, 4 166
 with Lord Lauderdale, 4 271-2
 with political economists, 4 157-8, 183-4
 with Robert Fulton, 4 117-23
 with Robert Peel, 4 163
 with Sutton (Archbishop of Canterbury),
 4 162-3, 176
 with William Godwin, 4 157
 with William Palmer, 4 71
 with William Winstanley, 4 87-8, 90
 homes
 Braxfield House, 4 152-3, 189, 249
 Chorlton Hall, 4 100-1
 Greenheys, 4 101-2, 108-9
 journals
The Mirror of Truth, 1 231n.; 2 297n.
Millennial Gazette, 4 12, 331
The New Harmony Gazette, 2 38n.
 of visit to Highlands (1802), 4 128
 management of New Lanark *see* under New
 Lanark
 personal life
 childhood and early education, xv-xvi
 children, 4 123, 203
 correction by parents, 4 61
 courtship of Caroline Dale, 4 98-107
 dancing lessons, 4 54, 60
 death, xli-xlvii
 diet, 4 102
 early history, 1 172-3
 education of sisters-in-law, 4 152-3
 experience of hunting, 4 95-6
 leaves home for London, aged ten, 4 60-
 3
 leaves for United States (1824), 4 209
 loss of religious faith, 4 67
 marriage to Caroline Dale, xvii; 4 107-8
 near-drowning, 4 59
 presented to Queen Victoria (1839),
 xlii
 scalded as child, 4 52-3
 shyness, 4 100-1
 popularity
 at New Lanark, 4 146, 149-51
 in France, 4 224-5, 318
 reception of early views, 4 162-3
 sacrifice of, 2 215, 243-5, 296
 popularity of, 2 269-70; 4 116, 212, 215
 propagation of views, 4 317, 328, 332-3
 accused of insanity in opinions, 1 138
 actions if Prime Minister, 2 215-22
 address to electors of Britain, 2 223
 address to meeting of Scottish
 manufacturers (1815), 4 168-9
 at dinner for Joseph Lancaster (1812), 4
 161
 attacked in Malthus's *Essay on Population*,
 xxxii
 on character formation, xlviii
 on child labour, 4 168
 City of London Tavern meetings, 4 209-
 17
 and co-operative societies, xxxviii
 commitment of time and money to Plan,
 1 191-2
 and committee on distress, 4 174-88
 on committee to investigate
 unemployment and poverty after war, 4
 176-7
 condemnation of, 3 390
 costs of, 4 296
 declaration of mental independence
 (1826), 2 48-55
 depiction of views as visionary and
 impracticable, 2 183-4
 development of thought, xlvii; 4 30-1
 discussions with Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
 4 88
 early habits of reflection, 4 53-4
 early influences on, 1 133
 early reading, 4 24-5, 53-4, 300-1
 enemies working against, 1 171-2
 founds British and Foreign Philanthropic
 Society, xxxv
 fragmentary nature of reputation, lix

- Owen, Robert – *continued*
- growing stress on evils of manufacturing system, xxiii
 - influence of Godwin on, xxxin., xxiii
 - influence of, lix–lx
 - invited to join Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, xvii
 - judgement of outside world on, 1 139
 - and labour exchanges, xl–xli
 - on marriage *see* Marriage
 - meets foreign ambassadors (1816), 4 188
 - not always understood by friends and relatives, 4 16
 - opposition to laissez-faire doctrine, xv
 - opposition to present religion, 2 177
 - proposal of new social system to United States government, 2 41–2
 - public denunciation of religion, 4 243–5
 - public meetings, 2 200–1
 - public reaction to, 2 165, 269–70; 4 36
 - public renunciation of old system of world, 2 224–31
 - qualifications for, 2 82–3, 413–15
 - radical opposition to, xxviii–xxix
 - reception of, 2 83–4
 - religious opposition to, 4 245–7, 255–6, 326
 - Report to the Committee of the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor*, 2 135–7; 4 186, 209
 - reputation as reformer, 4 185, 187
 - in Scottish Highlands, 4 129
 - sending out of newspapers, 4 210–12, 244
 - sends copies of *Essays* to sovereigns of Europe, 4 165
 - social critique of radicalism, xxxix
 - stands for Parliament, 4 281–2, 285–6, 292
 - submission of views to British Cabinet (1830), 2 125–6
 - Sunday lectures, 4 334
 - as trade union leader, xli
 - on true religion, 1 232
 - and United States constitution, 3 244
 - and utilitarianism, xx
 - and Utopian tradition, xxii
 - spiritualism
 - communication with Benjamin Franklin, 4 254
 - communication with Duke of Kent, 4 248, 253–5, 284–5
 - communication with Thomas Jefferson, 4 254
 - conversion to, xlvi; 4 11n., 248
 - defence of, 4 253–4
 - spiritual ‘communications’, 4 38–46
 - travels
 - xlii
 - Aix-la-Chapelle peace conference (1818), xxxii
 - for education of sisters-in-law, 4 152–3
 - France (1848), xlv–xlvi
 - Ireland (1822–3), xxxv; 4 164–5, 295
 - in Scotland, 4 96–9, 125–9
 - to Europe, 4 220–42, 320–8
 - to Jamaica, xxxvii; 2 110n., 146n.
 - to Mexico (1829), 4 309–16
 - to United States, xlv; 4 316–17, 328–32
 - tour of British cotton mills, 4 167
 - Address to the Meeting in St. Martin’s Hall* (1855), 4 8, 12
 - Autobiography*
 - dialogue with old friend concerning, 4 7–15
 - motive in writing, 4 15–18, 36
 - seen as disagreeable duty, 4 18
 - A Development of the Principles and Plans on which to establish Home-Colonies*, 3 281
 - Manifesto of Robert Owen, 1 142
 - A New View of Society*, xxi–xxii
 - Observations on the Effects of the Manufacturing System*, xxiv
 - ‘Plan for the Permanent Relief of the Working Classes’, 2 43
 - The Revolution in the Mind and Practice of the Human Race*, 2 421n.
 - Six Lectures on Charity*, 2 169n.
 - Two Memorials on Behalf of the Working Class*, 2 196n.
 - Owen, Robert Dale (Owen’s son)
 - at von Fellenberg’s school in Switzerland, 4 233–4
 - becomes U.S. Congressman, 4 305, 328–9
 - and establishment of Smithsonian Institute, 4 329–31
 - and Oregon dispute, 4 331
 - Owen, Robert (Owen’s father), 4 51–2
 - Owen, William Dale (Owen’s son), 4 123
 - at von Fellenberg’s school in Switzerland, 4 233–4
 - Owen, William (Owen’s brother), 4 52
 - Owen stays with in London, 4 61–2, 69
 - Oxford University
 - disadvantageous effects on character, 4 270
 - teaching of, 3 94–5, 109–10
 - Paganism, 2 63
 - Pagans, creation of by early instruction, 2 61

