

doomed to the still more dreaded ignominy of "parish burial," excites one's indignation as much as it stirs one's sympathy. We deeply pity the sufferers, while we deplore the laxity of the system which has brought such a terrible fate upon them. We need not inquire into the history of these defunct societies; we know that, if traced, it would reveal the usual discreditable features—absurdly inadequate premiums, extravagant management expenses, an impracticable scale of "benefits," and a "struggle for existence," carried on for years after the insolvency of the society was either strongly suspected or actually proved.

From this return of "Paupers who have been Members of Benefit Societies," the members of many existing societies may forecast the fate which inevitably awaits them unless speedy and vigorous efforts be made to avert it. No measures now adopted can save some of these institutions from ruin; they may be bolstered up for a time, but their ultimate collapse is certain, and it may be sudden.

As to the rest, it remains with the members themselves to determine what shall be their future. No amended Friendly Societies Act can save Friendly Societies from the consequences of indifference or folly on the part of their members; and the most vigilant of Chief Registrars can do nothing to ward off the dangers which he foresees, if those who are most concerned turn a deaf ear to his warnings. The registration of a Friendly Society does not guarantee its financial soundness, and cannot ensure its economical management; these are matters which every member is bound, by all the dictates of prudence, to attend to himself, and which he can neglect only at the peril of losing whatever provision he is striving to make for the days of sickness or of sorrow that are certain to visit his home.

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ART. VI.—RICHARD COBDEN.

The Life of Richard Cobden. By JOHN MORLEY, Barrister-at-Law, M.A., Oxford, Hon. LL.D., Glasgow. In two volumes. London: Chapman & Hall (Limited). 1881.

WE begin our review of this book with a confession similar to that with which Macaulay began his review of Mackintosh's "Historical Fragment;" and as it is scarcely possible to improve upon his phraseology we freely adapt it to our own case.

"We have in vain tried to perform what ought to be to a critic an easy and habitual act. But it is to no purpose. All the lines of that

plain but expressive countenance are before us. All the peculiar cadences of that voice, which used to impart to Parliament and the people the lessons of a serene and benevolent wisdom, are in our ears. We will attempt to preserve strict impartiality. But we are not ashamed to own that we approach this biography of a virtuous and most accomplished man with feelings of respect and gratitude which may possibly pervert our judgment.”*

At the close of the first visit to England of the American revivalists, Moody and Sankey, one of the supporters of their mission, conversing with another, expressed his fear that the efforts of the Revivalists had not been very effectual for the conversion of sinners. His more hopeful friend rejoined, “No, but they have converted the ‘Churches.’” We hope that the true disciples of Cobden do not, like the Churches, stand in need of conversion, but we trust that the publication of these volumes will revive the purity and deepen the power of their testimony in favour of the three great principles, “logically connected in argument and intimately blended in sentiment,” †—Free Trade, Economy, and Peace—the furtherance of which Richard Cobden lived, and it is not too much to say, died to promote. There is need for this expression of trust, and, at the same time, for warning. A spasmodic effort is being made to undo Cobden’s work, and, under the names of Fair Trade and Reciprocity, to revive the spectre of that “old, worn out, and disgusting system of Protection,” which was tersely defined “as robbing everybody to enrich somebody else.” The new advocates of Protection are intellectually as little and weak as they whom in argument Cobden encountered and slew; but they are, if not numerically, yet politically and socially powerful. Mr. Morley, in his preface, while expressing the hope that at this juncture “his book will prove opportune,” carefully warns his readers that possibly it may disappoint those who expect to find in it a completely furnished armoury for the champions of Free Trade. “I did not,” he adds, “conceive it to be my task to compile a polemical hand-book for that controversy. For this the reader must always go “to the Parliamentary Debates between 1840 and 1846, and to “the manuals of political economy.” We hope Mr. Morley’s caution may not be lost on those whom duty or inclination leads to take part in the revived controversy.

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW may regard with pardonable complacency the career of Richard Cobden. He was the great oral exponent of that teaching on the question of the Corn and Provision Laws, and on the wider problem of general

* Essay, “Sir James Mackintosh,” p. 310. Edn. 1874.

† Mr. Cobden’s own words.

Free Trade which this Review so ardently supported. Its first editor, Sir John Bowring, and the contributor of its first article, William Johnson Fox, were acknowledged Free Traders before Cobden's name was politically known, even in Manchester, much less in London. They, with James Mill, from the very first, made the REVIEW, on those and cognate questions, speak with no uncertain sound. About the time of Bentham's death (May, 1832) the late General Thomas Perronet Thompson* became editor and a proprietor of the REVIEW. Thompson was the first man who, to use Cobden's phrase, "vulgarized"—or, as he was corrected by Mr. Bright, "popularized"—the doctrines of political economy. In 1829, while still a major in a dragoon regiment, Thompson published "The Anti-Corn Law Catechism, by a Member of the University of Cambridge," one of the most masterly and pungent exposures (as Bowring truly said) of fallacies which ever passed the press. The wife of one of his brother officers, seeing on a copy of the Catechism the words, "With the Author's compliments," in Thompson's somewhat peculiar handwriting, incautiously said, "Why, that is my major's writing!" The authorship became generally known, and the fact reaching official military circles led to Thompson's supersession from military employment.† During his connection with the REVIEW he contributed to it many other articles on the Free Trade question, especially one with the title, "L'homme à quarante ecus," of nearly equal value with the "Catechism."‡ The "Catechism" was the first of those tracts which the Anti-Corn Law League circulated through the country by hundreds of thousands. Thompson was one of the League missionaries, and was an acceptable speaker at a public meeting, though not in Parliament. He was a great mathematician, and his speeches were pieces of abstract demonstration quaintly enriched with a Puritan phraseology. This he owed to his familiar acquaintance with, and admiration of, the Puritan characters in our history, and to his Methodist training.§ At the meeting of the League held after the repeal of the Corn Laws, to suspend its further proceedings, Cobden bore this

* See further as to Thompson and Fox, "Autobiographical Recollections of Sir John Bowring," pp. 70-73.

† After the conclusion of the Free Trade struggle he received the honorary rank of Major-General, through the influence of his Anti-Corn Law League colleague, Mr. C. P. Villiers, then (1853-4) Judge Advocate-General.

‡ These, with other of his writings, he published in six volumes, under the quaint title of "Exercises." The work is now very scarce.

§ He was the grandson of the Rev. Vincent Perronet, one of the few ministers of the establishment who supported John Wesley. His father (a banker at Hull) was one of Wesley's first lay preachers. At Cambridge he was the favourite pupil of Isaac Milner, one of the early evangelical leaders.

testimony to the services of him whom he used to call "the Father of us all."—"Colonel [such was his then rank] Thompson has made more large pecuniary sacrifices than any man living for Free Trade, and we all know his contributions, in an intellectual point of view, have been invaluable to us."*

It was David Hume and Adam Smith, who first, in the "Economical Essays" and in "The Wealth of Nations," published in these islands the doctrines of Political Economy. The WESTMINSTER REVIEW first introduced the subject into popular literature. To Richard Cobden belongs the high honour of being the prophet—in the truest and highest sense of Forth-teller rather than Foreteller,†—of the truths which others had earlier given to the world.

With Mr. Morley's book we are disappointed. As a biography it is far inferior to Stanley's "Arnold," to Mr. Trevelyan's Life of his Uncle, or his "Early Life of Fox." It is—especially in the first volume—rather a series of studies or disquisitions on Cobden than his life.

Our impression is that the writer had no personal acquaintance with Cobden. Of some facts in his career he seems to be ignorant. On some subjects he seems either not to apprehend Cobden's opinions, or to have been misinformed in regard to them. In both these respects we will endeavour, from our own recollections of Cobden's conversations, and from information received from some of his older associates, to correct and supplement our author's statements.

The man who was the arch-enemy of landlord predominance, but who, was in reality one of the truest friends of the landed interest, was not the son of a manufacturer, but, as he loved to call himself, "a Sussex farmer's son." He was born, not among the dismal streets and the tall chimneys, and under the dingy sky of a manufacturing town, but on the confines of the Weald of Sussex, and in the midst of a nest of great landlords, whose estates "extend in almost unbroken masses for upwards of twenty miles."‡ His whole life long, it was well said, he was more of a countryman than a townsman.§

Sometime in the seventeenth century the Cobden family settled on a small farm called Dunford. It lies in the parish of Heyshott, one mile and a half from the ancient borough of Midhurst. They were yeomen, the farm passed in succession from father to son until 1809, when Cobden's grandfather,

* Speech at Manchester, July 4, 1846.—"Cobden's Speeches," Edin. 1878, p. 201.

† Dean Stanley's "Lectures on the Prophetic Office."

‡ "1799 and 1853," "Cobden's Collected Writings," p. 209.

§ *St. Paul's Magazine*. January, 1870.

Richard Cobden the elder, died, and the old family farm was sold. The future Free Trade leader was then four years old. He was born on the 3rd of June, 1804. He was the fourth of the eleven children of Wm. Cobden by his wife, who, in Mr. Morley's phrase, "had borne the gracious maiden name of 'Millicent Amber.'" The father seems to have been a "kindly, helpless man," the mother "was endowed with native sense, shrewdness, and force of mind."* From her, doubtless, Cobden derived that "rare union of insight, with force of will,"† which, according to Bunsen, distinguished him among the statesmen of his time. Of the rest of the family we hear but little; of the sisters almost nothing, and not much more of the younger brothers. Of Frederick, the eldest brother, we hear only too much. In Richard's twenty-fifth year he wrote to his brother:—

"I know your heart well enough to feel that there is a large portion of it ever warmly devoted to my interests, and I should be doing injustice to mine if I did not tell you that I have not one ambitious view or hope from which you stand separated. I feel that fortune, with her usual caprice, has, in dealing with us, turned her face to the least deserving; but we will correct her mistake for once, and I must insist that you, from henceforth, consider yourself as by right my associate in all her favours."‡

To the injury of Cobden and his interests, the brothers remained associated until the death of Frederick. "With all his excellent qualities, he was one of the men who mistake feverish anxiety for business-like caution, and then suppose that they repair the errors of timidity by moments of hurried action." But throughout their lives Richard acted on the promise made in early manhood, and the elder partook of the good as well as the bad fortunes of the younger brother. When Dunford was re-purchased, Frederick shared with Richard and his family the shelter of its roof, and there, in 1858, he died.§

"Difficulty," said Burke, "is a severe instructor, set over us by the supreme ordinance of a parental guardian and legislator, who knows us better than we know ourselves, as he loves us better too. 'Pater ipse colendi, haud facilem esse viam voluit.' He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill: our antagonist is our helper."

No one better than Cobden could, from his own experience, "set his seal" to the truth of this saying; and even more truly than Burke he also might have said of himself, "I was not rocked

* "Life," vol. i. p. 23.

† "Bunsen's Memoirs," vol. ii. p. 417.

