

# SELF-HELP BY THE PEOPLE

## THE HISTORY OF THE ROCHDALE PIONEERS By George Jacob Holyoake

Author of "The History of Co-operation in England",  
"Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life", etc etc

1844-1892 Tenth edition revised and enlarged.

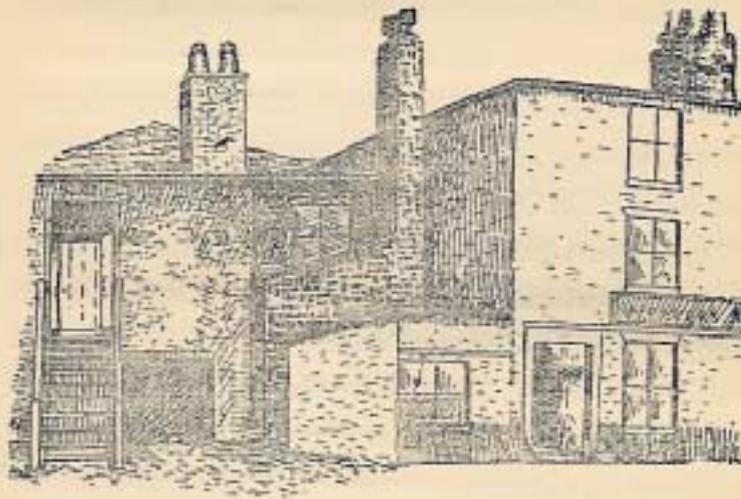
*"From nothing from the least,  
The lowliest village (what but here and there  
A reed-roofed cabin by a river side),  
Grew everything; and year by year  
Patiently, fearlessly working her way  
O'er brook and field, o'er continent and sea"  
Rogers' Rome*

London  
Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Lim  
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons  
1907

Dedicated (by permission) to Lord Brougham, who never ceased to advance the intellectual and social welfare of the people and who lent, when no one else in his position would, the influence of his name for the promotion of social science, of which co-operation is the industrial part.



CENTRAL STORES, TOAD LANE, 1863.



THE SOCIALISTS' INSTITUTE.

THE WEAVERS' ARMS.

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THE PIONEER STORE IN ITS ORIGINAL STATE, 1844.

## Preface

The chapters of this little History were commenced to be inserted in the *Daily News* (in 1857), as the reader may infer from note to Chapter I. The breaking out of the Mutinies in India absorbed all space in that quarter, and prevented the completion of the publication in those columns; otherwise, the subsequent chapters might have had the advantage of notes of the Editor of the *Daily News* (Mr. William Weir), who had great knowledge of, and interest in, Co-operative Associations, abroad and at home.

When the chapters appeared as a book, it became known to many persons, interested in social ideas. Mr. Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune* had an edition printed in New York. This was the first reprint. Next, Fernando Garrido, a Spanish dramatic writer and publicist, made a translation in his "Historia de las Asociaciones Obrean Europa." Professor A. Talandier published a translation in *Le Progres de Lyons*. Great impetus, the translator reported, was thereby given to Co-operation in Lyons. The Emperor, who had social ideas, commended Co-operation to the Lyonnese, and mentioned it in an Imperial speech. M. Elie Reclus, editor of *L'Association*, told the moral of this story of the Pioneers to the Parisians, in his fable of "The Blind Man and the Lame Man." Mr. John Stuart Mill, by quoting passages from this little history in his "Principles of Political Economy," did more than anyone else to call attention to the proceedings of the Rochdale Pioneers. Mr. Joseph Cowan read chapters of this narrative nightly to pitmen and other workmen who were his neighbours, which led to the formation of the Blaydon-on-Tyne store, now occupying a street, and owning a considerable farm. Mr. Henry Pitman reprinted the book in the *Co-operator*. Mr. M'Guinness of Paris made a translation of it in the French *Journal Co-operative*.

