

CHAPTER II

The Owenite Period

## I.—ROBERT OWEN

THE social experiments and teachings of Robert Owen have played an important part in the early history of American Socialism, and a brief sketch of his life and theories are essential for the proper understanding of that period of the movement.

Robert Owen was born on the 14th day of May, 1771, in the Scotch village of Newtown, as the seventh child of respectable but impoverished parents.

He received a rather fragmentary public-school education, and at the early age of eleven years he was apprenticed to a London merchant. Already then the boy exhibited in a marked degree those qualities which in later life made him a leading man in two continents: an extraordinary organizing talent, untiring industry, and a keen analytical mind, combined with broad sympathies, excellent judgment of human nature, courage, and withal a uniformly courteous demeanor.

His business career was one of phenomenal success. Within a few years he advanced from a subordinate clerkship in the store of a London merchant to a very responsible position with a leading Manchester trading-house.

At the age of nineteen years he was engaged by one Drinkwater to superintend his spinning-mill at Manchester, in which about 500 workingmen were employed, and the manner in which he terminated the employment is very characteristic of the man.

Mr. Drinkwater, after a brief trial, had agreed in writing to employ Owen for three years, and to make him a partner in his business after the expiration of that time.

In the meanwhile, however, the Manchester mill-owner was offered very advantageous terms of partnership by a wealthy and influential merchant. Owen's outstanding agreement was the only obstacle to the arrangement, and Mr. Drinkwater determined to get rid of it at any cost. He invited Owen to his office, and explaining the situation to the young superintendent, he asked upon what terms he would release him from the agreement, and offered him a position under the new management at any salary he might name. Owen, who had anticipated the purpose of the interview, and had come armed with his written contract, promptly committed it to the flames, and, quietly watching the precious document reducing itself to ashes, he remarked that he had no desire to be in partnership with people who did not want him, and that he could not remain in the employ of Mr. Drinkwater on any terms.

Shortly after this episode he acquired an interest in the Charlton Twist Company, which became very prosperous through his efforts.

During all his business preoccupations, however, Owen did not neglect the study of social phenomena, and at the period at which we have now arrived he was already imbued with the conviction which subsequently guided all his actions, and in fact determined his entire course of life—the conviction that man is the creature of surrounding circumstances, that his character is not made by him, but for him.

“Man becomes a wild, ferocious savage, a cannibal, or a highly civilized and benevolent being according to the circumstances in which he may be placed from his birth,” he reasoned, and the logical conclusion from this process of reasoning was that the only way of raising the character and habits of men is by improving the conditions under which they live.

He commenced a test of a practical application of this theory in his treatment of the 500 Manchester operatives consigned to his care, but the abrupt discontinuance of his

connections with Mr. Drinkwater checked the experiment before it could show positive results.

Owen now yearned for a larger field of activity, and in the beginning of 1800 he found such in the Scotch village of New Lanark.

The New Lanark works had been founded in 1784 on the falls of the Clyde by Mr. David Dale and Sir Richard Arkwright, the famous inventor.

In 1799 the village consisted of about 2,500 mill-hands with their families, and Mr. Dale was its sole proprietor. The village presented the typical aspect of a manufacturing settlement of that time. About 500 of the employees were children recruited from the charitable institutions of Edinburgh, and were fed and housed in a large barrack erected for that purpose. They were sent to the mill not infrequently at the age of six years, their working hours lasted from six in the morning until seven in the evening, and those of them who survived naturally grew up to be dwarfed and deformed, physically, mentally, and morally. The work was so hard, and the pay so small, that none but the lowest stratum of adult workmen would take employment at the mills. The village was dirty and the population given to brutality, drunkenness, thievery, and sexual excesses, and was deep in debt to the petty village usurer, the tavern-keeper, and store-keeper.

Such was New Lanark when Owen, with some business associates, purchased from Mr. Dale the mills, village and all, for sixty thousand pounds.