‡ Vol. i. p. 17, under date Sept. 21, 1828.

§ Vol. ii. p. 204.

and dandled into a legislator." Poverty met him in infancy, and we regret that it is not too much to say that throughout the greater part of his life he was straitened in his circumstances.

Poverty and misfortune never wearied in pursuing William Cobden. Relatives of his own or his wife's charged themselves with the maintenance of his children. Richard, less happy than the others, was "taken away from a dame's school at Midhurst,* and cheerful tending of the sheep on his father's farm, and was sent by his mother's brother-in-law, a merchant in London, to a school in Yorkshire"—a school of the kind which we hope and believe has ceased to exist, and of which "Dotheboys Hall" will ever be the literary monument. "The unfortunate boy, from his tenth to his fifteenth year, was ill-fed, ill-taught, ill-used, and never saw parent or friend."† Of his sufferings during this desolate period his sensitive nature would not in after times allow him to speak. The iron indeed entered into his soul, but the brutal, enslaving, cramping and degrading tyranny of this school did no moral injury "to the manliest and gentlest spirit which ever haunted a human form."‡ In his fifteenth year he was delivered from this house of bondage, and began life as a clerk in a London warehouse. There is some difficulty in harmonizing the accounts of this part of his life given in Mr. McGilchrist's very interesting and useful little memoir§ with those given in the volumes before us. Both authorities agree that his first situation was in the counting-house of an uncle, who, in Cobden's own phrase, "inflicted rather than bestowed his bounties." Mr. McGilchrist says that in consequence of this Cobden removed to another house of business. Mr. Morley is silent as to this, but says that in 1822 Cobden accepted the offer of a situation in a mercantile house in Ghent, but that in consequence of his father's very unreasonable disapproval he withdrew his acceptance. Both authorities agree that Cobden's endeavours to learn French, and his love of reading generally, provoked the censure of his employers, who, according to the narrow views prevalent at that time, thought such pursuits quite inconsistent with the character and habits "of a man of business."

We have heard, and the story seems intrinsically probable, that at one time Cobden was in the warehouse of the well-known firm of William Leaf & Co., in Old Change. He, with many other

* Or, according to one authority, the Grammar School of Midhurst.

† *Ibid.* p. 4.

‡ Mr. Bright's words in his Tribute to Cobden, House of Commons, 3rd of April, 1865.

§ "Richard Cobden, the Apostle of Free Trade: his Political Career and Public Services; a Biography." By John McGilchrist. Lockwood & Co., 1865.

young men, lived in the house. The rule was, that after a fixed hour in the evening lights in the bedrooms were to be put out. Cobden, however, had a lamp, so made, as, while hiding its light from others, to throw it all on his bed, and he passed the greater part of his nights in studying Smith's "Wealth of Nations."* The year 1825 was a sad and memorable one to Cobden. His mother died a victim to typhoid fever, caught in nursing a neighbour's child who fell sick of that disease. He himself became a commercial traveller. It is not among "Bagmen," as they used derisively to be called, that we have been used to look for our statesmen; nor have the commercial-rooms of provincial inns generally been preparatory schools for the House of Commons; and yet, in our day, that unjustly derided class—unjustly derided, because they are the great distributors of the benefits of trade and manufacturers amongst the people—has furnished two of our most remarkable men—Richard Cobden, the most active and most "persuasive of popular statesmen;† George Moore, one of the most liberal and practical of philanthropists.‡

"The collecting accounts and soliciting orders for muslins and calicoes" gave Cobden an "opportunity of gratifying the master-passion of his life, an insatiable desire to know the affairs of the world." In the free and energetic, if not always refined, discussions of the commercial-room, he acquired that accessibility to, and sociability with, strangers which remained with him to the last, and was one of his most marked and pleasing characteristics. This knowledge of men and affairs, superinduced on his acquaintance with the principles of economic science gained by diligent nocturnal study of "The Wealth of Nations," resulted in "the formation in his mind of a body of theoretic principles and a philosophical conception of modern society, round which the knowledge so strenuously sought was habitually grouped, and by which the desire to learn was gradually directed and configured."§ As Mr. Courtney has said of "The Wealth of Nations," Cobden's Free Trade policy was merely part of that greater whole—the conception of Society—to which Mr. Morley refers. At some time during his early life Cobden studied

* *Ex relatione* the late William Wickham, formerly honorary secretary of the Ballot Society, a distant relative of Cobden's.

† Vol. i. p. 7.

‡ Cobden and Moore "travelled" during the same period. Among the survivors of the commercial travellers of that time there is a legend, which seems probably true, that in commercial rooms Cobden was known as "Spouting Dick." We see that one of the oldest literary organs of the genteel, or Conservative party, politely calls Mr. Morley's book "the life of a bagman by a Cockney." And according to a writer in the *Saturday Review*, Carlyle was once guilty of a like breach of good taste in calling Cobden "a bagman."

§ P. 7.

phrenology, and though never a thorough disciple of that system, he remained to the end affected in a slight degree by its modes of thought and expression. "No teacher of Cobden's time he found so acceptable or so inspiring as George Combe." He read Combe's volume* before he wrote his first pamphlets. It seemed, he said, like a transcript of his own familiar "thoughts." He found, to quote Mr. Morley—

"Combe's teaching in harmony with his own temperament: it rests upon the natural soundness of the human heart, and its methods are those of mildness and lenity. In his intrepid faith in the perfectibility of man and society, Cobden is the only eminent practical statesman that this country has ever possessed, who constantly breathes the fine spirit of that French school in which the name of 'Turgot' is most illustrious."†

Combe early became, and to the end remained, one of Cobden's intimate friends and frequent correspondents. Cobden's letters, written during his earliest commercial journeys, are very interesting. One of them, written on his first journey, illustrates "that peculiar vein of reverence for tradition" which, as Lord Beaconsfield in his posthumous tribute remarked, distinguished Cobden's character. Compelled, in the days before railways, to wait half a day at Shrewsbury for a coach, he visited the old church, and "was greatly impressed by its venerable walls and painted glass." "Oh! that I had money," he writes to his brother, "to be deep skilled in the mysteries of mullions and architraves, in lieu of black and purple and pin grounds."

His second journey extended to Scotland, and he went out of his way to see the birth-place of Robert Burns. He was accompanied by a small manufacturer from Paisley, "who found Cobden's spirit of hero-worship tiresome," and whose chief inducement to accompany him seems to have been the fact that at the poet's birth-place "they kept the best whisky in the neighbourhood." The visitors were shown "the verra spot where poor Robbie was borned," and were told many legends concerning him.

"I believe, [Cobden shrewdly remarked] if these two bodies were put upon their oath to all they told us, that they would not be guilty of falsehood or perjury, for I am quite sure they are both persuaded that their tale is true, and from no other cause than that they have told it so often. And yet I would venture to bet all I possess and, what is more, *all I owe*, that they never saw Burns in all their lives."‡

On his first journey to Ireland, when he was little more than one-and-twenty, his mind turned directly to the political and

* On the "Constitution of Man."

† Vol. i. pp. 93, 94-121.

‡ *Ibid.* i., p. 8.

social condition of the country. Its condition was one of the subjects of his First Pamphlet, and was matter of interest and anxiety to him to the end of his life. He notices how immediately after the traveller leaves Dublin—

“You are reminded by the miserable tenements in the roadside that you are in the land of poverty, ignorance, and misrule. Although my route afforded a favourable specimen of the Irish peasantry, it was a sight truly heartrending. There appears to be no middle class in Ireland; there are the rich, and those who are objects of wretchedness and almost starvation.”

Humble as was then Cobden's position, he did not escape the ruin brought on the commercial world by the panic of 1825. The firm for which he travelled was one of the many who failed, and he was forced to take an unwelcome holiday. After passing two more years on the road, Cobden determined to start in business for himself. “I began business,” he wrote many years afterwards, “in partnership with two other young men, and we only mustered a thousand pounds amongst us, and more than half of it was borrowed.”* At first they only sold in London calico prints sent them by firms in Manchester, on commission. “In 1831 they determined to enlarge their borders, and to print their own goods.” The new firm had three establishments—their printing works at Sabden, near Clithero, and two for the sale of their goods—one in London, and another, under Cobden's personal superintendence, in Manchester. In 1830,† when he had only reached his twenty-sixth year, Cobden took up his residence in Manchester. He writes with enthusiasm of Manchester as it was fifty years ago. It is in many respects very different from the Manchester of to-day. It is, he says, the place for all men of “bargains and business.”

“His pen acquires a curiously exalting animation as he describes the bustle of its streets, the quaintness of its dialect, the abundance of its capital, and the sturdy veterans, with a hundred thousand pounds in each pocket, who might be seen in the evening smoking clay pipes and calling for brandy-and-water in the bar parlours of homely taverns. He declared his conviction from what he had seen, that if he were stripped naked and turned into Lancashire, with only his experience for a capital, he would still make a large fortune.‡

In such a place, and in such a moral atmosphere, “a commonplace character—it has been said by a writer who evidently

* Vol. i. p. 15. Comp. McGilchrist, p. 15.

† According to the informant quoted by McGilchrist; 1831, according to Mr. Morley; but McGilchrist's statement seems authoritative.

‡ Vol. i. p. 19.

knew Cobden well—would have settled into a common-place money maker and cotton lord;”* but Cobden was no common-place character, and a very different career was to be his.

“With reference to wealth,” he writes to his brother Frederick, “both you and I must not omit reasonable precautions; we are not made for rivalling Methusaleh, and if we can by care stave off the grim enemy for twenty years longer we shall do more than Nature intended for us. At all events, let us remember that to live usefully is far better than living long. And do not let us deprive ourselves of the gratification at last—a gratification the selfish never have—that we have not embittered our whole lives with heaping up money, but that we have given a part of our time to more rational and worthy exertions.”†

This was written in his thirty-fourth year, and it is the earliest recorded expression we find of his conviction that as he belonged to a short-lived family, old age would not be his lot. In fact, he lived nearly to complete his sixty-first year, or seven years longer than the period which he thought Nature intended for him. In the same spirit he again writes to the same correspondent:—

“As for money I feel a disregard for it, and even a slovenly inattention to its possession that is quite dangerous. I have scarcely ever, as usual, a sovereign in my pocket, and have been twice to Whalley, to find myself without the means of paying my expenses. I do not think that the possession of millions would greatly alter my habits of expense.”‡

After his settlement in Manchester, and between 1833 and 1836, his character widened and ripened with surprising quickness. “We pass,” continues Mr. Morley, “at a single step from the natural and wholesome egotism of the young man who has his bread to win, to the wide interests and generous public spirit of the good citizen.”§ The moral and intellectual improvement of his firm’s workpeople at Sabden demanded and early received his attention; nor was his self-education neglected. During this same period he made himself acquainted with “the greatness of Cervantes, the geniality of Le Sage, the sweetness of Spenser, the splendid majesty of Burke,” no less than with “the general course of European history in the past, and with the wide forces that were then actually at work in the present.”|| Early in life he felt the impulse of composition. His first writing was a play, entitled “The Phrenologist.” He offered it to the manager of Covent Garden Theatre. “Luckily for me,” he

* *St. Paul’s Magazine*, *ubi supra*.