- Pain
 avoidance of inflicting on others under
 rational system of society, 3 190
 instinct to avoid, 3 133
- Pakenham, Mr, British Ambassador in
 Mexico, 4 311-13
- Palmer, Benjamin, as Owen's employer, 4 69
- Palmer, William, friendship with Owen, 4 71
- Parents
 affection for children, 3 318
 disadvantages of, 2 279
 anxiety about health and welfare of children,
 3 137-9
 children powerless to choose, 2 152
 and employment of children, 1 113, 115-16
 failures in bringing up children, 1 56; 4 136
 happiness in well-being of their children, 3
 216
 influence on character, 3 46, 56-7
 instruction in care of children, 2 36, 93
 not best persons for bringing up children, 2
 279, 284-6, 294; 3 318-19
 reaction to infant school at New Lanark, 4
 189, 192
 relationship between, influence on children,
 3 136
 removal of children from influence of, 1 58
- Paris, Treaty of (1814), 4 201n.
- Paris, Treaty of (1856), 4 333
- Parliament
 consideration of Owen's petition, 4 292-3
 consideration of Owen's plans for
 improvements in condition of working
 classes, 4 272-3
 consideration of Owen's views on child
 labour, 169-75
 errors of, 3 256-7
 legislation of, 3 256
 Owen's report to on Poor Law, 1 217
 and Owen's views, 4 280-1
 petition to concerning religion, 2 199-200
 power for evil, 3 257-8
 power for good under rational system of
 society, 3 257-9
- Parson, Charles, Bishop of Peterborough, 4
 157
- Party politics
 as cause of disunion, 1 216
 emanating from false beliefs about human
 nature, 2 125
 error of, 1 310
 influence on individual, 1 176
 irrationality of, 2 310
 and maintenance of government, 3 394-5
 registration of when joining villages, 1 226
- Passivity, of conduct under present system of
 society, 2 96
- Paternalism, of Conservatives, 4 184
- Patriotism, attitude of rational man to, 2 66
- Paul, St, 4 45
- Pauperism
 plan for diminution and future prevention
 of, 2 247-9
 reforms thought to increase, 1 186-7
- Peace of mind, and early training of children, 1
 38
- Peasants, relationship with landed classes, 1
 114
- Peel, Sir Robert (junior), 4 163, 213, 256,
 269-70, 286
 and Bullion Committee, 4 288
 youthful mistakes, 4 270
- Peel, Sir Robert (senior)
 and Factory Act, xvi, xxv; 1 241; 4 157n.,
 169-71, 175, 180-1, 246, 256, 269-70,
 319
 Owen's friendship with, 4 163
- Percival, Dr Thomas, and Manchester Literary
 and Philosophical Society, 4 87, 89
- Perfection, business of life to strive towards, 3
 62-3
- Performance, improvement of, Owen's
 methods for, xix
- Persia, laws of, 1 82
- Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich
 educational theories, 4 231-2
 Owen's visit to, 4 231-2
- Philanthropist, The*, 2 136n.
- Philanthropy, inspired by right knowledge of
 human nature, 2 66
- Philips, Sir George, opposition to Owen's
 proposals on child labour in mills, 4 175
- Philosophers, discovery of elements of science
 of human nature, 3 121-2
- Phrenology, and categorisation of mind, 3
 236n.
- Physical feelings, conflict with mental feelings,
 3 58
- Physical powers, full development of in new
 moral world, 2 229-30
- Physical training, for injurious purposes, 3 156
- Physicians *see* Medical profession
- Physiology, of man, 3 79
- Pictet de Rochemont, Professor, 4 226
- Pictet-Turretini, Marc-Auguste, 4 241-2
 character, 4 223
 and Owen's visit to Europe, 4 220-34
 visit to New Lanark, 4 220
- Pitt, William, Owen's letter to concerning
 Sabbath observance, 4 67-8
- Pity, higher classes deserving, 1 281-2
- Place, Francis, 4 157, 165, 177, 268, 296
 friendship with Bentham, 4 148-9
 opposition to Owen, 1 213n.

- Plato, 1 285; 3 45, 121; 4 45
- Playgrounds, at New Lanark, 1 17, 57, 64, 337
- Plough cultivation, inferior to Spade cultivation, 1 294–9
- Poinsett, Joel Roberts, American Minister in Mexico, 4 306–7, 311–12
- Police, in model communities, 2 86–7
- Political change, propositions demonstrating necessity of, 2 239–40
- Political economists
 address to (1830), 2 150–2
 criticism of, xxvi
 failings of, 2 108–9, 183–5, 234–5; 4 77–9, 158, 177, 183–4
 formation of new school of, 4 183
 and free trade, xxix
 ignorance of human nature, 1 351–2; 3 99
 inexperienced in realities of life, 2 281
 opposition to Owen, 4 215, 217
 Owen's discussions with, 4 157–8
 seeing accumulation of wealth as purpose of society, 1 350–2
 some support for Owen, xxxiii
 and suffering of poor, 4 182
 and Whigs, 4 182
- Political economy, principles of, 1 265
- Political institutions, evil consequences of, 3 401–4
- Political parties, table of, 1 223–5
- Politics
 combinations of views, xxvii
 eventually to be superseded, lvii–lviii
- Polygamy, 2 304–6
- Poor
 maintenance at public expense, 1 149
 'nationalisation' of, 1 153, 168
- Poor laws, 2 218, 282; 3 387
 absurdity of, 3 314
 Charles Weston's proposals for reform, xxii
 costs of, 3 314n.
 House of Commons Committee on, Owen's report to, 1 143–55; 4 186–7, 209–10
 Poor Law Amendment Act (1834), 2 282, 3 314n.; 4 142n.
 Surges-Bourne's committee on, 4 185–7
- Poor relief
 costs of, 1 82n.
 evils of, 1 81–3
 failures of current system, 1 152
 influence of Malthus on ideas of, xxix
 Owen's criticism of current policies, xxix–xxx
 reforms proposed, 1 82–3
- Poor-relief, immediate measures for, 1 233–6
- Poor's rates, 1 21
- Popularity, based on ignorance of others, 1 204
- Population
 ability of land to support, 2 358–61, 367; 3 400
 in Britain and Ireland, 3 251
 of communities, optimum size of, 2 69, 84–5; 3 284–5
 fears of over-population, lv–lvi; 1 196, 299; 4 200
 growth of
 ability to sustain, 1 165–6, 288; 2 67–8; 3 313–14
 moral restraints on, 1 344
 and power of labour, 1 258–61
- Population Act (1811), 1 33, 111
- Population size
 in communities for amelioration of the poor, 1 147
 communities meaning increase in unpopulous areas, 1 154–5
- Porter, Anna Maria, 4 267
- Porter, G.R., *The Progress of the Nation in Its Various Social and Economic Relations*, 2 356, 366
- Pot-houses, 1 79–81, 105, 114, 185
 controls demanded on, xxi–xxii
- Potteries, union of master manufacturers, 2 233–4
- Poverty
 as cause of inferior and malformed children, 3 137
 circumstances of, 3 285
 as consequence of ignorance, 1 54; 2 128, 218; 3 222, 304
 in countries with greatest potential for wealth, 3 137
 current laws regarding, 1 81–3
 demoralising effects of, 1 185
 disappearance under rational system, 2 218–20; 3 123, 137, 250, 304
 distinction from wealth, abandonment of in preparation for Millennium, 2 352
 effect of family size on, 2 281
 extent of in British cities, 2 365
 fear of, 2 111, 129–30, 164; 3 387
 increase of in Britain, 2 129–30, 133
 and monetary system, 2 111
 in most advanced states, 1 333–4
 provision of employment to alleviate, 2 256
 remedy for, 3 387
- Power
 knowledge as, 2 161
 machinery exceeding manual power, 4 180–1
 of truth, 2 197
 and wealth, 2 164, 3 282