As resident manager, Owen had the power to introduce such reforms as he thought proper, and he immediately undertook the gigantic task of remodeling the village. One of his first acts was to banish the village storekeepers who had been in the habit of selling to the operatives inferior articles for excessive prices, and to establish instead superior shops, where all commodities were retailed at cost. The gin-mills and taverns were removed to the outskirts of the vil-

lage, the streets were cleaned, and comfortable dwelling-houses were substituted for the old hovels.

He determined to receive no more pauper children, and discontinued the parish agreements made by Mr. Dale.

For the children of his employees he established a model infant school, and facilities for education were provided for all inhabitants of New Lanark.

True to his theory, he abolished all systems of punishment of delinquent workmen, seeking to correct their shortcomings by kind admonition, and to crown all, he voluntarily reduced their hours of labor and increased their pay.

Every step of these reforms was attended with difficulties; the superintendents of the different branches of the work regarded him as a dangerous eccentric and blocked his schemes wherever possible, and what was worse, the workmen were by no means friendly to his reforms: years of pitiless exploitation had made them distrustful, and they suspected some hostile design behind each of Owen's new measures.

In 1806 a crisis set in in the English cotton industry in consequence of an embargo laid by the United States upon the export of the raw material. The operations of all cotton-mills of the United Kingdom were stopped, and the thousands of working men thus thrown out of employment were facing starvation.

Owen retained all of his employees, and altho no work was done for four months after, he paid them their full wages, amounting to about seven thousand pounds.

This generous act finally convinced the mill-hands of the sincerity of Owen's purpose. Henceforward they had full confidence in their employer, and heartily cooperated with him in all his measures of reform.

But another obstacle arose. So long as the reforms introduced by Owen did not threaten to diminish the profits of the business, his partners did not interfere with him, but when he proposed some new innovations involving the

building and maintenance of an expensive school and nursery, they rebelled, and pointedly declared that they had associated with him in business, not in philanthropy.

On account of these dissensions, Owen had to change partners twice, and in 1813 he was in danger of being altogether ousted from the management of New Lanark by the majority shareholders of the concern.

But the resourceful philanthropist-manufacturer was equal to the occasion. He prepared a sketch of the works of New Lanark, of his humanitarian plans in connection with the works, and of his difficulties with his partners. This he published in a limited number for private circulation among well-disposed capitalists, and within a short time seven men of wealth, including the famous jurist, Jeremy Bentham, expressed their willingness to invest large sums of money in the New Lanark works, on the understanding that all profits above five per cent. on their investments would be applied to philanthropic uses.

With the funds thus secured, Owen bought out his partners, and now had an entirely free hand in the carrying out of his favorite reforms. Within a generation New Lanark became unrecognizable. The erstwhile miserable village, with a degenerate population, had become a model colony of healthy, bright, and happy men and women, and the object of admiration of the thousands of visitors who came to inspect it every year.

The fame of Owen's achievements spread to all civilized countries. Among his admirers he numbered sovereigns, princes, statesmen, and prominent men in all walks of life, and at one time he was one of the most popular persons in Europe.

But Owen was not satisfied with the results achieved by him. The splendid results in New Lanark had deepened his conviction in the theory that man is the product of the conditions surrounding him, and he now arrived at the ultimate and logical deduction from that theory—that an equal

degree of morality and happiness presupposes the equality of all material conditions of life. Owen had developed from a mere philanthropist to a full-fledged communist.

This change of views brought with it a desire for the enlargement of his sphere of activity. New Lanark had become too narrow for him; he longed to benefit the entire working class, and the remainder of his life was devoted to the propaganda of his ideas in all conceivable forms.

He early recognized the importance of factory legislation, and drafted many measures for the relief and protection of factory employees, some of which were passed by Parliament, owing to his efforts.

In 1817 Owen was invited by the "Committee of the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor" to state his views on the cause of increasing pauperism and to propose measures of relief. In his report to the committee he developed the view that under a system of free competition the increase of productivity of labor inevitably leads to the deterioration of the condition of the working class. The introduction of improved machinery throws thousands of working men out of employment, thus engendering a desperate competition for the mere means of subsistence, which lowers the standard of the workingman's life still more. No temporary measures can check this deplorable but necessary concomitant of industrial development.