The first principal translation in book form was one in French by Madame Godin (under the name of Marie Moret), for the information of the workmen of Guise. Professor Vigano of Milan published an Italian translation in a quarto volume. M. O. Cambier, a magistrate of Paturage, Belgium, issued a complete translation of 283 pages at Verviers and Paris, including the prefaces of 1857 and 1867, and a biography of the author. Later, Signor Lorenzi Ponti published in Milan a translation from the French of Madame Godin. Herr H. Hantschke published a translation in German with engravings of the old store in Toad Lane and of the present store in Rochdale, of which a presentation copy was sent me in ornate Berlinese binding.

The last translation has been that of Dr. St. Bernat of Buda-Pesth into the Hungarian language. The Sociological Society of America issued a small Manual of Co-operation. This epitome, excellently executed by ladies, included some of the following chapters. The Manual was popular, I judge, as a share of profit from it was sent to me. Foreign translations on a subject new to the public do not at first allure readers, and the translators generally lose money by their generous labour. I received no profit from any, nor stipulated for any. On the contrary, I felt under obligation to the translators for being at the expense of introducing to their countrymen an English method of industrial self-help, which otherwise might have remained much longer unknown and unregarded.

“Self-Help by the People,” here first used, I believe as a title, has been employed by Dr. Smiles to designate his popular book of brief biographies. In 1860 a condensed edition of this History was issued in Paisley, purporting to be “Abridged from the Original Publication,” but what, or whose publication, was not stated. An article contributed to “Chambers’s Journal” contained passages purporting to be original, taken from the Rochdale story. The correction was at once made by the editor. Afterwards I was sorry I mentioned the matter, as other writers might have gone on quoting as their own, passages which would have advanced the knowledge of Co-operation. The *Quarterly Review* of 1863 had occasion to include this “History” in the list of books reviewed, in a very remarkable article on Co-operation, but it suppressed the name of the author. The writer of the review suggested that a single book of nameless authorship had an odd look among others that enjoyed paternity. The editor adopted an extra-ordinary mode of removing the singularity - he omitted the names of all the other authors reviewed, though among them were writers of the most perfect “regulation” type of thought, and the result was the only article that probably ever appeared in the *Quarterly* in which only authorless books were reviewed.

There remains, however, the satisfaction of knowing that this book has been useful. Mr. William Cooper of Rochdale, writing to the *Daily News*, December 1863 stated that of 332 Co-operative Societies then on the Registrar’s Returns, 251 had been established since 1857 when “Self-Help” was published, and he adds, “I have heard several persons ascribe the origin of their now prosperous Society to reading the History. Not fewer than 500 or 600 copies were sold in Rochdale. It was bought and read by a few working men in many towns in the United Kingdom.” This History is now revised, enlarged, illustrations added, and brought down to the Rochdale Congress of 1892.

The Italians have a proverb of unusual sagacity for that quick-witted people, namely: “They who go slowly go far”. Co-operation has gone both slow and far. It has issued like the tortoise from its Lancashire home in England; it has traversed France, Germany and even the frozen steppes of Russia; the bright-minded Bengalese are applying it, as is the soon-seeing and far-seeing American; and our own emigrant countrymen in Australia are endeavouring to naturalise it there. Like a good chronometer, Co-operation is unaffected by change of climate, and goes well in every land.

G.J.H.  
Eastern Lodge, Brighton  
September, 1893

# PART I - 1844-1887

## Chapter I - The First Efforts, and the Kind of People Who Made Them

Human nature must be different in Rochdale from what it is elsewhere. There must have been a special creation of mechanics in this inexplicable district of Lancashire - in no other way can you account for the fact that they have mastered the art of acting together, and holding together, as no other set of workmen in Great Britain have done. They have acted upon Sir Robert Peel's memorable advice; they have "taken their own affairs into their own hands;" and what is more to the purpose, they have kept them in their own hands.