- Prejudice
deliberate disturbance of concerning
marriage, 2 265
destroyed by truth, 2 371; 3 296-7
instilled into children by current system of
education, 3 138
overcome by knowledge and charity, 3 391-
2
power over men's thinking, 3 296
removal by unions of opposite varieties of
character, 3 73
- Presbyterians, religious divisions among, 3 235
- Preston, Matthew, 1 1n.
- Prevention
of disease, 2 349-50, 407
superiority of over punishment, 4 191
- Prevost, Albertine, 4 226-7
- Pride
absent from rational state of society, 3 207
individual differences no justification for, 3
36
- Priesthood
among chief institutions of evil, 2 263
artificial laws of, 2 302-3
belief in divine truth, 3 172
belief in inherent wickedness of man, 3 172
call for compassion for, 3 230
decrees of resulting in prostitution, 2 268
desire for control of education, 4 22
destructive of happiness, 3 185-6
enforcement of current marriage system, 2
266
evils resulting from, 2 353, 362; 3 171-5,
229-30
and fundamental errors in which evil
originates, 2 330-2
invention of mysteries, 2 302-3
and liberty of expression, 3 179-80
maintenance of forced associations, 3 173-
4
misdirection by, 4 159
and new discoveries and ideas, 3 71-2
power to deceive, 2 316
regulation of chastity, 2 268-9, 292-3
and sexual ignorance, 2 290
unnecessary under rational system of society,
2 159
warning against injury to, 3 182
and waste of productive power, 3 249
see also Religion
- Printing press, 1 309
technical advances in, 1 336
- Prisons
Elizabeth Fry's work in Newgate, 1 169-71
unnecessary in new moral world, 2 231
- Private property
attitude to in New Lanark, 4 110
as cause of selfishness, 3 326-7
disappearance of under rational system of
society, 2 208; 3 14, 328-9, 356
effect on character, 3 327
evil consequences of, xlix; 2 51-2, 63
origin of, 2 99
and poverty, 3 327
in transitional state of society, 2 373-4
- Privilege
establishment of, 1 279
individual
absent from new moral world, 3 16
differences no justification for, 3 36
of members of model communities, 2 44-6,
88
pursuit of, 2 310
rights to, 3 337-8
- Production
and consumption, 1 335, 344, 346-7
costs of, methods of increasing, 3 102
importance to society, 3 248
improvement in quality in new moral world,
2 234
limits on, and rights of humanity, 2 256-7
men seen as implements of, 1 350
powers of, 3 4-5
derived from science, 3 364
and hours of work, 2 111-12
increase in, 1 288-9; 2 109, 111-12, 164,
358, 366-7; 3 252
and inequality, 2 125-6
possible increase of, 3 364
and scientific advances, 2 127-8
union of feeling and action necessary to
direct, 2 130-1
science of, 3 247-8
wasteful use of, 3 249
- Professions
absent in new state of society, 3 99
address to members of, 2 158-61
based on error, 3 225
causing unhappiness, 4 323-4
ceasing of necessity for, 2 348-9
civil, oppressive nature of, 3 252-3
as demoralizers of humanity, 3 253
disappearance under rational system of
society, 2 159; 3 96, 261, 285, 334-5,
376
as distributors of wealth, 3 260
evils brought about by, 2 263, 362-3
legal, 3 154-5
medical, 3 155-6
naval and military, 3 156-7, 253
Quaker opposition to, li
religious, 3 154-5
and waste of wealth, 3 252-3
- Profit motive, 1 243-4

- Profit motive – *continued*
 abandonment of in preparation for Millennium, 3 351
 absent from new moral world, 3 15–16
 for agriculturists and manufacturers, 1 274–5; 2 147
 and distribution of wealth, 3 100–2
 effect on character, 3 254, 375; 4 141
 and employment of children, 1 237–8
 evils brought about by, 2 363–4
 not bringing out superior faculties of human nature, 2 140–1
 system based on error, 3 225
- Profit-sharing, not advocated at New Lanark, xviii
- Promiscuity
 in current society, 2 299
 and current system of marriage, 2 295–6, 311–12
- Property
 end of saleable value under rational system of society, 3 314
 as marker for divisions of classes of workers in villages, 1 217–19
 taxation of, 2 223, 253
see also Private property
- Prostitution, 3 151, 174
 consequence of current marriage laws, lv; 2 265–6; 3 325
 created by absence of affection, 2 293
 degradation caused by, 2 293, 295
 disappearance of under rational system of society, 3 152
 extent of, 2 293, 295, 299
 in London, 2 295n.
 and private property, 3 327
 resulting from decrees of priesthood, 2 268
- Providence, nature of, 3 131
- Prussia, educational reform in, 4 188
- Pryce, Sir John Powell, Bart., 4 52
- Public meetings
 and criticism of Owen, 1 172–3
 for enlightening public, 2 200–1
- Public opinion
 in Britain, 2 137
 and desire for amusement, 4 12, 17
 and findings on effects of education, 1 245
 formation of by beneficial changes in system of British Empire, 2 242–4
 and open discussion of marriage, 2 263–5, 308
 and Owen's development of labour exchanges, xl–xli
 persuasion to rationality, 2 216–17
 reaction to new truths, 4 13
 and support for Owen, xxxii; 1 214, 278
 to those professing disbelief in religion, 2 173–4
 in United States, xxxvi
 work of Rational Society to influence, 2 335
- Puebla, Bishop of (Antonio Perez Martinez), 4 307, 312–13
- Punishment, 1 185
 absent from infant school in New Lanark, 4 189, 193–4
 for beliefs, 2 9, 185–6, 191–2, 356; 3 28, 31
 and civil and religious liberty, 3 181
 as consequence of ignorance, 1 54, 205
 of crimes of poor, 1 33
 current society dependent on system of, 2 21
 disappearance under rational system of society, 1 326–9; 2 208; 3 15, 330–2, 357, 376; 4 32
 errors of system being realised, 3 330–1
 evils of, 1 79
 exclusion of in education, 1 319
 and ignorance, 1 134
 ineffectiveness of, 4 33–4, 61
 irrationality of, 2 74
 places of, unnecessary in new moral world, 2 231
 relation to earliest formation of character, 4 230–1
 right to administer, 1 35
 superseded by system for prevention of evil, 3 65
 and theft in New Lanark, 4 190
- Pusey, Edward, and Anglican revival, 3 258
- Quakers, 1 8, 156, 169–70
 establish infant school in Spitalfields, 4 207–8
 and ideas for remodelling of society, xlix
 influence on New Lanark, xx–xxi, 2 158; 4 147
 influence on Owen's thought, li, lviii
 membership of Joseph Lancaster, 4 161
 objections to music, dancing and military discipline, 4 195–6, 291
 and public dinners, 4 161
 and self-righteousness, lviii
 showing effect of external circumstances on character, 3 27
 and social order, lviii
- Qualities, development of in rational state of society, 3 171
- Quality, deterioration of by producers, 3 101
- Queenwood (Harmony Hall) community, Hampshire
 lavish construction of, xlv–xlv, lvii; 4 331, 334–5

- Radicalism, 1 310
 among working class, xli-xlii
 criticism of Owen, lv-lvi
 disagreement with Owen, xxviii-xxix, lv-lvi; 4 268
 Owen's social critique of, xxxix
 support for Owen, xxxiii
- Railways, 3 281
- Ralahine, Ireland, co-operative farm, xlii
- Rapp, George, and Harmonites, 2 13n.
- Rappites, xlix
- Rational being, comparison with uneducated and neglected, 3 315-16
- Rational Quarterly Review, The*, and Owen's spiritual 'communications', 4 38n.
- Rational religion, 2 20-1
 principles of, 2 322-4
- Rational Society
 aims, 2 335
 construction of 'Halls of Science', xliii
 establishment of, xliii; 2 334
 marriages performed, xliii
 membership, xlii
 and New Moral World newspaper, xlii
 organisation of, xliii
 propaganda work, xliii
 and Queenwood community, Hampshire, xliv-xlv; 4 333, 336-7
 and radicalism, lvi
 religious opposition to, xliii-xliv
 social function, xliii
- Rational system of society
 compared to current system, 2 15-16, 21, 403-7; 3 388-9
 fundamental facts on which founded, 2 202-3
 introduction of by government, 3 382-9
 opposed to interests of class, sects and parties, 2 84
 outline of, 2 202-11
 preliminary charter of (1843), 2 416-18
 principles incompatible with doctrine of free will, 2 81-2
 seven point charter (1841), 2 416n.
 'Transition Charter', 2 416n.
- Rationality
 and attitude to death, 3 178-9
 and classification of society, 3 78
 current system of marriage incompatible with, 2 296-301
 and desire to spread happiness, 3 191
 difficulties in process of achieving, 3 341
 formation of in character, 1 175
 and ideas of accountability, 3 42
 means of attaining, 2 193-4
 not yet fully seen, 3 68
 and obedience, 1 136
 opposed to war, 1 72
 and prevention of crime, 1 52
 as result of training, 1 54
 and securing happiness of others, 3 168-9
 and self-knowledge, 3 157-9
 teaching to children, 1 57
 in treatment of workforce, 1 50-1
 and truth, 2 289; 3 48-50
- Rawson, Rawson W., statistical research, 2 356
- Reading
 and knowledge, 2 4-5
 teaching of, 1 64, 1 86
- Reardon, Richard, Archbishop of Canterbury, 2 135
 address to on the union of churches and schools, 1 245-9
- Reason
 cultivation from infancy, 1 70
 effects of failure, 1 71
 need for judicious application of, 1 99-100
 and peaceful revolution, 3 8
 productive of best results, 2 74
 removing causes of evil, 1 79-80
 use of to overcome error, 1 98-9
- Recreation
 in model communities, 1 149; 2 93-4
 in pre-industrial age, 1 114
 preferable to restraint, 1 60
 provision for at New Lanark, 1 60, 125
 work necessary in communities seen as, xxxv
- Red Socialists, 4 28
- Reform
 attitudes to, 3 4
 beneficial to all, 3 4
 dangers of lack of preparation, 1 196-7
 general agreement for, 3 8, 11
 gradual nature of necessary, 1 135, 202-3, 215-16, 231, 242, 255, 264-5; 2 14-15
 must start with lowest levels of society, 1 335
 necessity for intermediate arrangements, 1 310
 not necessitating change in national institutions, 1 209
 political
 not supported by Owen, xxxix, liii
 relationship to mental liberty, liii
 tension with social reform, xxxix
 useless without fundamental change in principle and practice, 4 129-30
- Reform Act (1832), xl-xli, liii
- Regulations, for marriage and divorce in new moral world, 2 320-1
- Reid, Andrew, 1 1n.
- Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor, Committee of the Association for, Owen's Report to, further development, 1 156-73