As a solution of the problem, Owen proposed the establishment of industrial communities on the basis of mutual cooperation. The communities were to consist of 500 to 1,500 persons, who would themselves produce all the necessities of life. The members were to live in large houses surrounded by gardens, industry was to be conducted on a large scale by the men, while the women did the housework and tended to the education of the children.

The plan was rejected by the committee as too radical,

but, nothing daunted, Owen continued his propaganda at public meetings and by private agitation

Like the true utopian that he was, he addressed himself to the spirit of benevolence of the wealthy and powerful, and even submitted his plans to Czar Nicholas of Russia, and to the Congress of Sovereigns at Aachen in 1818, of course with no better success than what he met with at the hands of the committee.

Owen now determined to undertake the experiment with his own resources, and was eagerly watching for a favorable opportunity. When he learned in 1824 that the Rappist settlement in Indiana was for sale, his mind was soon made up. He purchased the settlement with everything on it, and sailed for America to superintend the experiment in person.

The varied fortunes of the communities founded by Owen and his followers in the United States are described separately in the following pages.

These experiments have attracted so much public attention, that the other side of Owen's activity in this country, his personal propaganda for the theories of Communism, is but too often being entirely overlooked. And still that propaganda had a powerful influence on many of his contemporaries.

Upon his first arrival in the United States he exhibited elaborate models of his proposed communities, and delivered addresses on his favorite topics in many large American cities, and found numerous attentive listeners among the most intelligent classes of citizens.

At Washington he delivered several lectures in the Hall of Representatives before the President, the President-elect, all the judges of the United States Supreme Court, and a great number of Senators and Congressmen.

After the failure of New Harmony, Owen paid three more visits to the United States, and each of these visits was devoted to the propaganda of Socialism. In 1845 he called

an international socialist convention to be held in New York, but the convention turned out to be a rather insignificant affair. In 1846 we find him in Albany explaining to the Constitutional Convention of New York his theory on the formation of human character.

Several Owenite communities were likewise founded in the twenties and thirties of the last century, in different parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland, with no more success than those in America.

But the failures of his communistic experiments did not discourage the indomitable reformer, and in 1832 we find him enthusiastically engaged in a new enterprise, the "Equitable Banks of Labor Exchange." "The quantity of average human labor contained in a commodity determines the value of such commodity," declared Owen, "hence, if all commodities be valued and exchanged by the producer according to that standard, the capitalist will have no room in industry or commerce, or the worker will retain the full product of his labor."

To carry this idea into operation, the "Equitable Labor Exchange Bank" was founded in London on the following plan: Every producer of a useful article might bring the same to the "bazaar" connected with the bank, and receive for it notes issued by the bank and representing a number of labor hours equivalent to those contained in his article. With these notes the holder could purchase other articles contained in the bazaar and likewise valued according to the quantity of labor consumed by its production.

The weak point of the scheme was, that the bank occupied itself exclusively with the exchange of commodities, and did not even attempt to regulate their production. Anything brought to the bazaar was accepted regardless of the actual demand for it. The result was, that after a short time all useful articles disappeared from circulation, and the bazaars were stocked with goods for which there was no demand.

The "Equitable Labor Exchange Bank" suspended business, and its founder lost a fortune.

Owen was past sixty at that time, but he still continued his activity in behalf of the working class for many years.

Under his influence the "Association of all Classes and Nations" was organized, an association which at one time exercised a powerful influence in English politics, and whose members called themselves "Socialists" since 1839. He also presided at the first national convention of English trade-unions.

Owen died on the 17th day of November, 1858. He had reached the rare age of eighty-seven years, and few lives had been so eventful and useful as his. His failures were many, but his achievements were more; he was the first to introduce the infant-school system, he was the father of factory legislation, one of the first advocates of cooperative associations, and he anticipated many of the theories and features of the modern socialist movement.