† *Ibid.* p. 20.

§ *Ibid.* p. 25.

† Vol i. p. 118.

|| *Ibid.* p. 26.

said, "the manager rejected it, for if he had accepted it I should probably have been a vagabond all the rest of my life." He soon engaged in public life. His earliest speeches were made at Clithero, on behalf of the education of the young. The furtherance of popular education was throughout his life one of his principal objects. It was association in that cause that led to his making the acquaintance of his fellow-labourer and dearest friend, JOHN BRIGHT.

His earliest political work consisted of Letters addressed anonymously to *The Manchester Times*.* The history of these letters is worth telling more fully than Mr. Morley has told it. During the severe struggle by the inhabitants of Manchester to obtain the incorporation of the town, the proprietors of *The Manchester Times* received a series of letters upon that and other subjects of public interest from an anonymous correspondent, under the signature of "Libra."† These letters—we are told by Mr. Cathrall, one of the proprietors—which were generally furnished "alternate weeks, were marked by so much thought and ability, that we were desirous to have an interview with the writer, and accordingly inserted a line in our paper to that effect."‡ Cobden consequently called at the office, and made the acquaintance of Cathrall and his partner, the late Archibald Prentice,§ who was widely known throughout Lancashire as one of the ablest journalists and one of the most active politicians on the Liberal side in the county. We have heard Mr. Prentice say that on reading the letters of "Libra," he was impressed by the idea that they had among them in Manchester "some lonely student like Adam Smith, in his garret at Kirkcaldy," meditating the composition of a work which, like "The Wealth of Nations," should, in Mr. Buckle's words, "contribute more to the happiness of man than had been effected by the united abilities of all the statesmen and legislators of whom history has preserved an authentic record." Mr. Prentice himself fixed rather a later date for the commencement of his acquaintance with Cobden. He received a copy of Cobden's "England, Ireland, and America," having on the title-page, in Cobden's very marked handwriting, the words, "With the author's compliments." He said, "Why this is 'Libra's' handwriting," and

* The forerunner of the present journal, *The Manchester Examiner and Times*.

† According to the rule then practised by editors, the letters being strictly argumentative, and not asserting matters of fact, or dealing with personal subjects, the real name and address of the writer were not required.

‡ Quoted in McGilchrist, pp. 17, 18.

§ Author of "Recollections of Manchester," and of the "History of the Anti-Corn Law League."

this led to his inquiring into the personality of "Libra," and to his acquaintance with Cobden. Mr. Morley describes Cobden at this time "as extremely self-possessed and confident, and as a consequence, he was often thought to be wanting in the respect that is due from a young man to his elders, and from a man who has a fortune to make towards those who have to make it."* It is difficult to account for a description so strangely at variance with actual records. The testimony of those who knew Cobden at that time is directly contradictory. "I well remember," says Mr. Cathrall, "in reference to his first meeting with Cobden, that in this interview he was very diffident, and somewhat nervous in temperament; at the same time, it was obvious to us, even then, that he was, in ability and promise, much above the average of young men."† Mr. Prentice‡ also tells us that he thought that "in the modest and unassuming gentleman before him there was not sufficient nerve to make a political leader; with this agrees the testimony of the writer of the valuable sketch from which we have several times quoted. "When you saw him, the suggestion of your mind was, whatever that man may be, he cannot be a popular agitator. Perfect simplicity clothed his greatness."§ These testimonies are corroborated by the undisputed fact that Cobden, on his first attempt to address a public meeting in Manchester, broke down from sheer nervousness.||

"Very early in life," Mr. Morley tells us, "Cobden perceived, and he never ceased to perceive, that for his purposes no preparation could be so effective as that of travel." So early as 1833 he paid a short visit to Paris in search of designs for his business. The chief impression made on him by this visit was that the habit of Parisian life was—as he happily phrased it—"pleasure without pomp." In the following year he returned to France, and extended his journey to Switzerland.

"The people of this country," he writes to his brother, "are, I believe the best governed, and therefore the most prosperous and happy in the world. It is the only Government which has not one Douanier in its pay, and yet, thanks to free trade, there is scarcely any branch of manufacturing industry which does not in one part or other of the country find a healthy occupation."

But he was not absorbed in the study of the social and political state of the people; he felt, to the fullest extent, the

* Vol. i. p. 26.

† McGilchrist, pp. 13, 18.

‡ In his "History of the Anti-Corn Law League."

§ *St. Paul's Magazine, ubi supra.*

|| McGilchrist, vol i. p. 1920.

influence of the imposing glories of the inanimate universe. Many years later, "a friend, who was about to visit the United States, asked him whether it would be worth his while to go far out of his way for the sake of seeing the Falls of Niagara?" "Yes, most assuredly," was Cobden's reply; "Nature has the sublimity of rest and the sublimity of motion—the sublimity of rest is the great snow mountains; the sublimity of motion is in Niagara."*

The spring of 1835 saw the publication of his first political pamphlet, "England, Ireland, and America;" and almost immediately after he had seen it through the press he started on his first tour to America, a more serious thing then than now, for steam had not yet bridged over the Atlantic, and the railway system in America, as in England, was in its earliest infancy. He landed in New York on the 1st of June, and reckoning the passages out and home, was absent exactly three months. Writing to his brother, he expressed his joy at finding himself in a country, on the soil of which, he continues, "I fondly hope will be realized some of those dreams of human exaltation, if not of perfection, with which I love to console myself."† He visited the chief cities of the eastern shore; he saw an Indian encampment, on the site of what is now the great city of Chicago, but found his way no further west.

After his return from America, public affairs "drew him with an irresistible attraction." In the summer of 1836 he published his second pamphlet, "Russia." His first pamphlet was by this time in its fifth edition. Under the combined pressure of his business, and his devotion to public affairs, his health, never strong, failed, and his doctors advised him that the winter should be spent abroad. "As the business was in good order, and the mainspring—to use his own figure—was not necessary until the following spring he resolved to set forth eastward." He was absent from October, 1836, to April, 1837. He touched at Lisbon and at Cadiz, where he saw "the loveliest female costume in the world, the Spanish mantilla." Those who did not know him, and who imagined him to have been only a dry, cold, hard, political economist will be surprised at what those who knew him will recognize to be the familiar tone of his conversation in the remark:—

"Sorry I am to tell you that the demon innovation is making war upon the mantilla, in the shape of foreign fashions. French bonnets are beginning to usurp the throne of the black mantilla. The French will have much to answer for if they supersede with their frippery and finery this beautiful mode."‡

* Vol. i. pp. 27, 28 and 35.

† *Ibid.* p. 30.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 43.

From Spain he went to Egypt, Greece and Turkey. While in Egypt he saw "the monuments called Cleopatra's Needles," and expresses the hope "that good taste, or at least the feelings of economy, will prevent this vestige of the days of the Pharaohs from being removed to London or Paris, to become merely objects of vulgar wonderment, besides being subjected to the destroying effects of our humid climate."* He had an interview with no less a personage than Mehemet Ali, whose head was, as far as Cobden could discover through its covering, confirmatory of the science of phrenology; yet upon the whole, there was nothing striking or extraordinary in his countenance. Mehemet Ali volunteered a discourse on cotton, until, finding he was talking to a Manchester man, he abruptly changed his conversation to the subject of his navy. On another occasion, Cobden had an hour's conversation with Mehemet on the subject of his way of managing his cotton factories. Cobden was struck with the Pasha's readiness in replying and reasoning; but his final judgment on him was he had been puffed by his creatures in Europe as a regenerator and a reformer. "I can trace in him only a rapacious tyrant."† From Constantinople he made an excursion up the Bosphorus—

"to see the scenery which all concur in praising as the most beautiful in Europe; but [he wrote], the misery, the dirt, the plagues, and all the other disagreeables of Constantinople haunted me even in the quiet and solitude of natural beauties which, apart from such associations, are certainly enough to excite the romantic fervour of the most chilly hearted."‡

A visit to Athens led to the following panegyric on the Greeks, and prediction of their future:—

"I am satisfied there is nothing now in existence which for beauty of design, masterly workmanship, and choice of situation, can compare with that spectacle of grandeur and sublimity which the public temples of the ancient Athens presented two thousand years ago. What a genius and what a taste had those people! *And, mind, the genius is there still.* All the best deeds of ancient times will be again rivalled by the Greeks of a future age. . . . The raw material of all that is noble, brilliant, refined, and glorious is still latent in the character of this people, overlaid, as is natural, with the cunning, falsehood, meanness, and other vices inherent in the spirits of slaves. Do not, however, fancy that I am predicting the revival of Greek greatness, through the means of the little trumpety monarch of that name, which will pass away like other bubbles blown by our shallow statesmen. All the East will be Greek; and Constantinople, no matter under

* Vol. i. p. 52.

† *Ibid.* p. 66.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 72.

what nominal sovereignty it may fall, will, by the force of the indomitable genius of the Greeks, become in fact the capital of that people.”*

He showed his usual shrewd forecast of events in thus early describing—

“the persistent energy and intelligence which in fifty years has transformed the huts under Turkish rule into the present beautiful Athens, with her schools, academies and benevolent institutions, which stand forth as a beacon to show where the future life of the East is already kindled.”†

“Cobden,” remarks Mr. Morley, “could hardly have spent a more profitable holiday, for he had laid up a great stock of political information, and acquired a certain living familiarity with the circumstances of the eastern basin of the Mediterranean and the Turkish Government—then as now the centre of our active diplomacy—and with the real working of those principles of national policy which he had already condemned by the light of native common sense and reflection.”‡

We have read with interest and agree with Mr. Morley’s review of Cobden’s first two pamphlets.§

“They are a great landmark in the history of politics in England, and they are still as much worth reading as ever they were. Some of the statements are antiquated; the historical criticism is some what open to doubt; there are one or two mistakes, but they are mostly like the poets who spoke of ‘*i miei non falsi errori*.’ If time has weakened their literal force it has confirmed their real significance.”||

Sir Louis Mallet, in his Introductory Note to Cobden’s “Russia,” has, indeed, given us external proof of the favourable reception these pamphlets received from those in authority:—

“An authentic anecdote will best illustrate the effect which the perusal of these pamphlets produced on the minds of public men, who from the eminent position they occupied thirty years ago, were best qualified to form a critical opinion on their merits. Shortly after the publication of the pamphlet (on Russia) Lord Durham, who was then the English Ambassador at St. Petersburg, received a copy of it in his official bag. He read it, and was so much impressed with the clearness and force of its leading ideas, that he at once wrote to his friend, the late lamented Mr. Joseph Parkes,¶ and requested him to

* From the Preface to “Fair Athens,” by E. M. Edmond.