- Religion
- address to religious of every denomination, 2 141–3
 - advantages of, and four classes of religious belief, 2 176, 182–3
 - based on actions not words, 3 209–11
 - based on error, 3 225
 - belief in rightness of own, 1 139–40
 - belief that man is bad by nature, 3 172
 - belief in unchanging laws of universe, 2 170–1, 173–4
 - as cause of insanity, 2 177; 3 136–7
 - as cause of war, 3 237
 - causes of, 2 63
 - characteristics of true religion, 3 231–2
 - and charity, 1 228–9, 2 251
 - combinations of views, xxviii
 - and common sense, 1 185
 - competition between different religions, 3 112
 - conscientious believers in, 2 170, 172
 - and contemplation of Nature, 3 228–31
 - control of government and education, 2 192–6
 - criticism of teachers of, xxx
 - declared disbelief in, 2 170–3, 296
 - definition of current and past nature of, 2 176–7
 - detrimental influence upon society, 3 171–5
 - and disease, 2 349
 - disputes in name of, 3 158–9
 - divisions caused by, 3 51–2, 196; 4 154–5
 - efforts to convert Owen to, 4 259–60
 - errors of responsible for unhappiness of man, 1 207–8
 - evangelical movement, xxi
 - stress of fallen nature of man, xlvi
 - evil consequences of, xxxii; 2 51–2, 181–2; 3 154–5, 196–7, 235, 237–8, 273–6, 400–1; 4 155–6, 260
 - exclusion, 1 54
 - and external cause of all existences, 3 198–202
 - and formation of character, xxxii
 - formation of, 3 158
 - founded on falsehood, 2 142–3, 191–2; 3 111–12; 4 260–3
 - four classes of character with regard to, 2 170–4
 - and freedom of thought, 2 223; 3 312, 356
 - and hypocrisy *see* Hypocrisy
 - incompatible with actions in current state of society, 3 219
 - influence of birthplace on, 2 60–2
 - influence over women, 2 414
 - and insanity, 2 195; 3 400–1
 - and intolerance, 1 207–8
 - and knowledge of causes of good and evil, 3 209–10
 - as mystery, 3 93, 154
 - natural, practice of, 3 196
 - of nature, 2 170, 175–6, 179–83, 186–7; 3 196; 4 264–5
 - creed and duties, 2 206
 - power to unite human race, 3 196–7
 - public adoption of, 2 225–6
 - nature of divinity from which it emanates, 2 192
 - as obstacle to all progress, 4 213, 215–16
 - opposition to nature's law, 3 75
 - Owen's public denunciation of, 4 215–17
 - Owen's use of language of, xxx–xxxiii
 - place of in new system of society, 2 169
 - and practicality, 3 231–4
 - professed disbelief in, public reaction to, 2 173–5, 178–9
 - provision for observance at New Lanark, 1 66–8
 - and punishment for beliefs, 2 185
 - rational, 2 20–1
 - principles of, 2 322–4
 - and promotion of happiness of all, 3 232–7
 - and Scottish character, 4 114
 - sectarian influences at New Lanark, 1 45, 48–9
 - sectarianism, 1 67–8, 87–8, 99, 176, 207–8; 3 369–70
 - supported as social necessity, 2 170–1
 - table of various sects and parties, 1 223–5
 - teaching of by British government, 2 297–9
 - teaching to children by rote, 1 87–8
 - testing of belief, 1 80
 - toleration of difference, 1 19, 49
 - and truth, 2 180–1, 244–5; 3 111–14, 217
 - was resulting from, 3 310
 - see also* Belief; Christianity; Priesthood
- Religious Tract Society, pamphlets criticising Owen, 2 318n.
- Reserve, disappearance of under rational system of society, 3 290–1, 293
- Responsibility for actions of infants, 2 59
- period of life where this applies, 2 59–60
- Responsibility for actions *see also* Irresponsibility
- Retail trade
- and arrangements at New Lanark, 4 189
 - disappearance of under rational system of society, 2 139–41; 3 103, 261–2, 293, 335
 - and distribution of wealth, 2 140

- duties of assistants, 4 70-1
 honesty in, 4 71-2
 skills of buyer, 4 72
 treatment of customers, 4 70-1
- Retail traders, address to, 2 139-41
- Revenge, disappearance of under rational system of society, 3 207, 293, 323
- Revenue
 based on labour, 1 81-2, 94
 collection of under new establishments, 1 326
- Revolution
 caused by social evils, 2 107
 evil consequences of, 1 248; 2 121; 3 258-9
 only alternative to voluntary conversion to socialism, 1
- Reward
 for beliefs, 3 356
 current society dependent on system of, 2 21
 disappearance under rational system of society, 1 326-9; 2 208; 3 330-2, 357
 irrationality of, 2 74
 for peaceful occupations, 3 269
 rights to, 3 337-8
 for war heroes, 3 269
- Ricardo, David, xxix; 2 108n.; 3 99n.; 4 157n., 177n., 183, 268
 accuses Owen of opposing all machinery, xxv
- Richardson, Samuel, 4 53
- Riddell, John Buchanan, 9th Baronet, 4 282
- Rights
 charter of (1834) rights of humanity, 2 253-8
 of members of model communities, 2 88
- Road-making, as source of employment, 1 97
- Roads
 maintenance of, 3 176
 Owen's planned improvements, 1 19-20
- Rocafuesti, Vicente, urges Owen to introduce views into Mexico, 4 306-7
- Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, xlv
- Rochevoucauld, Francois-Alexandre-Frederic, duc de la, cotton spinning manufactory, 4 224
- Rollin, Charles, *The Ancient History*, 4 53
- Romans, exercise of physical and mental powers, 3 62
- Roscoe, William, 4 267
- Rothschild, Hannah, 4 266
- Rothschild, Nathan, 4 266
- Rowcroft, Thomas, 4 216n.
 and philanthropic enterprises, 1 195-6
- Roy, Ram Mohun, religious discussions with Owen, 4 156
- Royal Family
 interest in Owen's views, 4 265-6
 obstinacy of, 4 251
- Royal Lancastrian Society, 4 137n.
- Rules and regulations
 for home colonies, 2 395-401
 for model communities, 2 25, 31-7, 82, 84-95
- Rush, Richard, (United States Ambassador), 4 274, 276-7, 327-8
- Ruskin, John, influence of Owen on, lix
- Russell, Lord John, 4 325, 327
- Russell, Lord William, Ambassador to Berlin, 4 323, 325
- Ryder, Dudley, 1st Earl of Harrowby, 4 266
- Ryder, Henry, 4 266
- Sabbath observance
 errors in, 1 59-60
 Owen's letter to Pitt concerning, 4 67-8
- St Giles, circumstances of, 3 50, 212
- Saint-Simon, Henri de, on industrial meritocracy, lii
- Salt, Titus, building of Saltoun (industrial village), 4 13n.
- Santa Anna, General Antonio Lopez de, 4 308-9, 313-14
- Satterfield, John, employment of Owen, 1 172; 4 71-4
- Satterfield, Joshua, 4 72-3
- Savages
 Christian treatment of, 3 259
 showing effect of original constitution on character, 3 27
- Scepticism, 2 170-1, 173
- Schools
 arrangements for, 1 317-18
 churches used as, 1 247-8
 infant *see* Infant schools
 in Newgate Prison, 1 169-70
 run by Central Council of the Church for Religious Education, 1 245
see also Education
- Science
 advances in
 and end of individualism, 3 314
 and future creation of wealth, 3 256
 and increased production, 2 127-8; 3 378-9
 and possibilities of happiness, 2 164
 should be used to serve man, 4 19-20
 advantages to be brought about by, 3 313
 application of under rational system of society, 1 345-6; 2 368-70
 of distribution, 3 247
 of effect of circumstances on human nature, 2 68, 3 73-4, 263-5