Owen left four sons, all of whom became American citizens. They all achieved renown in their chosen occupation. Robert Dale Owen was at one time the foremost exponent of his father's theories in this country. In conjunction with Frances Wright he published, toward the end of the twenties of the last century, a magazine under the title *Free Enquirer*, and conducted a "Hall of Science" in New York, in which lectures were delivered on all topics of social reform. In sympathy with Robert Dale Owen and Frances Wright were also the two brothers, George Henry and Frederick W. Evans, two young Englishmen, who landed in New York in 1820. They published successively the *Working man's Advocate*, the *Daily Sentinel* and *Young America*, and of these publications the last mentioned at one time enjoyed considerable popularity. *Young America* printed at its head twelve demands, of which the ninth, "Equal rights for women with men in all respects," and the tenth, "Abolition of chattel slavery and of wages slavery," are par-

ticularly interesting to-day. These demands were said to have been indorsed by no less than 600 papers in different parts of the United States, and eventually gave rise to the formation of a political Working Men's Party in the State of New York. The Working Men's Party held a state convention in Syracuse in 1830, and nominated Ezekiel Williams for Governor. Williams received a little less than 3,000 votes in the State, but in the City of New York, where the Working Men's Party had fused with the Whigs, it succeeded in electing four of its candidates, Silas M. Stilwell, Gideon Tucker, Ebenezer Ford, and George Curtis, to the Legislature. The Working Men's Party was the last manifestation in the labor movement of this country directly attributable to the influence of Owenism. It maintained its independent existence a short time, and was soon absorbed by the "Locofoco" movement.

Robert Dale Owen devoted much of the remainder of his life to politics. He was twice elected to Congress, and drafted the act under which the Smithsonian Institution in Washington was established. As a member of the Indiana Constitutional Convention he was chiefly instrumental in the enactment of the liberal provisions for woman's rights and the introduction of the free-school system in that State. He was for six years *chargé d'affaires* of this country at Naples, and was in his days one of the ablest and noblest figures in national politics. His letter to President Lincoln is said to have been a potent factor in bringing about the President's proclamation abolishing chattel slavery. Toward the end of his life he, like his father, turned to spiritualism. He died in 1877.

George Henry Evans remained active in the field of social reforms until his death in 1870, and Frederick W. Evans joined the Shakers in 1831, and became the leading man of the Mount Lebanon Community, where he was popularly known as Elder Frederick.

## II.—NEW HARMONY

THE scene of the first Owenite experiment on American soil was a tract of land on the Wabash River in the State of Indiana. It consisted of about 30,000 acres, all of which was wilderness until 1814, when the Rappists made it their home. The marvelous industry and excellent taste of the sectarian communists within a few years converted the desert into a flourishing settlement.

In 1825 "Harmony" (or "Harmonie," as the Rappists named their community) was a regularly laid-out village, with streets running at right angles to each other, a public square, several large brick buildings, and numerous dwelling-houses, mills, and factories. Owen acquired it all for the sum of \$150,000.

No communistic experiment was ever undertaken under more favorable auspices: the Owenite settlers found ready homes, about 3,000 acres of cultivated land, nineteen detached farms, and a number of fine orchards and vines, all in excellent condition. The hardships usually attending the first years of pioneer life of every community had been successfully overcome by their predecessors, and no debt was weighing on the property.