† *Ibid.* p. 81.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 88.

§ Vol. i. c. 4, “The Two Pamphlets,” pp. 88-112.

|| P. 111.

¶ The eminent solicitor—afterwards one of the Taxing Masters of the Court of Chancery. As we have heard Mr. Parkes tell the story, Lord Durham’s expression was, “Find out the man who wrote it; he has more sense in his head than the whole diplomatic body of Europe.” “Those pamphlets contained more statesmanlike views than all the heads of the whole British Cabinet.”—Cobden to his Brother, June 12, 1837, vol. i. p. 138.

discover the name of its author." Mr. Parkes obtained Mr. Cobden's permission to mention his name, and when two years later, his Lordship returned to England, he desired Mr. Parkes to bring about a meeting between himself and Mr. Cobden. The result was that Mr. Cobden dined with Lord Durham, who, after an evening of friendly conversation, was still more struck by his new acquaintance. His subsequent prophetic and sagacious remark to Mr. Parkes deserves to be recorded: 'mark my words,' he said, 'Cobden will one day be one of the first men in England.'

We should as little look for a Yorkshire school to produce a literary man as for a commercial room to provide a statesman, and yet these pamphlets are as valuable for their literary excellence as for their political teaching: they are an enduring monument to the power and value of self-education. They are well-described by Mr. Morley as having

"a ringing clearness, a genial vivacity, a free and confident mastery of expression which can hardly be surpassed; Cobden is a striking instance against a favourite plea of the fanatics of Latin and Greek. Notwithstanding all his disadvantages, at the age of one-and-thirty, he stepped forth the master of a written style which, in boldness, freedom, correctness, and persuasive moderation, was not surpassed by any man then living. He had taken pains with his mind, and been a diligent and extensive reader, but he had never studied language for its own sake."*

Mr. Ridgway, the well-known publisher, who first brought out these pamphlets, told Cobden "that nobody ought to publish a pamphlet unless he had some other object in view besides publication." "I have"—wrote Cobden to his brother so early as March 1835—"another object in dim and distant perspective."† He was evidently then thinking, and as Mr. Morley truly says "with natural ambition, of the pedestal from which a place in Parliament enables a man to address his audience." For some months before the General Election which followed the death of William IV., Cobden's name had been before the politicians of Stockport, and though he expressed a wish "to have his freedom for two years more," yet, as the election drew nearer, he threw himself into the struggle with all his energy, but without success—on the day of election he was at the bottom of the poll.‡ His description of the causes of his failure, given in a letter to his uncle, is worth transcribing on account of its bearing on a subject to which we shall immediately allude.

* Vol. i. p. 111, 112.

† H. Marsland (Reformer), 480; Major Marsland (Tory), 471; R. Cobden, 418. The two successful candidates were local magnates. Cobden was quite a stranger to the borough.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 42.

“The cause of failure was that there was too much confidence on the part of the Reformers. We were too satisfied, and neglected those means of insuring the election which the Tories used, and by their activity at Stockport, as elsewhere, they gained the victory. If the battle had to be fought again to-morrow I could win. To revenge themselves for the loss of their man, the Radicals have since the election adopted a system of exclusive dealing (not countenanced by me), and those publicans and shopkeepers who voted for the Major now find their counters deserted. The consequence is that the Reformers place printed placards over their shops, “Voted for Cobden,” inscribed in large characters, and the butchers and greengrocers in the market-place cry out from their stalls, “Cobden beef, Cobden potatoes.”

As some compensation for his defeat, and as a testimony to his merits, 17,000 of his admirers subscribed one penny each to present him with a piece of plate. It was presented to him at a public dinner. Perhaps the rise of intimidation in Stockport in the shape of exclusive dealing excited his fear for the cause of free election, but certain it is that, as Mr. Morley records, the chief topic of his speech at this dinner was the ballot: “he declared that without that protection, household suffrage, the repeal of the Corn Laws, the shortening of Parliaments would be all insecure benefits.” Other accounts represent him as pointing out the very different results to the Liberal party which would have ensued had the votes at the late General Election been taken by ballot.* “There is”—remarks Mr. Morley—“in this a certain inversion of his usual order of thinking about the proper objects of political solicitude, for he commonly paid much less heed to the machinery, than to the material objects of Government.”†

If we may be allowed to say so, Mr. Morley is evidently unaware of the place the Ballot held in Cobden’s scheme of political thought: and as that scheme cannot be appreciated without knowing how cardinal a point in it was the ballot, we will endeavour to supply what, in this respect, is lacking in Mr. Morley’s volumes, and to supply it in Cobden’s own words:—

“It is perfectly necessary (he said fourteen years after the delivery of this speech at Stockport) that you should have the ballot in this country, because in no country in the world where constitutional government exists, is there so great an inequality of fortune as in this country, and so great an amount of influence brought to bear upon the poorer classes of voters. And I don’t confine my advocacy of the ballot merely to protecting the farmers or the agriculturists, give me the ballot also to protect the voter in the manufacturing districts; for

* Vol. i. p. 117.

† McGilchrist, p. 33.

you may depend upon it that you have quite as glaring an evil, arising from the influence of great wealth and station, in your electoral proceedings in Lancashire and Yorkshire, as you have in any purely agricultural district.”*

But it was for the sake of the counties particularly that he wished to see the Ballot become law, for he believed that then the counties would send to the House some of the Representatives which the county afforded; and he wanted to see the farmers in this country men of more character, dignity and self-respect, than they ever could be under the open voting system. “The Reform Bill,” he used to say, “was mainly carried by the votes of the county members. Give the farmers the ballot, and they will resume their natural place in the ranks of the Liberal party.” The revolt of the counties, as it was called at the General Election of 1880, was a remarkable illustration of the truth of this prophecy.† But if one of his reasons for urging the adoption of the ballot, was, because as he phrased it, “you cut out the heart of the aristocratic system by applying the principle of secret voting;”‡ it was not his only or his principal reason. “The Ballot,” he said, “is a moral engine which is not appreciated in England, because it has never been tried. Let it only be tried at one or two elections, and it will soon spread through the country like wildfire.”§

And again—

“The great merit and the great recommendation of the ballot is this, that it would promote order, decorum, and morality at the poll. I am by no means certain—and I tell it in all frankness—that the ballot would have a very decisive effect in forwarding any one of the particular parties interested in the poll. I am not prepared to say that my views, with regard to public questions, would be likely to be more represented in the ballot box than they are now by open voting. I think it very likely that the political party that most dreads the ballot, would sometimes the most profit by it. But this I say, that nobody who has inquired as to the proceedings in elections in America, in Switzerland, in France, in Spain, or anywhere, and compared them with the proceedings, the tumults, the violence, the bloodshed, the disgusting and odious corruption witnessed at our elections—that nobody can doubt that, as a moral engine, as a means of repressing these excesses, the ballot is the best expedient that can be resorted to.||

* Speech at Manchester, December 4, 1851. “Speeches,” p. 559.

† Especially in East Cornwall, where the Conservative member, who sat from 1874 to 1880, was considered by his party to hold one of the safest seats belonging to them.

‡ Letter to Sir Joshua Walmsley, 1852. “Life of Walmsley,” p. 275.

§ Speech at Sheffield, January, 1854, not included in the published collection.

|| At Rochdale, August 17, 1859. “Speeches,” p. 567; *conf.* p. 447.

When *The National Parliamentary and Financial Reform Association* was formed, he seemed to Sir Joshua Walmsley to be "even more anxious for Financial Reform and the Ballot than for an extension of the Suffrage."* This opinion he modified, and in 1859, and thenceforward to the end of his life, he considered that the extension of the Suffrage, "being that upon which all the rest depends, ought to be dealt with first."† When Lord Russell was about to re-appear in his old character of Parliamentary Reformer, Cobden warned him that he would not "raise any amount of enthusiasm in the country in favour of any Reform Bill which did not include the ballot; that he would not obtain from the country that strength and preponderance which he had a legitimate right to expect in proposing such a measure."‡ This warning was justified by what followed. Lord Russell's Reform Bills of 1852-54 and 1860, did not include the ballot; they were coldly received by Parliament and the country, and they were withdrawn by their author. In 1859, Cobden foretold that "one election under a new Reform Bill would inevitably carry the ballot,"§ and here also the events justified his foresight.|| Throughout all these years he considered the support of the ballot the true test of Liberalism.¶ Holding these views, he therefore welcomed the formation, in 1853, of "*The Society for Promoting the Adoption of the Vote by Ballot.*" "So long as three men—he used to say—hang together to form an organization for the ballot, I will make one," and he continued a subscriber to the Society to the close of his life. He never (except on one occasion) took any public part in its proceedings, but he admitted to his friendship and confidence a gentleman, who took an active part in the management of the Society's affairs, and who was permitted to be in frequent communication with Cobden. Indirectly, therefore, its executive had the benefit of Cobden's unrivalled talents and ripe experience in the directing popular movements. In introducing this gentleman to a meeting of the Liberals of Manchester,**

* "Life of Walmsley," p. 212.

† Speech (unreported) at a private conference of Members of Parliament and others friendly to the ballot held in the Session of 1859, and Speech at Rochdale, August 18, 1859, p. 579.

‡ Speech in 1851 at meeting of "The Parliamentary and Financial Reform Association," to be found in "The Ballot" of June 16, 1860.

§ Speech at Rochdale, August 18, 1859. "Speeches," p. 586.

|| The first Election after the Household Suffrage Act Bill was in 1868. The Ballot Act passed 1872.

¶ To Sir Joshua Walmsley.—"Life of Walmsley," p. 270.

** The Society was largely—indeed mainly—supported by subscriptions from Lancashire.

Cobden characteristically recommended them never to postpone the promotion of the ballot, for fear of inconveniencing a Minister, or making a division in the ranks of his supporters. After Cobden's return from his residence in Paris,* during the negotiations for the Treaty of Commerce, he addressed to the same gentleman a letter, urging the Society to induce the Parliamentary supporters of the ballot to a more energetic support of the measure than a mere silent vote or pair for Mr. Berkeley's annual motion. The interest naturally attaching to Cobden's latest utterance on the ballot induces us to transcribe the substance of this letter:—

“The frightful increase in the use of all kinds of corrupt and undue influences which characterizes our Parliamentary elections, if not soon checked will complete the demoralization of our constituencies, and destroy every remaining vestige of public principle and electoral independence.

“These pernicious influences and results are not now confined to small places, but are rampant everywhere, and are admitted to be triumphant by all parties; hence we find that in North Yorkshire and Oxfordshire the landed proprietors are alleged to be the operators, and landed power the instrument employed.

“In Longford and at Birkenhead, the Roman Catholic priests are said to be the aggressors, and religious authority the weapon that is wielded.

“In Nottingham, it is the mob that is the tyrant, and mob-law that defies all opposition; and in Preston, Grimsby, Wakefield, and other places, both parties charge each other with being perpetrators of the most barefaced corruption.