- Science – *continued*
 encouragement of, 1 344
 and formation of nucleus of society, 3 279–80
 of forming character, 2 119; 3 247
 of government, 3 247
 of human nature, 2 371; 3 23–5, 120–2
 of legislation, 3 107
 misdirection of, 3 157
 and production of wealth, 3 14, 247–8
 and rule of Nature, 1 230
 of society, 2 120–2, 205–6, 348, 371
 elements of, 3 243–8
 of surroundings, 4 23
 of training and placing children to best advantage, 2 119
 training of young people in, 3 290
 uses of in first Villages, 1 235
- Scotland
 dislike of English, 1 47
 Free Church, 3 258
 Owen's travels in, 4 96–9
 Sabbath observance, 1 59
- Scott, Sir Walter, 4 126
- Secrecy, disappearance of under rational system of society, 3 189, 290–1, 293
- Sectarianism, 1 67–8, 99, 176; 235, 369–70
 as cause of disunion, 1 216
 and education of children, 1 87–8
 emanating from false beliefs about human nature, 2 125
 evil effects of, 1 131
- Sects
 registration of when joining villages, 1 226
 table of, 1 223–5
- Secularism, lx
- Security
 for borrowing to build model communities, 2 25–6
 as requirement of happiness, 3 336
- Self, happiness of and happiness of community, 1 36
- Self-importance, habit of in aristocracy, 2 163
- Self-interest, and doctrine of free will, 2 99
- Self-knowledge
 as condition for preserving organization in best state of health, 3 157–9
 ignorance of, 3 162
 and philanthropy, 2 66
 under rational system of society, 3 293
- Self-sufficiency, efforts at in model communities, 2 47
- Selfishness
 disappearance in new moral world, 1 324; 3 36
 and ignorance, 3 397
 and private property, 3 326–7
 produced by single-family system, 2 284–5
 and profit motive, 3 375
 promoted by competition, xlix
 and wish for maintenance of ignorance, 3 384
- Seneca, influence on Owen, xvi; 4 65
- Senses
 and consciousness, 3 29–30
 over-stimulation of, 3 60
- Serres, Olivia (Princess Olive), 4 251–2
- Servants, influence on development of children's characters, 1 66
- Sexes, just rights of, 2 257–8
- Sexual intercourse, as natural propensity of human nature, 3 148–53
- Shakers, xlix; 2 12–13, 394; 4 263n.
 principles of, 4 298
- Shakespeare, William, 3 45
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe, Queen Mab, xliv; 2 318n.
- Sherwin, W. T., opposition to Owen, xxix; 4 215n.
- Sickness, conditions in manufacturing towns contrasted with proposed villages, 1 181
- Sidmouth, 1st Viscount (Henry Addington), 1 170, 179; 4 163–5
 attempts to discredit Owen, 4 173–4
- Sidmouth, Lady, visit to New Lanark, 4 203–4
- Silver
 intrinsic value of, 3 247, 259
 as means of distributing wealth, 3 104
 as standard of value, xxxiv; 1 290–1; 2 144
- Simplicity, characteristic of new state of society, 3 97
- Simpson, John, partnership with Richard Arkwright, 4 77–8
- Simpson, William
 as member of Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, 4 89
Observations on Cold Bathing, 4 89n.
- Sin, introduction of by attempts to regulate instincts, 3 150
- Sincerity
 effect of manufacturing system on, 1 113
 and mental liberty, 2 11
 replacing deception under rational system of society, 2 150
- Singing, provision for at New Lanark, 1 125
- Sismondi, Jean-Charles-Léonard Simonde de, 4 228
- Slavery, 1 34, 105
 abolition of in Mexico, 2 122
 campaign to abolish, 3 258
 as classification of society, 3 70

- conditions of working class like those of, 2
146; 4 167
- ending of, in interests of governments, 3 378
- found everywhere in existing society, 3 70
- impossible in rational state of society, 4 175
- of one generation to another, 3 56
- in United States, 2 110, 146
- in West Indies, 2 110, 146
- of women, 2 52; 3 324
- Sleep and rest, as natural propensity of human nature, 3 148
- Sloane, David, 4 63
- asks forgiveness, 4 66
- jealousy of Owen, 4 65-6
- Smith, Adam, *Wealth of Nations*, xxxiv; 1
302n.; 2 78n., 107-9, 230n., 393n., 3
147n.; 4 20n.
- Smith, Benjamin, and attempt to found infant school in London, 4 196
- Smith, James (mill manager and philanthropist), 4 87
- Smith, John Abel, 4 266
- and establishment of infant schools, 2 29; 4
196
- Smithson, James, 4 329
- Smithsonian Institute, establishment of, 4
329-31
- Socialism
- Christian, lix
- and concept of labour as foundation of all value, xxxiv
- first use of term, xviii
- impossible before age of manufacturing, xlix
- Red Socialists, 4 28
- Report to the County of Lanark* seen as marking beginnings of, xxxiv-xxxv
- Sociality
- as enjoyment, 1 285-6
- as utility, 1 286
- Society
- aims of organization under rational system, 3
306
- chaos of current system, 2 293-4; 3 104,
119, 271-2, 278
- classification of, 3 77-8
- and contending interests, 3 70
- tyrants and slaves, 3 70
- under rational system, 3 15, 285-97, 306-
7
- communities not interfering with existing institutions of, 1 155
- constituents of rationality, 3 281-2
- detrimental influence of religion upon, 3
171-5
- effect of current system of marriage on, 2
286-91
- elements composing, 3 246
- emanating from fundamental errors, 3 3,
13
- enjoyment of, as condition for happiness, 3
307
- existing classifications of, 4 19
- extent of re-organization necessary, 3 280
- failings of under current system, 3 129
- first principles of, 1 134-5
- knowledge of as condition of happiness, 3
157-9
- in more perfectible state, 1 137
- need for remodelling of, xlvi-xlix
- nucleus, requirements for, 3 281-2
- reorganisation of into rational system, 3
247
- responsible for formation of character, 4 30-
1
- science of, 2 205-6, 348, 371; 3 83
- elements of, 3 243-8
- transitional stage of, adjustment of differences during, 3 352-4
- transitional state of, 2 373-4
- understanding of in new moral world, 3 97-8
- Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes, 3 365n.
- Society for Promoting National Regeneration, 2 233
- and hours of work, xli
- Socrates, 3 45; 4 45
- Solar system, principles of, 3 70-1
- Southey, Robert, sympathy for Owen's views, xxxii
- Spade cultivation, xxxv; 1 337, 345
- attitudes of political economists to, 1 300-1
- merits over plough, 1 294-9
- optimum size of associations for, 1 304, 306
- outline system of, 1 299-301
- Spade cultivation *see also* Agriculture
- Sparta, government of, 3 107
- Spear, John Murray, spiritual communications to Owen, 4 39-46
- Spear, Miss, and Owen's courtship of Caroline Dale, 4 98-100, 102-3
- Spear, Robert (cotton merchant), 4 84, 98
- Spence, Thomas, 4 283
- Sphynx*, *The* (newspaper), publication of Owen's address to agriculturists, mechanics and manufacturers, 2 105
- Spinning machines, 1 298, 336
- evils resulting from, 1 298-9
- Spiritualism
- defence of, 4 253-5, 285
- Owen's conversion to, xlvi; 4 248
- spiritual communication from United States, 4 38-46
- de Stael, Albertine, 4 227-8
- de Stael, Madame, 4 226-7