Associated with Owen in the enterprise was William Maclure, of Philadelphia, a man of considerable wealth, a scientist and philanthropist. Mr. Maclure was the most eminent American geologist of his time, and was known as "The Father of American Geology"; he was also the principal founder of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, and, for almost a quarter of a century, the president of that institution. Besides his scientific pursuits, Maclure was especially interested in educational problems. He was the first to introduce the system of Pestalozzi in the United States, and was one of the earliest advocates of industrial education. Mr. Maclure was to have charge of the schools

and institutions for learning in New Harmony, and he brought with him quite a coterie of eminent scientists and educators. Among the former were Thomas Say, the greatest American zoologist of his time; Charles Alexander Lesneur, a famous ichthyologist and a painter of talent; and Dr. Gerard Troost, who subsequently became professor of geology in the Nashville University. Among the professional educators were Professor Neef, who had been associated with Pestalozzi in his school in Switzerland; Madame Marie D. Frotaeot, and Phiquepal d'Arusmout, also Pestalozzian teachers.\* Frances Wright also took an active interest in the founding of New Harmony, and so did all of the four sons of Robert Owen.

No wonder then that the future of the community appeared bright and promising to Owen. He confidently predicted that the truth of his principles and the blessings of communism would in the near future manifest themselves in the new colony, and spread "from Community to Community, from State to State, from Continent to Continent, finally overshadowing the whole earth, shedding light, fragrance and abundance, intelligence and happiness upon the sons of men," and with his characteristic enthusiasm and broadness he invited "the industrious and well-disposed of all nations" to come to New Harmony, as he rechristened the settlement.

And they came in flocks, the men of all nations, well-disposed or otherwise; in fact, no less than 800 persons responded to Owen's call within the short space of the first six weeks, and a hundred more joined soon after. It was the most motley and incongruous crowd that ever assembled for a joint enterprise: there were, undoubtedly, among them men and women actuated by pure and noble motives, and who joined the movement with the sincere purpose of contributing by their efforts to the success of the commu-

\* For particulars of that interesting phase of Owen's social experiment, see "The New Harmony Communities," by George Browning Lockwood, Marion, Ind., 1902.

nistic enterprise, but there were also those who had absolutely no understanding or sympathies for Owen's ideals, who looked upon his enterprise as the act of a wealthy eccentric, and sought to take advantage of his generosity as long as it lasted. There were men and women of all classes and vocations, habits and notions, professionals, mechanics, laborers, idlers, and adventurers.

No test of qualification was imposed on them, no inquiry as to their motives was made, and this indiscriminate admission of members at the very outset impressed the community with a stamp of disharmony and shiftlessness which finally caused its downfall.

During the two years of its existence as a community, New Harmony had no less than seven different forms of government or "constitutions."

It was not Owen's original intention to start the colony on a purely communistic basis. "Men brought up in an irrational system of society," he argued, "can not change to a rational system without some preparation." His first constitution accordingly provided that the settlers were to be held on probationary training for three years, under the control of a "Preliminary Committee," and only after a successful service of the probationary period were they to be admitted to full membership.

The period of three years seems, however, to have appeared too long for the New Harmonites, for, in January, 1826, we find them adopting a new constitution, by which the colony was reorganized on the basis of complete communism, with a general assembly as the chief authority and a council of six as its executive organ.

But the new plan of organization somehow did not work, and the members unanimously called on Owen to assume the dictatorship of the community. Under this new form of government, the third since its existence, the settlement seemed on a fair road to success. Some order was introduced into the general chaos; the idlers disappeared, and

the shops and farms presented a scene of unwonted industry.

But in April, 1826, some members, tired of the steady and systematic work, demanded a division of the villages into several independent communities. To this Owen would not agree, but, as a result of the ensuing discussion, he presented the community with a fourth constitution. This divided the members into three grades—"conditional members," "probationary members," and "persons on trial," and provided for a "nucleus" of twenty-five selected members, who had the exclusive right to admit new applicants.

Owen retained the power to veto any new member, and was to continue the sole head of the community for one year and so long thereafter as at least one-third of the members should think the community unfit to govern itself.

But the clamor for a division of the community was not stifled, and by the end of May, Owen, yielding to the general demand, agreed to form four separate communities from the members of New Harmony, each having an independent administration.

This was the fifth constitution of New Harmony, and barely three months later the settlers adopted a sixth constitution, abolishing all officers, and appointing in their place a committee of three, invested with dictatorial powers.