“Under these circumstances, and seeing that the only remedy which the Government proposes to apply to this monstrous evil is ‘The Corrupt Practices Prevention Act,’ which the *Times*, at its first enactment, designated ‘a pompous profession, meant to be inoperative, and which everybody admits to have been utterly useless,’ the time now appears to have come, when a stand should be made for at least a trial of vote by ballot, a measure that is resorted to by every other enlightened community, and by our own in almost every case except that of Parliamentary elections.’

“The Ballot has been discussed in the House of Commons until both argument and sophistry are exhausted, and only jokes and bantering remain; and yet its adoption is prevented by a motley majority led on by a professedly Liberal Premier.† If this is to continue, that which is called ‘The Liberal Party’ will soon be in a hopeless minority—their honest and hardworking adherents will cease to take interest in their cause; and their less reliable supporters will succumb to the better tactics and superior wealth of the so-called Conservative party. This state of things may be of little consequence to Lord Palmerston

* In 1862.

† *i.e.*, Lord Palmerston.

and his Anti-Ballot Whig supporters; but it cannot be supposed that it would be welcome to the great body of the Liberal members of the House of Commons. The preservation of public independence, and of a free public opinion, are of far greater importance than the preservation of any Administration, however satisfactory its foreign policy may be. Indeed, what can be a greater anomaly, or a greater injustice to this country, than to have a Government which upholds liberty in foreign states, while it refuses freedom of election at home?"

This letter was made the text of a private communication, addressed by the Society's secretary to each of the Parliamentary supporters of the ballot; and in conformity with Cobden's advice, on its statements was based an appeal to them "to demand of a Government, of whose party they formed so large a majority, that it should adopt the ballot as a Government measure, either as the permanent method of taking votes, or at least for a trial during such a period as would be sufficient to test its adaptation to the purpose proposed."* This communication fell like a bombshell among the members to whom it was sent, especially the large proportion of them who combined a formal support of the ballot with a very real servility to Lord Palmerston, some of them little thinking that Cobden was the instigator of the proceeding; indeed, much to his amusement, they complained to him of the effrontery of the Society in daring to recommend them to assume a position offensive, if not hostile, to the Government.

Before descending into the political arena, Cobden devoted six months of hard work, in the teeth of the combined opposition of Tories and Tory Radicals, to obtain municipal incorporation for the great community in which his lot was cast. Manchester received its charter of incorporation in the autumn of 1838, and Cobden's share in promoting this important reform was recognized by the new borough; at the first municipal election he was chosen one of its first aldermen.

During a visit to London on this business, he made the acquaintance of some of the prominent journalists and politicians of the day. We select, from the record of the impressions made on him by the people he thus met, his remarks on some who were connected with *The Westminster Review*:—

"I was introduced yesterday to Mrs. and Mr. Grote at their house. I use the words Mrs. and Mr. Grote because she is the greater politician of the two. He is a mild and philosophical man, possessing the highest order of moral and intellectual endowments; but wanting something which, for need of a better phrase, I shall call *Devil*. He is too abstract in his tone of reasoning, and does not aim to influence

* Vide *The Elector* newspaper, May 16, 1862.

others by any proof, excepting that of ratiocination.* *Tusy musy* as Braham† calls it, he is destitute of. Had she been a man, she would have been the leader of a party; he is not calculated for it. I met at their House Sir W. Molesworth, a youthful, florid-looking man of foppish and conceited air, with a pile of head at the back (firmness) like a sugar-loaf. I should say that a cast of his head would furnish one of the most singular illustrations of phrenology. For the rest he is not a man of superior talents; and let him *say* what he pleases, there is nothing about him that is democratic in principle."‡

This is hardly a just estimate of Molesworth; his talents were not brilliant, but he was a man of remarkable research, great industry, and power of labour; his speeches were wholly without pretensions to rhetoric in their composition, and their effect was impaired by the mannerism of his delivery, but they were as logical as Cobden's own; and—we refer especially to his great Colonial Speeches (1847-52)—were treasuries of information on the subjects of which they treated.§ He certainly was an Aristocrat by birth, by training, and in feeling; but on the whole he remained true to the Radical creed which he adopted in his youth, and was not without the courage of his opinions, as on one occasion he showed, by rising from the Treasury Bench to answer one of his leader's (Lord Palmerston) speeches against the Ballot.|| After taking office, however, under Lord Palmerston, he completely abandoned the principle of non-intervention which he formerly held as strongly as did Cobden himself, and exposed himself to the bitterest sarcasms which Cobden ever uttered in the House of Commons.

"If," he said, "there be a Right Honourable, or honourable gentleman in this House, whose opinions I have a right to say I understand, it is the Right Honourable Baronet. I say most deliberately—and he cannot contradict me—that never in this world was there a speech delivered by any honourable gentleman so utterly at variance with all previous declarations of opinion as that delivered by the Right Honourable gentleman last night. Does the Right Honourable gentleman remember a *jeu d'esprit* of the poet Moore, when dealing, in 1833, with the Whig

* "Mr. Grote is a worthy excellent man, and would be an admirable politician if the world was a chess-board."—*Sydney Smith*, pamphlet on "The Ballot."

† It is *Braham* in the text, but surely *Bentham* is meant.

‡ Vol. i. p. 137.

§ They were composed bit by bit, carefully learned by heart, and delivered in a manner which he had been taught by an elocution master. We have heard Cobden relate that during a visit he paid to Molesworth at Pen-carrow in Cornwall—Molesworth used after dinner to rehearse to his guests a speech on Jewish Emancipation, afterwards made in the House of Commons. One of the party used to call for it in the words, "Now then, Sir William, give us the new Epistle to the Hebrews."

|| In 1854 or 1855.

occupants of those (the Treasury) benches, shortly after they had emerged from a long penance in the dreary wilderness of opposition, and when the Whigs showed themselves to be Tories when in office? Does he remember the *jeu d'esprit*? Why, I think he and I have laughed over it, when we have been talking over the sudden conversions of right honourable gentlemen. The poet illustrated the matter by a story of an Irishman who went over to the West Indies, and, before leaving, heard some of the blacks speaking tolerably bad English; whereupon, mistaking them for his own countrymen, he exclaimed, "What black and curly already?" Now we have all seen metamorphoses upon those benches. How colours have changed and features become deformed, when men came under the influence of the Treasury atmosphere; but I must say that never to my knowledge have I seen a change in which there has been so deep a black, and so stiff a curl.*

In the same letter which describes the Grotes and Molesworth, Cobden says—

"I spent a couple of hours with Roebuck at his house. He is a clever fellow; but I find that his mind is more active than powerful. He is apt to take lawyer-like views of questions, and, as you may see by his speeches, is given to cavilling and special pleading."

"At this time a friend was very anxious to introduce Cobden to Lord Palmerston; 'but I told him,' writes Cobden, 'I had made up my mind that his lordship is incurable. He [the friend says] that he is open to conviction, and a cleverer man than most of his colleagues. What a beautiful *ensemble* they must be!"

This opinion of Palmerston he held to the end, without variableness or shadow of turning.

We cannot afford space to follow Mr. Morley through the history of the Anti-Corn Law Movement in Parliament and the country. He of course could tell us nothing which is not to be found in Mr. Prentice's History of the Anti-Corn Law League, or Mr. Henry Ashworth's Recollections of Cobden, and of the remarkable confederation of which he was the mainspring. Cobden's shrewd mind saw that the question of the Corn Laws was not merely political or economical, and that if conducted as a merely political or economical movement it would fail. "It appears to me," he wrote to his brother in 1838, "that a moral and even a religious spirit may be infused into that topic, and if agitated in the same manner that the question of slavery has been, it will be irresistible." Those who remember the late Mr. Baptist Noel's "Plea for the Poor,"† and the conference of 650

* "Speeches," p. 322. See Cobden's account of the reception of this speech in "Life," vol. ii. p. 160.

† Then one of the Queen's Chaplains in Ordinary, and minister of St. John's Chapel, Bedford Row.

ministers of all religious denominations held just as the League passed from a local into a national organization, will be able to estimate the truth and soundness of this opinion of Cobden's. In his first speech in Parliament, he referred to this Conference, and took it as a sign, "that the religious people of the country had revolted against the infamous injustice of that Bread Tax which is condemned by the immutable morality of the Scriptures."*

It has been said that

"there are two Parliaments in Great Britain—the Parliament of the whole people and the parliament, a committee of this larger Parliament, which sits at Westminster. The problem of influencing the larger parliament in such wise as to exert a pressure upon the lesser parliament, was never solved with more striking effect than by Mr. Cobden."†

Mr. Ashworth, who was a fellow labourer with Cobden throughout his career, observes—

"It is very likely that Cobden very much underrated the time, the labour, the expense, and the personal sacrifice involved in a struggle against the richest and most powerful class in the land.

"He had to excite the feelings of the people in opposition to the existing laws (at all times a very dangerous process); he had to point out that these laws were enacted for the special benefit of the great landowners; and this could hardly be done without exciting anger against them as individuals.

"In looking back upon the work, and counting the odds:—on the one side a few comparatively unknown and unimportant men; and on the other, almost the entire ruling class of the country;—it seems wonderful that even a seven years' struggle, and the expenditure of nearly half a million sterling, should have prevailed."‡

Mr. Morley would attribute Cobden's underrating of the obstacles in his path to his sanguine disposition, but in our view he is a singular instance of

"the indomitable faithfulness of men who take no counsel but of their conscience, whom no pretences can beguile, no threats dismay, who look truth straight in the face; and if they see a neglected duty seize it for their own, '*proniores ad officia quod spernebantur!*' These are the men who feel sure that, if a thing is right, it must be possible; and this faith in human causality extinguishes the sense of difficulty—sweeps from their path the ideal obstacles which far more than any

* "Speeches," p. 5. "The great Free Trade struggle was more indebted to the principle of veneration for its success than is generally known.—*Letter to George Combe*, vol. i. p. 20.

† *St. Paul's Magazine*, *ubi supra*.

‡ "Recollections of Cobden and the League," by Henry Ashworth, pp. 25-26, notes.

substantial checks, arrest the energies of weaker natures. For the simply conscientious no interval is visible, or even conceivable, between perceiving the best and executing it. No line for them is so straight as the line between thought and action.*

In addition to this, the mainspring of his character and career, he possessed almost every other necessary qualification for the post into which, to use his own phrase, he drifted: "my forte—he wrote to his friend Edward Baines—"is simplicity† of action, hard-working behind the scenes, and common sense in council;" he was, besides, a man of remarkable industry, and like all men who have done great things, his rule of conduct was "this one thing I do." It was by the concentration of his power of labour on the "one thing" which seemed to him at the time ought to be done that he achieved so much.‡ All these qualifications would have been of little avail had he not possessed a power of public speaking of a very singular kind, and entirely his own. "No one," Mr. Morley very truly says, "has ever reached Cobden's pitch of success as a platform speaker, with a style that seldom went beyond the vigorous and animated conversation of a bright and companionable spirit."§ On this subject it is interesting to read Cobden's own estimate of himself.