- Stamford, Lincolnshire, Owen's employment in, 4 63–9
- Stanley, John, accident with molasses, 4 60
- Starvation
in Britain, 3 365
in depression after end of war with France, 4 182
- State, influence of well-ordered population on, 1 82
- State lottery, 1 79, 81
- Statistical research, 2 355–6
on poverty and destitution in Britain, 2 365–6
- Steam engines, 1 297, 309, 311–12, 336
evils resulting from, 1 298–9
- Stephen, Leslie, on Owen's 'essential views', xxii
- Sterne, Laurence, *The Sermons of Mr Yorick*, 4 54
- Steuart, Sir Henry, and *Report to the County of Lanark* (1820), 1 287
- Steuart, Sir James, economic proposals, xxvii–xxviii
- Stewart, , David Dale, 4 154n.
- Stewart, Rev. James Haldane, 4 154
- Stores, for communal wealth, 3 247–8, 262
- Stowell, Lord (Sir William Scott), visit to New Lanark, 4 203–4
- Strutt, Edward, Baron Belper, 4 267
- Strutt, Joseph, 4 227–8, 267
on child labour, xxvi
and Peel's Factory Bill, 4 281
- Stuart, William, Archbishop of Armagh, 4 164, 267
- Sturge, Joseph, and social reform, 3 258
- Subscriptions, opening of, 1 194
- Suffering
caused by irrational system of society, 3 383
causing radical social change, 2 107
knowledge of that of others, 3 167
of lower classes, 3 394
while production increasing, 2 105–6
of women, 2 319, 322; 3 16, 291
- Superabundance *see* Wealth, superabundance of
- Superintendents
duties of, 1 322
qualities of, 1 322–3
- Superior characters, 3 68–9
not yet seen, 3 68
- Supernatural fears
absence of as condition for happiness, 3 307
absence of in new moral world, 3 177–9
- Superstition, 1 36; 3 129
absence of as condition for happiness, 3 134, 307
- absence of in new moral world, 3 177–9
belief in, 3 367
destruction of, 3 367
disappearance of under rational system of society, 3 376
ending of by work of Bible Society, 3 385–6
evil effects of, 2 51–2; 3 235
and forcing of belief, 1 208
freedom from in United States, 2 54–5
and ignorance, 3 201
maintained by current marriage system, 2 266
and religious doctrine, 1 68
and Sabbath observance, 1 59
unfavourable to health in children, 3 136
- Support fund, contributions from wages, 1 49
- Surgeons, necessity for under rational system of society, 2 159–60
- Surges-Bourne, William, and poor law reform, 4 185–7
- Surplus
annual destruction of, 3 247
management of by exchange of goods between communities, 2 72–3
- Sussex, Duke of, 4 274, 277–9
support of Owen, 4 247–8
support for Whigs, 4 270
visits Owen, 4 206
- Swiss National Society of Natural History,
Owen addresses, 4 241–2
- Switzerland, Owen's visit to (1817), 4 225–34
- Talk About Socialism* (pamphlet criticising Owen), 2 318n.
- Tallmadge, Nathaniel Pitcher, and establishment of Smithsonian Institute, 4 329
- Taxation
abolition of non-property taxes, lvii; 2 253–4
effects of reduction, 1 201–2
inequality of, system based on error, 3 226
necessary evil under individualism, 1 209
and pauperism, xxix
of property, 2 223, 253
- Teachers
of babies and young children, 1; 3 114–16
errors of under current system, 3 110
instruction of at New Lanark, 4 192–5, 203
keeping people in ignorance, 3 72
selection and training under rational system of society, 2 66–7; 3 108–9, 114–15, 165–6
- Telegraph system, 4 100
as aid to travellers, 3 176
- Temperance, 2 353

- and happiness, 3 60-1
- Temptation, towards drunkenness, 1 80
- Tennyson, Alfred, Lord
 'The Lord of Burleigh', 4 64n.
 'The Miller's Daughter', 4 65
- Testing, of religious belief, 1 80
- Texas
 advantages of situation for model
 government, 2 119
 application for colony to be set up in, 2 117-
 22
- Theft, at New Lanark, 4 110-11, 132, 190
- Theology
 evils arising from, 3 154-5
 inconsistency in, 3 373
 students of, 3 153-4
- Thickens, William (Owen's schoolmaster), 4
 52-3
- Thompson, Benjamin, Count Rumford
 and Munich workhouse, 1 39
*An Account of an Establishment for the Poor in
 Munich*, 1 39n.
- Thompson, Pishey (bookseller), 2 19
- Thompson, William
*An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution
 of Wealth Most Conducive to Human
 Happiness*, xxxviii
 Labour Rewarded, xxxviii-xxxix
- Thornton, Samuel, 4 157, 266
- Thought, liberty of, as condition for happiness,
 2 11; 3 307
- Tilsley, William (draper), 4 62
- Times, The*, 2 134n.
 income of, 4 9
 leading article against system of equality, 4
 9
 opposition to Owen, 4 244
 and Owen's letter concerning benefits of
 Villages of Unity and Mutual Co-
 operation (1817), 1 174n., 182
 support for Owen, 4 209
- Toleration
 assisted by pursuit of common interests, 1
 154
 of difference, 1 42
 essential for success of model communities, 1
 208
 for opinions and defects of others urged, 1
 140-1
 religious, 1 19
- Tools, provision of by members of model
 communities, 2 44
- Torrens, Col. Robert, 4 157, 177n., 183,
 268
 opposition to Owen, 1 213n.
 on poor relief, xxix
- Torrington, Viscount and Viscountess, 4 267
- Towns
 disadvantages of, 3 332
 nature of in new moral world, 2 244
 not conducive to health, 3 145
- Toys, unnecessary in rational system of
 education, 4 230
- Trade
 evil consequences of, 4 29-30
 present system incompatible with rational
 state of society, 2 72, 141
- Trade unions
 address to (1834), 2 232-5
 beginnings of, xli
 Grand National Consolidated Trades'
 Union, xli
 for masters, 2 233-4
 moves towards amalgamation, 2 232-3
 syndicalism, xli
- Traders, wholesale and retail, address to, 2
 139-41
- Transitional state of society, 2 373-4
 adjustment of differences under, 3 358-9
 and financial inequality, 2 40-1
 government in, 2 80, 245-6
 measures necessary in, 2 39-40
 monetary system in, 2 228
 proposals for change in existing system, 2
 236-52
- Transmigration of souls, 2 61n.
- Transport
 improvements in, 2 387; 3 252
 of wealth, necessity reduced under rational
 system of society, 3 262
- Transportation, for crimes resulting from
 poverty, 3 387
- Travel
 by members of model communities, 2 37, 95
 and communication between countries, 3
 175
 freedom of as human right, 2 254
 means for, as condition for personal
 happiness, 3 134, 175-6, 307
- Trollope, Sir John, 6th Baronet, 4 64n.
- Truth
 adoption of in preparation for Millennium, 2
 353-4
 attainment of in new moral world, 3 16
 and charity, 3 72-3
 considered insanity in current state of
 society, 3 218
 consistency with nature, 3 214-15
 criteria for, 1 70; 2 148
 divine, 3 172
 encouragement to speak, under rational
 system of society, 3 309
 explanation of, 1 42-3
 falsehood only alternative to, 3 221