The seventh and last constitution was adopted by the members of all colonies of New Harmony at a joint meeting held September 17, 1826. By this constitution the entire administration was placed in the hands of Owen and four other members to be appointed by him every year.

But the extraordinary mutability of its form of government did not save New Harmony from internal dissensions and splits. "Religion," records Sargent,\* Owen's biographer, "was the earliest topic of disagreement, and the evil seems to have been aggravated by visits from itinerant preachers,

\*"Robert Owen and His Social Philosophy," by William Lucas Sargent.

whose interference, however, was checked in a characteristic manner. It was professed that free discussion on religion, and every kind of teaching, was tolerated and even sought; and, therefore, all ministers who came for the avowed purpose of preaching publicly were entertained at the tavern free of expense: but with this unusual condition, that at the conclusion of a sermon any one of the congregation might ask whatever questions he pleased. This catechising was so little liked by the subjects of it that, during many months, no preacher visited New Harmony."

But apparently the disappearance of itinerant preachers did not wholly cure the evil.

Discussions on religion, and, together with it, on the most suitable form of government, continued to disturb the peace of the settlers, and at times assumed an alarming aspect.

Every new outbreak of religious controversy and every change of the constitution was accompanied by the withdrawal of some disaffected members from the community, and two groups of members separated from the parent organization, forming independent settlements within the territory of New Harmony.

One of them, the "Macluria," was named after William Maclure. The colony was settled by about 150 of the most conservative and orthodox members of New Harmony, and was chiefly concerned with the education of the young, paying but insufficient attention to agricultural and industrial pursuits.

The other community was named "Feiba Peven," which name, for some mysterious reasons, was supposed to indicate the latitude and longitude of the place. Feiba Peven was settled principally by English farmers, who were said to be very skilful, but somewhat too fond of whisky.

Both communities maintained rather friendly relations with New Harmony, and, as we have seen, rejoined it in adopting the seventh constitution.

Considering the complexity of elements and general plan-

lessness of the community, it is not surprising that its life was of but short duration.

At the beginning everything was bright and lovely. "Free education was provided for the children, the store supplied the settlers with all necessaries, and a respectable apothecary dispensed medicines without charge," narrates A. J. McDonald, the first chronicler of the experiment,\* but the historian does not inform us whether the expense was covered from the earnings of the settlers, or, what seems to be more likely, from Owen's pocket.

Shortly after the establishment of the community Owen went to England, leaving the new enterprise in charge of his young son William, and, upon his return in the early part of 1826, he still found New Harmony in apparently excellent condition. On July 4th of that year, the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Owen delivered an address to his followers, which has since become famous for its eloquence and boldness, and from which we quote the following passage:

"I now declare to you and the world, that Man, up to this hour, has been, in all parts of the world, a slave to a Trinity of the most monstrous evils that could be combined to inflict mental and physical evil upon his whole race. I refer to Private or Individual Property, Absurd and Irrational systems of Religion, and Marriage founded on Individual Property and some of these Irrational Systems of Religion."

The tone of his entire address is still very hopeful; he still expects his community to become a powerful factor for the removal of his abhorred Trinity of Evils

But a few months later we find him for the first time in a somewhat doubting and pondering mood. "Eighteen months' experience," he observes in his *Gazette*, "has proved to us that the requisite qualifications for a permanent member of the Community of Common Property are: 1, Honesty

\*Quoted in Noyes's "History of American Socialisms."

of purpose; 2, Temperance; 3, Industry; 4, Carefulness; 5, Cleanliness; 6, Desire for knowledge; 7, A conviction of the fact that the character of man is formed for, and not by, him."

The discovery came too late. The heterogeneous crowd gathered at New Harmony was already breaking up.

Member after member left the community, and Owen was unable to stem the tide.