"By nature I am not a mob-orator. It is an effort for me to speak in public; when I address an audience, it is from a sense of duty and utility, from precisely the motive which impels me to write an article in the *League* newspaper, and with as little thought of personal *éclat*. . . . It would be a relief to me if I knew there was no necessity for my ever appearing again at a public meeting."

To what, then, must we look for the secret of his oratorical power and success?

Sir Robert Peel, in his memorable Parliamentary tribute to Cobden, described his eloquence, "as all *the more effective, because it was simple and unadorned.*"|| "Stern close logic was recognized," says the writer we have so often quoted, "as on the whole a characteristic of League advocacy, and this reputation it owed in a great measure to Cobden."¶ "Where know-

* "The Relation between Ethics and Religion." An address at the opening of the Session 1881-2 of Manchester New College, London." By James Martineau, LL.D., D.D.

† Vol. i. p. 265.

‡ See his interesting letter on this subject to the late Rev. Thomas Spencer, vol. i. 203-4.

§ *Ibid.* p. 197.

|| House of Commons, June 29, 1846.—We quote from memory, but we observe that both Mr. Morley (vol. i. 388) and Mr. McGilchrist (p. 132) give Sir Robert's words "as all the more to be admired because it was unaffected and unadorned." Our version is the more striking.

¶ *St. Paul's Magazine, ubi supra.*

ledge and logic were the proper instruments, Cobden, says Mr. Morley, "was a master."* It is not only, nor perhaps chiefly in his appeals to the reason, "that we must look for the secret of his success as a speaker."

"I have asked many scores of those who knew him," adds Mr. Morley, "Conservatives as well as Liberals, what this secret was, and in no single case did my interlocutor fail to begin, and in nearly every case he ended as he began, with the word *persuasiveness*."

"Cobden made his way to men's hearts by the union which they saw in him of simplicity, earnestness, and conviction, with a singular facility of exposition. This facility consisted in a remarkable power of apt and homely illustration, and a curious ingenuity in framing the argument that happened to be wanted. . . . Besides his skill in thus hitting on the right argument, Cobden had the oratorical art of presenting it in the way that made its admission to the understanding of a listener easy and condensed. He always seemed to have made exactly the right degree of allowance for the difficulty with which men follow a speech, as compared with the ease of following the same argument on a printed page, which they may con and ponder until their apprehension is complete. Then men were attracted by the mental alacrity, by the instant readiness with which he turned round to grapple with a new objection. Prompt and confident, he was never at a loss, and he never hesitated."†

Of this an apt illustration recurs to our minds. Speaking at Bradford, Cobden was interrupted by an Irishman, exclaiming, "Sure you are sent out by the master manufacturers, to cheapen the rate of wages." "I should like,"—calmly replied Cobden, "to ask that gentleman, whose brogue shows he comes from the Emerald Isle, who sent him to Bradford to compete with Yorkshiremen, and cheapen the rate of wages." No more was heard of that Irishman for the evening.‡

To resume our extracts from Mr. Morley:—

"No public speaker was ever so rapid and so successful in establishing genial relations of respect without formality, and intimacy without familiarity. One great source of this, in Mr. Bright's words, was 'the absolute' truth that a persuasiveness, which it was almost impossible to resist, shone in his eye and his countenance."§

"He had a large and powerful head. . . . His features were not of a commanding type; but they were illuminated and made attractive by the brightness of intelligence, of sympathy, and of earnestness. About the mouth there was a curiously winning mobility and play. His voice was clear, varied in its tones, sweet, and penetrating; but it had scarcely the compass, or the depth, or the many resources that

* I. p. 195.

† Vol. i. p. 195.

‡ *Ex-relatione* the late Rev. Francis Clowes, who was present.

§ Vol. i. p. 197.

have been usually found in orators who have drawn great multitudes of men to listen to them. Of nervous fire, indeed, he had abundance, though it was not the fire which flames up in the radiant colours of a strong imagination. It was rather the flow of a thoroughly convinced reason, of intellectual ingenuity, of argumentative keenness. It came from transparent honesty, thoroughly clear ideas, and a very definite purpose.”*

“The extraordinary versatility of Cobden,” says Mr. McGilchrist, “and his capacity of adapting the style and tone of his arguments to the circumstances, sympathies, and prejudices of his auditors, whoever they may be, from M.P.’s down to the most violent of the chartists, was one of his most remarkable traits, and one in which no man of our century, with the sole exception of O’Connell, rivalled him.”†

It was his versatility which enabled him, in spite of all prejudice and of every possible disadvantage, to gain the undoubtedly high place he held amongst Parliamentary speakers and debaters. He entered the House of Commons with that traditional bar to indulgent favour, a reputation as a speaker outside the doors of the House. From the first he avowed himself to be independent of either of the two great parties, “and from the beginning to the end of his career he cared very little about the opinion of the House. . . . He never greatly valued the judgment of Parliamentary coteries. It was the mind of the country that he always sought to know, and to influence.‡ The Reform Bill gave the manufacturing towns Parliamentary representation. “Cobden was the first man to make the representation, not only of the manufacturers, but of the whole middle class a reality.” “Here is one of the terrible men of 1832,” was the remark attributed to Sir Robert Peel on Cobden’s first appearance in the House.§ This feeling no doubt contributed to cause the memorable scene in the Session of 1843, between Sir Robert and Cobden, of which Mr. Morley gives a vivid and interesting account.||

“It is quite clear,” wrote Cobden to his brother, in the first month of his first Session, “that I am looked upon as a Gothic invader, and the classicals will criticize me unmercifully; but I have vitality enough to rise above the little trips which my heels may get at first. Ultimately these attacks will only give me a surer foothold. . . .

“The Tories, especially the young fry, regard me in no other way

* *Ibid.* pp. 192-3. We regret that the likeness prefixed to Mr. Morley’s first volume is little better than a caricature; the best likeness of Cobden is in the well-known engraving of Herbert’s picture of “The Council of the Anti-Corn Law League.”

† P. 72, 73.

‡ It has been said that Sir Robert made this remark not of Cobden but of Mr. Bright. He might have said it, and with equal truth, of both.

§ Vol. i. p. 182.

|| Vol. i. p. 256, *et seq.*

than as a petard would be viewed by people in a powder magazine—a thing to be trampled on, kicked about, or put out in what way you can.”*

That he did obtain the “sure foothold” he foretold he should gain, we have the testimony of one, a most competent judge, who, though a candid, was by no means too friendly a critic: one who sat with Cobden in the House throughout his Parliamentary career;—Lord Beaconsfield.

“What the qualities of Mr. Cobden were in this House,” he said in his posthumous tribute, “all now present are able to judge. I think I may say that, as a debater, he had few equals; as a logician, he was close and compact, and I would say adroit, acute, and, perhaps, even subtle; yet at the same time he was gifted with that degree of imagination that he never lost sight of the sympathies of those whom he addressed; and so, generally avoiding to drive his arguments to an extreme, he became, as a speaker, both practical and persuasive.”†

To Cobden’s versatility Mr. Morley does justice in a passage which is the literary gem of the book, and in which he rises to an unwonted enthusiasm. Speaking of Cobden’s continental tour in 1846-47, he says—

“Everywhere men were delighted by his tact and address. He made as captivating points in a speech to the traders of Cadiz, the farmers of Prussia, or the great nobles in Rome, as when, from a waggon, he had addressed the rustics of a village in the west of England.

“At Milan, he charmed them by mentioning that if they went into a London merchant’s office, they would find the accounts kept on a method which came from Italy; and that the great centre of our financial system was in a street still named from the Lombard bankers.

“At Florence, he warmed the hearts of those who listened to him, by saying that he had come to Tuscany with the feelings of a believer visiting the shrines of his faith. The Dutch and the Swiss owed to their geographical situation a partial escape from the Protective System; but to Tuscany belonged the glory of preceding the rest of the world by half a century in applying economic theories to legislation. Let them render solemn homage, he cried with an outburst of true eloquence, to the memory of the great men who had taught the world this great lesson; all honour to Bandini, who, a century before, had perceived the truth that Free Trade is the only sure instrument of prosperity; undying honour to Leopoldi, who, seizing the lamp of science from the hands of Bandini, entered boldly into the ways of Free Trade, then obscure and unknown, without flinching before the obstacles that ignorance, prejudice, and selfishness had strewn in the path; honour

* Vol. i. p. 185.

† House of Commons, April 3, 1865.

to Neri, to Giovanni, Zebroni, to Fossambroni; to all those statesmen, in a word, who had preserved down to our days the great work which they had set on foot.”*

We believe we are right in saying that Mr. Morley has no personal recollection of Cobden’s speaking.† His able and interesting disquisition on him as a speaker does not, therefore, so vividly bring him before us as do some of the recorded impressions of those who heard him. From many of these we select two examples:—

“It is impossible to find,” says Mr. Hutton in his interesting Sketches in Parliament, “in popular orators, any sample of finer taste in the arrangement of what the speaker had to say, and the manner of saying it. The secret, of course, was the same. The man was filled with one aim, and one only, to convince his audience how their interests lay, and he absolutely identified himself with them for the moment, in order to bring those interests home to them. There was something quite French in the lucidity of his imaginative method; in the natural acuteness of his thought, he would clinch every argument with a figure as sharp and apt as any French thinker.”‡

Yet once more. Lord Beaconsfield, in that senile *farrago*—to describe his last romance by the word suggested by the truncated quotation on its title-page, and which will add so little to his literary reputation—gives this animated and truthful description of Cobden as a speaker:—

“Endymion listened with interest, soon with delight, soon with a feeling of exciting, and not unpleasing perplexity to the orator, for he was an orator, though then unrecognized, and known only in his district.

“He was a pale and slender man, with a fine brow, and an eye that occasionally flashed with the fire of a creative mind. His voice was not like Hollaballoos.§ It was rather thin, but singularly clear. There was nothing clearer, except his meaning. Endymion had never heard a case stated with such pellucid art; facts were marshalled with such vivid simplicity, and inferences so natural, and spontaneous, and irresistible, that they seemed, as it were, borrowed from his audience, though none of that audience had arrived at them before. The meeting was hushed; was wrapped in intellectual delight, for they did not give the speaker the enthusiasm of their sympathy. That was not shared, perhaps, by the moiety of those who listened to him. When the case was fairly before them, the speaker dealt with his opponents—some in the Press, some in Parliament, with much power of sarcasm; but this power was evidently rather repressed than allowed to run riot. What

* Vol. i. pp. 418-419.

† “We who only read Cobden’s Speeches,” vol. i. p. 197.

‡ Hutton’s sketches in Parliament, 181-2.