- Truth – *continued*
 as God, 3 73
 and happiness, 3 5, 16, 217–21
 and kindness, 3 72–3
 and knowledge, 3 31–2
 language of, 3 227
 love of, as original faculty, 2 10; 3 31
 not yet understood by man, 3 112
 now possible to be expressed in Britain, 2 132–3
 opening eyes to evils of current state of society, 3 219
 Owen's desire for expression of, 2 29
 power of, 2 197; 3 296–7; 4 14
 and prejudice, 2 371
 public reaction to, 4 13
 and rationality, 2 289, 3 48–50
 recognition of, 1 43, 58, 78, 91–2
 in relations between men and women, 3 181
 religion as principle of, 2 180–1, 242–3; 3 111–14
 replacing error under rational system of society, 2 150
 second coming of, 3 406–9
 spread of in United States, 2 54–5
 standards of, 3 47
 teaching of, 2 193–4, 246, 271–2
 training teachers in, 3 165–6
 unchanging nature of, 3 302–3
 as universal language, under rational system of society, 3 160–1, 214, 405–6
 universe as single truth, 2 180
 Turner, Rev. William, 4 157
 Tussaud, Madame, and wax figure of Owen, 4 36
 Tyranny, as classification of society, 3 70
- Uncertainty, absent under rational scheme of society, 3 207
- Unemployment
 after end of war with France (1815), 4 176
 costs of, 1 193
 in county of Lanark, 4 289
 increase in, and fall in wages, xxiii
 and maintenance at parish expense, 1 217
 means of combatting, 1 160–1, 331; 2 219
 and national works projects, xxvii
 suffering caused by, 1 146, 193; 4 182
- Union and co-operation
 benefits of to society, 2 370–1; 3 304
 effectiveness in production of wealth, 3 92–3
 effects of in war, 2 79
 essential for achievement of happiness, 2 63, 69; 3 13, 134
 and laws of Nature, 2 149; 3 55
 of masters and men, 2 233–4
 men's desire for, 2 79; 3 264
 in new moral world, 2 228
 of opposite varieties of character, 3 73
 replacing individual interest in new social system, 2 12–13
 of the sexes in rational state of society, 3 76, 136
- United States
 advantages for founding new society, 4 45–6
 call to introduce new social system, 2 11–12; 4 209
 character of Native Americans, 1 83–4
 civil and religious liberty, 3 181
 Civil War, 4 41–2
 constitution, 3 243–5
 model communities in accord with, 2 28–9
 cotton imports from, 4 83–5
 embargo on, 4 116, 132
 Declaration of Independence (1776), 2 49, 54; 4 42
 emigration of Owenites to, xlv
 freedom from superstition, 2 54–5
 government
 address to (1830), 2 41–2, 127–9
 and aristocracy of priests, lawyers and wealthy, liii
 founded on popular elections, 2 121
 power of public opinion over, 2 130
 responsibilities of, 2 3–4
 increase in poverty despite political democracy, xxxix
 laws of, 2 9
 monetary system, 3 104–5
 Oregon border dispute, xlv; 4 331–2
 Owen and family move to, 4 328–32
 Owenite communities *see* New Harmony, Indiana
 Owen's reception in, 4 304
 Owen's visits to, 4 304–6
 popular assemblies, 3 374
 and rational religion, 2 20
 reception of Owen's views in, 4 165, 256–7
 relationship with Britain, 4 313–14, 317–18
 Oregon dispute, 4 331–2
 rivalry in cotton trade, 1 103–4
 war, 1 102
 relationship with Mexico, 2 119
 revolution in, 3 379–80
 Shaker communities, xlix; 2 12–13, 394; 4 263n., 298
 slavery in, 2 110, 146; 4 167
 spread of truth in, 2 54–5
 system of punishment, 2 9
see also New Harmony, Indiana
- Unity of feeling and action, resulting from

- application of sciences of human nature
 and society, 3 120
 Universal attraction, 4 184
 Universal repulsion, 4 184
 Upper classes
 background of, 1 281
 children of, 2 282-3
 deserving pity, 1 281-2
 difficulty of recruiting to support of rational
 scheme, 3 396
 education of, 3 94-5, 109-10
 financial difficulties, 3 137
 gradations of wealth, 2 281
 hypocrisy among, 2 164-5
 provision of capital for changes in existing
 system, 2 246
 resources spent on hunting, 3 326-7
 Urban areas, disadvantages of, 3 101, 103-4
 Uselessness, abandonment of in preparation for
 Millennium, 2 351-2
 Utilitarianism, and doctrine of Jeremy
 Bentham, 2 151n.
 Utilitarians, address to (1830), 2 150-2
 Utopia, visions of, 3 121

 Value
 artificial standards of, xxxiv
 labour as standard of, xxxiv; 1 292-4, 347-8
 proposed change in standard of, 1 290-4
 Van Buren, Martin, 4 257, 313, 316-17
 and United States constitution, 3 244
 Veneration, faculty of in man, 3 236
 Vice
 associated with actions in accordance with
 nature, 3 139
 as opposition to general happiness, 3 149
 replaced by virtue under rational system of
 society, 2 102-3, 150; 3 304
 Victoria, Queen, 4 249, 252
 Owen presented to, 4 249n.
 Vienna, Congress of, 4 201n.
 Villages *see* Model communities
 Violence
 alien to spirit of new social system, 2 15
 at differences of opinion and feeling, 2 181
 and ignorance, 1 282
 ineffectual in bringing about change, 3 391
 in man's first state, 3 127
 model government of Texas to put an end
 to, 2 120
 Quaker rejection of, lviii
 social change necessary to prevent, 2 185,
 346
 teaching of in classics, 3 267-8
 Virtue
 associated with actions not in accordance
 with nature, 3 139
 causes of, man's investigation of, 3 209-16
 and continuance of unhappy marriages, 2
 261-2
 and fair trading, 2 141
 as happiness, 2 278
 impossibility of good and great man under
 present system of society, 4 27
 inequality of wealth incompatible with, 2
 280
 as promotion of general happiness, 3 149
 replacing vice under rational system of
 society, 2 150
 sexual, 1 315
 Visitors
 to model communities, 2 45
 to New Lanark, 4 168, 229, 258-9, 286

 Wade, General George, 4 125
 Wages, 1 274
 fall in
 due to use of machinery, xxiv
 and increase in unemployment xxiii
 Waithman, Robert (radical), support for
 Owen, xxx; 1 215
 Walker, Charles, superintendence of New
 Lanark, 2 157-8; 4 306
 Walker, John
 background and character, 4 146-8, 234-6
 Owen meets in Switzerland, 4 228
 as Owen's travelling companion in
 Germany, 4 234, 237-41
 partnership with Owen in New Lanark, xx,
 xxi, 4 142, 146-8, 195
 Wallace, A. R., influence of Owen on, lix
 Want
 fear of, 3 339
 necessity for removed under rational system
 of society, 3 338-9
 see also Poverty
 Wapping, circumstances of, 3 212
 War
 caused by religion, 3 237, 310
 and decrease in wealth, 3 252
 demands for labour, 1 144, 202-3
 desire to annihilate, 4 41
 disappearance of under rational system of
 society, 2 15, 160-1, 254, 350; 3 216,
 334
 effects of union and co-operation in, 2 79
 evil consequences of, 2 64, 107, 131-2,
 160-1; 3 4, 304
 expenditure on, 3 316
 folly of, 3 372
 heroes of saluted and rewarded, 3 269
 incompatible with knowledge and justice, 1
 72; 3 304