A number of individuals banded themselves together into small communities, and to those Owen assigned parcels of land at the outskirts of New Harmony. The land was leased to them for a period of 10,000 years at a nominal annual rental of fifty cents per acre, and upon condition that the lease should terminate as soon as the land should be used for any but communistic purposes. These communities were short-lived. Within the village proper communism was altogether abandoned. Private stores and shops displaced communal industries, the gin-mill made its triumphant entry, and petty competition and close-fisted bargaining reigned in the place which Owen had hoped to make the starting-point of the brotherhood of all sons of men.

### III.—YELLOW SPRINGS COMMUNITY

TOWARD the end of 1824 Owen arrived in Cincinnati, and remained there a short time lecturing and exhibiting his plans for a model community. He made many converts to his ideas, foremost among whom was Daniel Roe, the minister of the "New Jerusalem," or Swedenborgian Church.

This church was composed of people of culture, refinement, and wealth, and many of them were so fascinated by Owen's glowing accounts of the blessings of community life that they resolved to try the experiment.

About seventy-five or one hundred families organized for that purpose, and after careful consultation and selection, they purchased a domain at Yellow Springs, about seventy-five miles north of Cincinnati.

The property was held by the purchasers in trust for all members of the community; schools were to be established with rational methods of instruction, public lectures were held, and dancing and music were cultivated.

"For the first few weeks," records a member of the community, "all entered into the new system with a will. Service was the order of the day. Men who seldom or never before labored with their hands, devoted themselves to agriculture and the mechanical arts with a zeal that was at least commendable, though not always according to knowledge. Ministers of the Gospel guided the plow; called the swine to their corn, instead of sinners to repentance. Merchants exchanged the yardstick for the rake and pitchfork. All appeared to labor cheerfully for the common weal. Among the women there was even more apparent self-sacrifice. Ladies who had seldom seen the inside of their own kitchens went into that of the common eating-house and made themselves useful among pots and kettles; and refined young ladies who had all their lives been waited upon, took their turns in waiting upon others at the table."

The members of the Yellow Springs Community, like those of Brook Farm, consisted chiefly of "chosen spirits"—there were but few farmers or laborers among them. Their movement was not undertaken for economic or material considerations, but for spiritual and intellectual motives. They regarded their venture somewhat in the nature of a prolonged picnic, and the charm continued just about half a year. By the end of that time the aristocratic communists sobered down. The ministers soon found the sinners more manageable and interesting than the swine, the merchants found the pitchforks not half as remunerative as the yardstick, and the refined ladies tired of the coarse company of pots and kettles. One by one they returned to their old homes and vocations, and Yellow Springs became a beautiful but faded dream in their memories.

## IV.—NASHOBA

THE most original, if not the most important, community of the Owenite cycle was Nashoba, founded in the fall of 1825 by Frances Wright.

The settlement comprised 2,000 acres of land on both sides of the Wolf River, about thirteen miles above Memphis, in the State of Tennessee.

Frances Wright was one of the most striking figures of the Owen movement. Born in Scotland, she early acquired renown for her philanthropic works, strong intellect, and sympathies with all progressive movements of her time. She traveled extensively in the United States, especially in the South, where she made a study of the conditions of the negro. She also visited the Rappists, Shakers, and other sectarian communities, and was deeply impressed with their social theories and mode of life. She took a leading part in the early antislavery agitation, and was one of the first and most forcible advocates of woman's rights.

Her chief purpose in establishing the Nashoba Community was to educate the negro slaves to social and economic equality with the whites. With that object in view, she purchased several negro families, and persuaded some planters to lend her a few of their slaves for the experiment. With these and a number of white persons of all vocations she started the community.

Her plan was to establish model schools for the common use by the children of the white and black, to set the negroes to work on the settlement, using one-half of the proceeds of their labor for their maintenance and subsistence, and the other half for the creation of a fund to purchase their emancipation.

The management of the community was to be in the hands of some philanthropists associated with the founder in the enterprise. The first few months of the experiment

were quite satisfactory, and the results achieved under the intelligent and energetic superintendence of Frances Wright seemed very encouraging. But just when her personal presence was most needed, Miss Wright fell sick, and was compelled to make a voyage to Europe for the recovery of her health.