§ We take this to be an impertinent reference to Mr. Bright.

surprised Endymion as the chief quality of this remarkable speaker, was his *persuasiveness*, and he had the air of being too prudent to offend even an opponent unnecessarily. His language, though natural and easy, was choice and refined. He was evidently a man who had read, and not a little; and there was no taint of vulgarity, scarcely a provincialism in pronunciation.”*

We are compelled by our rapidly-contracting space reluctantly to turn from Cobden's public career, and devote what remains to his private life and character, here also endeavouring to supplement Mr. Morley's statements. He says, “that in motive and character Cobden was the most candid and direct of mankind.”† His candid nature is well illustrated by an observation we take from a letter to his friend, Mr. T. B. Potter: “Before entering on any discussion of importance with anyone, you must disabuse your mind of the possibility of that man's motive being less pure than your own.” In all the relations of life, Cobden was a singular illustration of his theory, “that political economists are the most amiable of men.”‡ He married just at the commencement of his public career (May, 1840) a young Welsh lady, a school friend of one of his sisters. Mr. Morley, who does not appear to have known Mrs. Cobden, narrates that “She is said by all who knew her to have been endowed with singular personal beauty, and manners of perfect ease and charm.”§ To the truth of this description we can bear our personal testimony.

“God knows,” said her husband writing of her, “how much the comfort and regularity of her domestic life have always been made subservient—willingly, and meekly so—to my political engagements, without one atom of ambition to profit by the privileges, which, to some natures, offer a kind of compensation for family discomfort.”||

During the Anti-Corn Law struggle, before the days of railways, Cobden's absences from home were, perforce, frequent and protracted, so much so, that on one of his returns he found his only son had forgotten him. “It so cut him to the heart”—we are quoting his own words—“that he was for the moment tempted to abandon his public career, and return to the domestic life he had abandoned.” The death of this son, a boy of singular energy and promise, occurred in the spring of 1856, while he was at school at Weinheim, in Germany.

* “Endymion,” vol. ii. p. 261-3. The motto on the Title page of “Endymion” is “Quicquid agunt homines,” the words following, it will be remembered, are “*Nostri est furrago libelli.*”

† Vol. ii. p. 475.

‡ Vol. i. p. 160.

§ Vol. ii. p. 183.

|| Speech at Sunderland Election, 1844. The remark was made with special reference to General Ferronet Thompson.

Scarlet fever carried him off in three or four days; and, by a blunder, his parents never even heard of his illness until Cobden opened the letter which contained the fatal news of his son's death.

This was a crushing blow to Cobden. It was rapidly followed by the consequent mental depression of his wife, the serious illness of Mr. Bright, and the death of his brother Frederick. From this time he was never the same man as before. To his daughters he seems to have been the object of an attachment scarcely equalled among daughters. His life, said Mr. Bright, with whom for more than twenty-five years he lived—to use his own words—"in transparent intimacy of mind," was to a large extent based "upon the best and greatest of all sermons—the Sermon on the Mount. His was a life of perpetual self-sacrifice."*

After the repeal of the Corn Laws, with part of the funds arising from the National Testimonial which, with equal justice and generosity, was subscribed for him, he purchased the small property of Dunford, which had belonged to his forefathers. The old farm-house was almost, if not altogether, pulled down, and on its site was built, what Mr. Morley calls, "a modest house." Cobden himself said of it, "Oh, it's only a patched-up place," but it struck a visitor as "a handsome-looking Italian villa, replete with every attraction which English gentlemen so much covet."†

Charged with having obtained this property "from the League funds," "Yes"—he with his usual readiness and candour replied—"I am indebted for that estate, and I am proud here to acknowledge it, to the bounty of my countrymen."

"That estate was the scene of my birth, and of my infancy; it was the property of my ancestors; it is by the munificence of my countrymen that this small estate, which had been alienated from my father by necessity, has again come into my hands, and that I am enabled to light up again the hearth of my fathers; and I say, that there is no warrior duke who owns a vast domain by the vote of the Imperial Parliament, who holds his property by a more honourable title than that by which I possess mine."‡

At Dunford, for the rest of his life, he passed all the time that he could spare from public labours. There he rambled alone in the fields, and thought long and deeply on the aspect of our political and social relations. Thence he thus wrote to a friend:—

* Vol. ii. p. 473.

† "Richard Cobden at Home: A Fireside Sketch," by F. M. E. p. 16.

‡ Speech at Aylesbury, January 9, 1850. "Speeches," p. 225.

"The spirit of feudalism, is rife and rampant in the midst of the antagonistic development of the age of Watt, Arkwright, and Stephenson! Nay, feudalism is every day more and more in the ascendant in political and social life. So great is its power and prestige that it draws to it the support and homage of even those who are the natural leaders of the newer and better civilization."*

The English Land System and its essential principle led him to entertain the idea he thus expressed to Mr. Henry Fawcett:—

"I am getting old; you are still young; you are just entering upon political life; my work is nearly done. I have fought one great battle; but there is another left behind that will require great efforts, perhaps, to achieve a triumph, and that is to secure Free Trade in land."†

In his last public speech he more fully expressed the same idea:—

"If I were five-and-twenty or thirty, instead of, unhappily, twice that number of years, I would take Adam Smith in hand, I would not go beyond him, I would have no politics in it; and I would have a league for Free Trade in Land, just as we had a league for Free Trade in Corn. You will find just the same authority for the one as for the other."‡

By "free trade in land," Cobden meant—as we are told by Mr. Harold Rogers—"the extension of the principle of free exchange, in all its fulness, to landed estates; and the removal of all restrictions on its transfer—either voluntarily, should the owner desire to sell it, or involuntarily, if the owner becomes embarrassed."§

From the sketch we have before quoted, and which is fully as interesting as it is, unfortunately, little known, we take the following graphic picture of Cobden at Dunford. Its writer, who appears to have been previously unknown to Cobden, wrote to him in December, 1863, expressing a wish to meet him, to talk over the state of affairs in America, then in the midst of the slaveowners' war. Cobden replied, he was bound to say there could be no practical result from the proposed meeting; but if, after this very discouraging reply, his correspondent still wished to favour him with a visit, he would gladly welcome him. The gentleman accepted the invitation; what passed he shall tell in his own words:—

"Sending in my card, Mr. Cobden himself came to the door; and so open-hearted was his welcome, that, before I had passed through the

* Vol. ii. p. 481-2.

† *Circa* 1860.

‡ Speech at Rochdale, November 23, 1864. Speeches, p. 294.

§ Vol. ii. p. 451, note.

entrance hall, it seemed to me that I had known him intimately for years; we entered the drawing-room, where I was introduced to Mrs. Cobden and her daughters, and the same warm and hearty welcome being given me by the ladies, I could not but feel that Mr. Cobden's letter was really an invitation, and that my visit was expected. I had not been long in the house before I discovered that my host was an ardent lover of pets. My attention was first called to this phase in Mr. Cobden's character by seeing a bullfinch in a cage on the table. Approaching the little prisoner, I endeavoured to gain his confidence by a show of caresses; but my reflective-looking friend evidently stood upon ceremony, and would not admit me to his intimacy or friendship until I had undergone the formality of an introduction. Mr. Cobden joined me at the cage, and the moment he approached, the bird flew towards him, and by every possible movement of his beak and wings, evinced the most extravagant feeling of delight. 'This little fellow,' said Mr. Cobden, 'will make friends with nobody in the house but me, and his affection is perfectly disinterested, for I never feed him.' This was said with a playful smile, and with so much humour that I could not restrain a hearty laugh. Here was a statesman of world-wide reputation, the great Free-trader who had changed the commercial policy of the two foremost nations of the world, positively fascinating a bullfinch.

"When he was showing me to my room at night, two terriers scampered towards him from the kitchen, and, regardless of my presence, jumped about him in the most excited manner. It was of no avail Mr. Cobden's crying to them, 'Down; down sir, down!' for they leaped up to his very shoulders, rendering it difficult for him to proceed along the corridor. Next morning I was up betimes, and took an early stroll in the grounds before breakfast; a number of sheep came to me rubbing themselves in the tamest manner possible against the iron fence which separated us. The poor animals evidently mistook me for a vegetarian, so complete was their confidence in me. During breakfast I told Mr. Cobden of my adventure; 'Ah!' said he, 'they are some of our pets—they saw you come from the house, and they supposed you had something in your pockets for them!' On leaving the table, I strolled through the grounds again in company with my host, and as we approached a plantation which I had not yet visited, birds began to fly from bush to bush, chirping and whistling in an almost deafening manner. I remarked somewhat cynically, 'I suppose these are pets too?' 'Well,' replied Mr. Cobden, 'as far as we can make them so.' As he said this, he took some bread from his pocket, and threw the crumbs on the walk in front of us. The birds flew immediately to the evidently expected feast, and while watching them pecking and fluttering around us, Mr. Cobden remarked, 'There is a pleasure in making these poor animals feel confidence in you. But their friendship, as you see, is not quite so disinterested as the bullfinch's?' The pleasant hours I spent by that fireside at Dunford, were, as might be anticipated, mainly given to conversation on political topics. Mr. Cobden here shewed to the greatest advantage; for his

listeners always wondered that such unyielding convictions as he possessed could be allied with so much goodness, and unvarying charity for those who opposed, and sometimes misrepresented him. Judging him by others, there appeared to be a deficiency in his character, for he seemed neither to have a single personal dislike, nor to understand what the feeling meant."

"His humour was delicious; it verified his conversation on every subject. He kept me in a continued smile, the only relief being an occasional 'side splitter;' and yet so obvious was the goodness actuating him, that I felt convinced the very people who provoked his sallies would have laughed as I did had they been present and listening to him."

"A neighbour joined us while we were at tea, and, in answer to the question 'What news do you bring us from Midhurst?' we were informed that a gang of poachers had been arrested that afternoon on Lord _____'s grounds. Knowing my host's opinion in relation to the Game Laws, and those who kept them on the Statute book, I naturally expected some reply from him not complimentary to the class for and by whom those laws were enacted; but he simply answered 'poachers, indeed! why I didn't suppose there was so much enterprise in all Sussex:'"

We cannot refrain from giving another illustration of Cobden's humour—a characteristic not generally attributed to him:—

"I have sometimes thought," he wrote to a friend at the time of the Corn Law victory, 'of giving William Chambers a hint for an amusing paper in his journal, on the miseries of a popular man. First, half the mad people in the country who are still at large, and they are legion, address their incoherent ravings to the most notorious man of the hour. Next the kindred tribe who think themselves poets, who are more difficult than the mad people to deal with, send their doggerel, and solicit subscriptions to their volumes, with occasional requests to be allowed to dedicate them. Then there are the Jeremy Diddlers, who begin their epistles with high-flown compliments upon my services to the millions, and always wind up with a request that I will bestow a trifle upon the individual who ventures to lay his distressing case before me. To add to my miseries, people have now got an idea that I am influential with the Government, and the small-place hunters are at me. Yesterday a man wrote from Yorkshire, wanting the situation of a gauger; and to-day a person in Herts requests me to procure him a place in the Post Office. Then there are all the benevolent enthusiasts who have their pet reforms—who think that, because a man has sacrificed himself in mind, body, and estate, in attempting to do one thing, he is the very person to do all the rest. These good people dog

* "Richard Cobden at Home," pp. 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25.