- War – *continued*
 model government of Texas to put an end to, 2 120
 origins of, 4 42–3
 and powers of production, 1 346–7
 public opposition to, 3 372
 training in arts of, 1 72
 unemployment and distress following,
 Owen's report on, 4 180–8
 waste caused by, 3 93, 249, 304
- Wardlaw, Rev. Ralph, 4 161
- Warehouses
 private, absent in new state of society, 3 103
 for storage of communal wealth, 1 326; 3
 247–8, 262
- Washington, George, 4 257
 and United States constitution, 2 49; 3 245
- Waste
 brought about by war, 3 93, 249, 304
 caused by present laws, 3 402–3
 of human intellect under current system of
 society, 2 81
 of productive power, 3 249, 362
- Watt, James, 1 258–60, 298; 3 251
 inventions of, 1 143
- Weak, oppression of, system based on error, 3
 226
- Wealth
 accumulation of
 and creation of new capitalists, 4 182
 desire for overcome in Associations, 1 348
 disappearance of under rational system of
 society, 3 366
 and effects of machinery, xxiv
 evil consequences of desire for, 2 63
 incompatible with happiness, 3 120
 as motive of society, 1 333–4
 and over-stimulation of sense, 3 61
 personal desire for ceasing in new moral
 world, 3 14
 seen as objective by political economists,
 1 350–2
 acquisition of, by bankers, 2 143–5
 associations banishing motive for
 accumulation of, 1 324–5
 attained through knowledge of laws of
 human nature, 2 151
 centralisation of, 1
 competition for, 3 151–2
 constituent elements of, 3 90–2
 creation of
 by labour rather than capital, xxvii
 employment in, 3 365
 old system of society preventing, 2 405–6
 and 'prime cost', 1 302–3
 retail trade not contributing to, 2 140
 dangers of excess, 2 106–10
 destruction of annual surplus, 3 247
 distinction from poverty, abandonment of in
 preparation for Millennium, 2 352
 distribution of in communities, 1 326
 distribution of increase, 1 260
 distribution of, 3 259–62
 and abundance for all, 3 174–5
 by retail trade, 2 140
 costs of, 3 117–18
 errors in under current system of society, 3
 260
 evils of current practice, 3 100–2
 knowledge of, 3 100–6
 most efficient manner of, 3 117–18
 in new moral world, 2 227–8
 responsibility for, 3 262
 and rights of humanity, 2 256
 storage facilities under rational system of
 society, 3 262
 system based on error, 3 225
 true principles for, 3 102–6
 under rational system of society, 2 407
 effect of excess on character, 2 280
 effect of mechanisation on production of, 1
 298
 ever-increasing power to create, 1 288–9
 exchange of, medium for, 3 104–6
 and happiness, 3 134
 incompatible with happiness, 3 372–3
 industry as foundation of, 2 148
 inequality of, incompatible with virtuous
 society, 2 280–1
 loss of by not investing in education, 3 316
 loss of
 groups contributing to, 3 261–2
 through ignorance of working classes, 3
 254–5
 through profit motive, 3 254
 manual labour as source of, 1 288
 as motive for marriage, 2 282
 'national stores', 2 417
 not conducive to happiness, 1 174–5, 244
 obtaining of as prime object of society, 1 302
 and over-satisfaction of desires, 1 255, 258
 over-supply of, means of, 3 248
 Owen's personal attitude to, 4 16–17
 period of dominion due to end, 1 255, 258
 and power, 2 164; 3 282
 producers of, address to (1834), 2 232–5
 production in, and advances in science, 3
 378–9
 production of
 and abundance for all, 3 174–5
 as aim of human life, 3 292
 bankers not contributing to, 2 144
 in Britain, 3 250–1
 by labour, 2 149, 234

- children's potential for, 1 262
 conditions for superfluity for all, 4 159-60
 dangers of over-production, 2 109
 effectiveness of united workforce, 3 92-3
 enjoyment in, 3 8
 and hours of work, 2 111-12
 increase in powers of, 2 109; 3 250-1
 inferior type of, 3 226
 knowledge of, 3 90-9
 labour necessary for, 2 13; 3 102-3, 283
 limits on, 2 256-7
 most efficient manner of, 3 117
 reward for, 2 234
 under rational system of society, 2 218-20
 public nature of under rational system of society, 2 159
 storage of in rational state of society, 2 77-8; 3 247-8
 superabundance of, 2 105-10, 118; 3 14-15, 49, 91, 152, 304, 326
 and decreasing benefit from, 2 145-8
 distress caused by, 4 179
 and end of poverty, 2 128
 and inequality, 2 125-6
 war of under new manufacturing system, 3 251
 waste of
 by commercial arrangements, 3 404
 by general domestic arrangements, 3 404-5
 by political institutions, 3 401-4
 by war, 3 93
 in religious institutions, 3 400-1
 Wealthy, interests of supported by party politics, 2 310
 Webster, Daniel, 4 45
 Wedderburn, Robert
 fears of Owen's plans, xxviii
 opposition to Owen, 1 213n.; 4 215n.
 Weigling, Wilhelm, and Red Socialists, 4 28
 Wellbeloved, Charles, 4 157
 West Indies
 cotton imports from, 4 83
 slavery in, 2 110, 146; 4 167
Westminster Review, on support for Owen, xlii
 Westmoreland, 10th Earl of, 4 64n.
 Weston, Charles, proposals for Poor Law reform, xxii
 Wharncliffe, Lord, 4 305
 Whigs, 1 310
 criticism of, xxvi
 and political economists, 4 182
 Whitbread, Samuel
 assistance solicited by Owen, xxi
 educational system, 1 86, 88-9
 Substance of a Speech on the Poor Laws, 1 88-9
 Wholesale traders
 address to, 2 139-41
 disappearance under rational system of society, 3 261-2
 Wickedness
 causes of, 1 127-9
 unknown under social system in line with laws of human nature, 2 102-3
 see also Evil
 Wilberforce, William
 2 172n.; 4 156, 266
 dedication to, 1 25-6
 stress on fallen nature of man, xlviii
 Wilderspin, Samuel
 Owen's instruction of in educational system, 4 207-8
 The Importance of Educating the Infant Poor, 4 208
 Wilkes, James, and enrolment for New State of Society, 1 231
 Will
 and acceptance of facts, 3 29
 belief not subject to, 1 68-71, 129; 3 310-11, 320, 330, 353, 386
 created by instincts, 3 76
 man formed independently of, 3 57-60
 not governing affections, 3 353
 relationship of feelings and convictions to, 3 23, 27-34, 51-5, 196, 223, 322
 see also Free will, doctrine of
 William IV, King of Great Britain, Owen's address to (1832), 2 199; 3 3-5
 Williams, Richard (Owen's cousin), 4 56-8, 69
 disappointment in love, 4 57-8
 Winstanley, William, friendship with Owen, 4 87-8, 90
 Wisdom
 denial of in persistence in error, 3 69
 experience as parent of, 1 184
 laws of man opposing, 3 89
 power of in new moral world, 3 80
 worldly, 2 170-1
 Women
 character of in new moral world, 3 16
 difficulty of speaking truth in current state of society, 3 218
 education of, 4 163
 in household duties, 4 174
 and inability to teach children correctly, 3 138
 system based on error, 3 225
 effect of polygamy on, 2 305-6
 employment of in model communities, lvi; 1 150; 2 34-5

- Women – *continued*
 equal rights for, lv–lvi
 influence of religion over, 2 414
 lying-in arrangements in model communities, 2 89
 men's ignorance and misinformation concerning, 2 273
 in Newgate Prison, 1 169–71
 particular suffering of, 3 16
 position of in new state of society, Chateaubriand's questions concerning, 2 262–3
 and relationship between sexes, 2 257–8
 under current system of society, 3 380–1
 under rational state of society, 3 323–5
 sexual exploitation of, 3 151
 as slaves of men, 2 52; 3 324
 suffering of by prostitution and crime, 2 322
 suffering of under current system of marriage, 2 319; 3 291
 training and employment of, 1 187
 treatment of under poor laws, 3 387
 Woodroffe, Christopher, Owen rents factory from, 4 75
 Wool trade, 1 102
 Wooler, Thomas, opposition to Owen, 1 213n.
 Workhouses
 1 161–2; 2 282; 3 387; 4 209
 management of, 1 163
 unnecessary in new moral world, 2 231
 Working classes
 associations founded by, 1 323
 circumstances of, and rights of humanity, 2 257
 conditions like those of slavery, 2 146; 4 167
 effect of greed on treatment of, xxiv
 incapable of leading themselves, xli–xlii
 leaders opposed to Owen, 4 214–15
 offensive comments on, liii
 oppression by civil professions and aristocracy, 3 252–3
 paternalistic treatment by Conservatives, 4 184
 plans for improvement in conditions of, 2 247–9, 4 271–2
 poverty among, 2 164; 3 137; 4 319
 right to vote, liii
 support for Owen, xlii
 World government, lvi–lvii
 Wright, Frances, xxviii.
 Writing, teaching of, 1 86

 York, Frederick, Duke of, 4 176
 conversations with Owen, 4 205–6
 Young, Edward, *Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality*, 4 25, 53
 Young, Molly, and infant school at New Lanark, 4 193–5
 Young people
 training of under rational system of society, 3 289–90
 see also Children