The working class are not considered to be very rich in the quality of self-trust, or mutual trust. The business habit is not thought to be their forte. The art of creating a large concern, and governing all its complications, is not usually supposed to belong to them. The problem of association has many times been tried among the people, and as many times it has virtually failed. Mr. Robert Owen has not accomplished half he intended. The "Christian Socialists," inspired by eloquent rectors, and directed by transcendent professors, aided by the lawyer mind and the merchant mind, and what was of no small importance, the very purse of Fortunatus himself, [Here, we must express our dissent. They failed precisely because they were aided by the purse of Fortunatus. In France, we are assured all those "Associations Ouvrieres," which refused to accept money from government in 1848 are prospering, while those which accepted it have either ceased to exist, or are on the eve of ceasing to exist. Sacrifice and self-reliance are the secret of success in these as in all other enterprises. - ED. *Daily News*] have made but poor work of association. They have hardly drawn a single tooth from the dragon of competition. So far from having scotched that ponderous snake, they appear to have added to its vitality, and to have convinced parliamentary political economists that competitive strife is the eternal and only self-acting principle of society. True, reports come to us ever and anon that in America something has been accomplished in the way of association. Far away in the backwoods a tribe of bipeds - some mysterious cross between the German and the Yankee - have been heard of, known to men as Shakers, who are supposed to have killed the fatted calf of co-operation, and to be rich in corn, and oil, and wine, and - to their honour be it said - in foundlings and orphans, whom their sympathy collects, and their benevolence rears. But then the Shakers have a narrow creed and no wives. They abhor matrimony and free inquiry. But in the constituency till lately represented by Mr. Edward Miall, there is liberality of opinion - Susannahs who might tempt the elders again - and rosy-cheeked children, wild as heather and plentiful as buttercups. Under all the (agreeable) disadvantages of matrimony and independent thought, certain working men in Rochdale have practised the art of self-help, and of keeping the "wolf from the door." That animal, supposed to have been extirpated in the days of Ethelbert, is still found shoving himself in our crowded towns, and may be seen any day prowling on the outskirts of civilisation.

At the close of the year 1843, on one of those damp, dark, dense, dismal, disagreeable days, which no Frenchman can be got to admire - such days as occur

towards November, when the daylight is all used up, and the sun has given up all attempt at shining, either in disgust or despair - a few poor weavers out of employ, and nearly out of food and quite out of heart with the social state, met together to discover what they could do to better their industrial condition. Manufacturers had capital, and shopkeepers the advantage of stock; how could they succeed without either? Should they avail themselves of the poor-law? that were dependence; of emigration? that seemed like transportation for the crime of having been born poor. What should they do? They would commence the battle of life on their own account. They would, as far as they were concerned, supersede tradesmen, millowners, and capitalists: without experience, or knowledge, or funds, they would turn merchants and manufacturers. The subscription list was handed round-the Stock Exchange would not think much of the result. A dozen of these Lilliputian capitalists put down a weekly subscription of twopence each - a sum which these Rochdale Rothschilds did not know how to pay. After fifty-two "calls" had been made upon these magnificent shareholders, they would not have enough in their bank to buy a sack of oatmeal with: yet these poor men now own mills, and warehouses, and keep a grocer's shop, where they take £76,0001 a-year over the counter in ready money. Their "Cash Sales" of £19,389, recorded in their last quarterly report which we subjoin, show their ready money receipts to reach £1,400 a week.