† Vol. i. p. 372-373. For another illustration see "A Scene at the Board of Trade" between Lord Ripon and the Brazilian Ambassador, being a friendly sarcasm on Joseph Sturge McGilchrist, p. 82.

me with their projects. Nothing in their eyes is impossible in my hands. One worthy man calls to assure me that I can reform the Church, and unite the Wesleyans with the Establishment."†

One of Cobden's chief characteristics—all the more remarkable considering the circumstances of his youth and early years—was his old-fashioned politeness, or rather courtly deference to ladies. To one who intimated to him that her political opinions were opposed to his, he replied, "Oh, I always expect ladies to be Tories, they ought to be." Meeting a friend in Paris during the negotiations for the Treaty, he expressed a wish to see him and his sister, but he added, "ladies are always great sticklers for form and etiquette. I will send Mrs. Cobden to call on your sister first."

We will refer to one other subject connected with Cobden's life at Dunford, which does not seem to be known to Mr. Morley. He took a deep and abiding interest in the welfare of the poor people in his neighbourhood, and by them he was regarded as a friend to whom they could with confidence appeal in the hour of need. When he went back there in 1819, there was neither school nor schoolmaster, "unless," he wrote to Mr. Ashworth,* "I give that title to a couple of cottages, where illiterate old women collect a score or two of infants, whilst their parents are in the fields." He took a deep personal interest in the establishment of a village school, and of penny readings and popular lectures for the improvement of the villagers.† Mr. Morley says, "on religious questions for the most part, he was quite silent; when he was in the country he went to church like other people."‡ Elsewhere he says, "He was neither oppressed, nor elevated by the mysteries, the aspirations, the remorse, the hope, that constitute religion."§ We think this does not represent the religious aspect of Cobden's character. It is, we think, more accurately described by Professor Goldwin Smith in the sentence "religion lay at the root of Cobden's character. . . . His firm belief in God was, as all who know him intimately will agree with us in thinking, a great source of his fearlessness as a social Reformer; nor though absolutely free from any taint of sectarianism or bigotry, did he ever readily take to his heart those whom he believed to be devoid of religion."|| A frequent remark of his was, "you have no hold of any one who has no religious faith."¶ To his friend, George Combe, he wrote, "I have a

* Under date, October 7, 1850. Vol ii. p. 4.

† We derive this information from Mr. McGilchrist, *vide* p. 250.

‡ Vol. ii. p. 478.

§ Vol. i. 201.

|| In *Macmillan's Magazine*, May 1865, p. 91.

¶ McGilchrist, p. 251.

strong feeling of sympathy for the religious sentiment," and referring to some strictures of Combe's "on the evangelical Dissenters and religionists generally," he says—

"I will confess to you that I am not inclined to quarrel with that class of my countrymen. I see the full force of what you urge, but am inclined to hope more from them in time than any other party in the State. . . . for I find them generally enforcing, or, at all events, recognizing and professing to act upon (they do not, I admit, sufficiently preach it) the morality of the New Testament, and you can do no more."*

"It was the morality of the New Testament—not the dogmas of any Church—which was Cobden's religion."

We know, on his daughter's authority, that he delighted to hear her read to him the Sermon on the Mount, of the teachings of which his life reflected so much.†

We have heard him say that he thought the Society of Friends, "more than any other religious body, realized the true idea of Christian Democracy; not the lowering of the few, but the raising of the many." "The Quakers"—he wrote to a friend—"have acted Christianity,"‡ but he remained a member of the Established Church, because "it was the religion of his mother, who was "an energetically pious woman;" he always said, "that it was an advantage to him as an agitator that he was a member of the Church of England.†

In the latter years of Cobden's life, Mr. Bright told Bishop Wilberforce, "He was getting quite High Church as he thought there was most reality in it."§ He was intimate with the Bishop, and was no doubt favourably impressed by the energy and reality of his character and work. No man could take more pride in the venerable Church of Heyshott—the parish in which Dunford is situate; he took a chief part in originating its restoration, and the reform of the musical portion of its services was one of the last objects of his care.||

We have before referred to Cobden's early expressed conviction that he should not be a long-lived man. After the conclusion of the Free Trade agitation, when in a more hopeful mood, he said, "I see no reason why I should not live to seventy, for I have faith in my tough and wiry body, and a temperament naturally cool and controllable;"¶ but when he had nearly

* See this very interesting letter in full at p. 200. First of vol. i.

† Vol. ii. p. 473.

‡ Vol. ii. p. 366, and see his eloquent description of "Quaker Victories" in 1793 and 1853; political writings, pp. 213-14.

§ "Life of Bishop Wilberforce," vol. ii. p. 247-8.

|| McGilechrist, p. 251.

¶ Vol. i. p. 373.

completed his fifty-seventh year the truth forced itself upon him that his work was nearly done.

"I am"—he wrote to a friend—"not like you, of a long-lived family. Since I passed my meridian a few years ago, I have found my powers sensibly waning, and particularly these organs of the voice which I exercised so rudely in their prime, and which were naturally but a weak inheritance from my father."

"If, however, I could pass the remainder of my days with only the labour of an average person of my years, I could, I daresay, nurse myself into a good old age. The question is, whether I ought rather to content myself with a brief span, and the satisfaction of trying to do something a little beyond my strength. It is a nice question for casuists, for the home duties affecting one's young children intrude."*

He, in fact, decided that he ought to be content with the briefer span for the sake of doing something far beyond his strength; and the result of the decision was that he sacrificed his life.

The author of the interesting sketch, to which we are so much indebted, visited him again at Dunford, in the autumn of 1864. He then said to his visitor—

"My work is nearly over; I shall not be here many months longer." His tone was awfully impressive in saying this, for his voice and manner alike expressed profound conviction and perfect resignation. I was startled, but I replied "Oh, Sir, you must not give way to such thoughts, you are in better health and much stronger than since I have known you." He answered immediately, "It is only a flash in the pan, I have already outlived the usual term of my family, and I feel I am going."†

November quickly followed this visit; Cobden then went to Rochdale to his yearly meeting with his constituents. His speech was one of his longest, and is in Mr. Morley's judgment, "perhaps the one that gives the best idea of his manner."‡ He was much exhausted, "I should have been well enough," he said, "if I could have gone to bed for four-and-twenty hours after the speech," but his Rochdale host had a reception of two hundred of the leading Liberals. It proved their farewell to their distinguished member, who was compelled to spend the whole evening in "shaking hands and incessant talking to relays of friends."

He had hardly reached home when his old enemy "nervous asthma," with the dangerous allies of bronchitis and disorders of

* Vol. ii. p. 370.

† "Richard Cobden at Home," pp. 30, 31.

‡ Speeches, p. 479.

the stomach, attacked him. "He never before," he said, "had such a shake." In January 1865, he felt that he ought to give up public life; he continued, however, to occupy himself in a vigilant observation of affairs, and by his unflinching practice of correspondence. With the opening of the Session, the Government plan of Canadian fortifications was announced; Mr. Bright wrote to him, expressing a wish he could have been in the House when the question came on. "You understand its details," he said, "better than any other man in the House, and I think you could knock over the stupid proposition to spend English money on fortifications at Quebec." A week later Mr. Bright came to Dunford, for what proved to be his last consultation with his great leader. During that visit Cobden, looking towards Lavington Church, said, "my boy is buried there, and I shall not be long after him." It was, indeed, little more than a month. On the 21st March, a month in that year, of singular inclemency, he went to London to attend the Canadian debate. Immediately on his arrival he was prostrated by an attack of asthma.

At the end of a week he rallied, but the apparent recovery only lasted a few hours, and was followed by a sharper attack of asthma, which now became congestive, and bronchitis supervened. On the 1st of April all hope was gone; he was able to perform some necessary business, and occasionally to say a few words to those who were watching by his bedside.

On the morning of Sunday, the 2nd of April while the church bells were calling people to morning service, his spirit tranquilly passed away.*

Nine years before, walking with a friend in Westminster Abbey, the friend remarked, that perhaps Cobden would rest in that "Great Temple of Reconciliation and Silence." "I hope not," was the reply. "I hope not, my spirit could not rest in peace among these men of war. No, no! cathedrals are not meant to contain the remains of such men as Bright and me."† The remains of "the Great Sussex Englishman," as Bishop Wilberforce called him, were therefore removed to his native county, and buried by the side of his son in the churchyard of West Lavington, a spot of remarkable beauty, and which he had himself selected as the burial-place of himself and his family in preference to his own parish of Heyshott. A bust of Cobden has, since his death, been erected in Westminster Abbey.

It is melancholy to read that, in the last year of Cobden's life,

* See vol. ii. c. xix. p. 455 to the end. *Conf.* McGilchrist, c. xiii. p. 241 to the end.

† Vol. ii. p. 473.

as he and Mrs. Cobden were coming up to London from Dunford, she said to him—

“I sometimes think that, after all the good work that you have done, and in spite of fame and great position, it would have been better for us both if, after you and I married, we had gone to settle in the backwoods of Canada”—and Cobden could only say, after looking for a moment or two with a gaze of mournful pre-occupation through the window of the carriage “that he was not sure that what she said was not true.”*

We hope and believe that this expression of dissatisfaction was only a momentary feeling, the result of nervous depression caused by failing health and strength. If ever man had the right to regard with well-justified complacency a life of benevolent industry devoted to the good of others, Cobden was the man. Certainly the verdict of posterity on his life and conduct will be that which Lord Beaconsfield foretold it would be—that “he was without doubt the greatest political character that the pure middle class of this country has as yet produced; that he was an ornament to the House of Commons, and an honour to England.”†



ART. VII.—TOWN SMOKE AND TOWN FOG.

London Fogs: A Paper read by Dr. ALFRED CARPENTER, before the Society of Arts, Dec. 8th, 1880, and printed in the Journal of the Society, No. 1464, Vol. xxiv.

THE purity of the air in that part of the aerial ocean in which we live, is of as much importance to us as is the healthy state of the water to the fish that swim in it. From the days of Plato the condition of the air has been a subject of anxious study to many and various writers. Distinct and sagacious opinions have been left to us, by antiquity, of the air of Egypt, Asia Minor, Attica, Bœotia, Sicily, and Italy, and of a variety of places favourable to the enjoyment of health, strength, and longevity. These opinions vary, of course, considerably. Paulus says:—“Impurus aer spiritus deiecit, infecto cordi gignit morbos.” “Impure air depresses and affects the heart, and so causes disease.” This agrees with the startling announcement lately made by the medical faculty of this metropolis, of a new fatal disorder, caused by London fog—a sudden paralysis, affect-

* Vol. i. p. 161.

† House of Commons, April 3, 1865, McGilchrist, p. 263.