In December, 1826, she deeded the land, together with the slaves and personal property, to General Lafayette, William Maclure, Robert Owen, Robert Dale Owen, C. Colden, R. Whitby, R. Jennings, G. Flower, J. Richardson, and Camilla Wright, "to be held by them, and their associates and successors, in perpetual trust for the benefit of the negro race." Under the management of these trustees the community lasted a little over a year. The extraordinary task assumed by Miss Wright proved to be beyond the powers of her successors, and Miss Wright, who had in the meanwhile returned from Europe, was unable to arrest the steady process of disintegration. In March, 1828, the trustees of Nashoba announced that they had for the time being deferred the attempt to organize the community on a basis of cooperative labor, and that they merely claimed for it the title of "Preliminary Social Community."

Three months later the entire experiment was abandoned. The slaves were given their freedom, and removed to Haiti.

The Nashoba experiment was not the end of Frances Wright's activity.

She continued to make propaganda for the cause of communism, antislavery, and woman's rights in the columns of the *New Harmony Gazette* and *The Free Enquirer*.

At one time she also attracted much attention by the eloquent public speeches on her favorite subjects, which she delivered in all the principal cities of the Union.

She died at Cincinnati, Ohio, December 14, 1852, at the age of fifty-seven years.

## V.—OTHER OWENITE EXPERIMENTS

OF the remaining Owenite communities, one deserves special mention for the variety of its fortunes and the persistence of its members.

The community appears in the history of the Owenite period three times, at different places and under different names, but in reality it is but one enterprise, started at Haverstraw, N. Y., and wound up at Kendal, Ohio.

## THE HAVERSTRAW COMMUNITY

This community was formed in 1826 by one Fay, a New York lawyer, and several other New Yorkers and Philadelphians of culture and means.

They occupied one hundred and twenty acres of land at Haverstraw on the Hudson, about thirty miles from New York. The number of their members soon increased to eighty, and among them were many persons skilled in various trades and occupations, as well as some professional men, and the material condition of the colony was at all times prosperous.

The feature of the community was the establishment of a CHURCH OF REASON, which was attended by the members on Sundays, and in which lectures on Morals, Philosophy, and Science were delivered. These assemblies took the place of all religious ceremonies and observances.

The community had a very short-lived career, and the cause of its failure is said to have been dishonest management.

After the breaking up of the Haverstraw Community, the majority of the members joined

**THE COXSACKIE COMMUNITY**

This experiment was very similar to that of Haverstraw. The estate of Coxsackie was also situated in the State of New York, about seven miles from the Hudson River. It existed less than a year, and from what we can learn, the members spent most of that time in discussing proposed constitutions.

We meet many of the members again in

**THE KENDAL COMMUNITY**

This community was located near Canton, Ohio. It was founded toward the close of 1826, and its beginning was very promising.

The members, about 150 in number, consisted of farmers, mechanics, and also the inevitable "choice spirits." They conducted a woolen factory, erected a number of dwellings, and were engaged in the building of a large common hall, 170 by 33 feet.

They were animated by a spirit of harmony and concord, and they proclaimed triumphantly that the success of their social system had been demonstrated beyond contradiction.

The following passage from a letter of John Hannon,\* who was a member of the community, accounts for its sudden end:

"Our Community progressed harmoniously and prosperously so long as the members had their health, and a hope of paying for their domain. But a summer fever attacked us, and seven heads of families died, among whom were several of our most valued and useful members. At the same time, the rich proprietors of whom we purchased our land urged us to pay; and we could not sell a part of it and give a good title, because we were not incorporated. So we were compelled to give up and disperse, losing what we had

\* Quoted in Noyes's "History of American Socialisms."

paid, which was about \$7,000. But we formed friendships that were enduring, and the failure never for a moment weakened my faith in the value of Communism."

Noyes mentions four more Owenite communities, two in Indiana, one in Pennsylvania, and one in New York. But they seem to have been insignificant and short-lived, and their history is not known.