#### **Rochdale Equitable Pioneers' Society Cash Account, Dec., 1857**

<b>Receipts</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>s</b>	<b>d</b>			
To Cash, balance September quarter	3311	14	1			
To Cash, Repaid by the Corn Mill Society	1000	0	0			
To Cash, Propositions	7	5	0			
To Cash, Contributions	510	4	3.5			
To Cash, Received for Goods	19389	0	0			
To Cash, Discounts	225	8	2			
<b>Total</b>	<b>£24,443</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6.5</b>			
<b>Disbursements</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>s</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>s</b>	<b>d</b>
By Cash paid for Goods				19483	0	3
By Cash paid for Wages	243	6	8.5			
By Cash paid for Rents	34	10	3			
By Cash paid for Carriage	152	7	8			
By Cash paid for General Expenses and Repairs	62	16	8.5			
By Cash paid for Treasurer's Salary	2	10	0			
By Cash paid for Petty Cash	1	0	0			
By Cash paid for Rates	18	16	8			
By Cash paid for Insurance	1	15	0			
By Cash paid for Building Fund	6	0	0			
				623	3	0
By Cash paid for Withdrawn by Members				2027	13	7
By Cash paid for Balance				2309	14	8.5
<b>Total</b>				<b>£24,443</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6.5</b>

Thus is the origin of the Rochdale Store, which has transcended all co-operative stores established in Great Britain, is to be traced to the unsuccessful efforts of

certain weavers to improve their wages. Near the close of the year 1843, the flannel trade - one of the principal manufactures of Rochdale - was brisk. At this auspicious juncture the weavers, who were, and are still, a badly paid class of labourers, took it into their heads to ask for an advance of wages. If their masters could afford it at all, they could probably afford it then. Their workpeople thought so, and the employers of Rochdale, who are certainly among the best of their class, seemed to be of the same opinion. Nearly each employer to whom the important question was put, at once expressed his willingness to concede an advance, provided his neighbouring employers did the same. But how was the consent of the others to be induced - and the collective agreement of all to be guaranteed to each? The thing seemed simple in theory, but was anything but simple in practice. Masters are not always courteous, and workpeople are not proverbially tacticians. Weavers do not negotiate with their superiors by letter; a personal interview is commonly the warlike expedient hit upon - an interview which the servant obtrudes and the master suffers. An employer has no *a priori* fondness for these kind of deputations, as a demand for an advance of wages he cannot afford may ruin him as quickly and completely as a fall may distress the workmen. However, to set the thing going in a practical and a kind way, one or two firms, with a generosity the men still remember with gratitude, offered an advance of wages to their own workpeople, upon trial, to see whether example would induce the employers generally to imitate it. In case general compliance could not be obtained, this special and experimental advance was to be taken off again. Hereupon the Trades' Union Committee, who had asked the advance on behalf of the flannel weavers, held, in their humble way, a grand consultation of "ways and means." English mechanics are not conspirators, and the working class have never been distinguished for their diplomatic successes. The plan of action adopted by our committee in this case did not involve many subtleties. After speech-making enough to save the nation, it was agreed that one employer at a time should be asked for the advance of wages, and if he did not comply, the weavers in his employ were "to strike" or "turn out," and the said "strikers" and "turn outs" were to be supported by a subscription of twopence per week from each weaver who had the good fortune to remain at work. This plan, if it lacked grace, had the merit of being a neat and summary way of proceeding; and if it presented no great attraction to the masters, it certainly presented fewer to the men. At least Mrs Jones with six children, and Mrs Smith with ten, could not be much in love with the twopenny prospect held out to them, especially as they had experienced something of the kind before, and had never been heard to very much commend it.

The next thing was to carry out the plan. Of course, a deputation of masters waiting upon their colleagues would be the courteous and proper thing, but obviously quite out of the question. A deputation of employers could accomplish more in one day with employers than a deputation of all the men could accomplish in a month. This, however, was not to be expected; and a deputation of workmen on this embassy was an interesting and adventurous affair.

A trades' deputation, in the old time, was a sort of forlorn hope of industry-worse than the forlorn hope of war; for if the volunteers of war succeed, they commonly win renown, or save themselves; but the men who volunteered on trades' deputations were often sacrificed in the act, or were marked men ever after. In war both armies respect the "forlorn hope," but in industrial conflicts the pioneer deputy was exposed to subsequent retaliation on the part of millowners, who did not admire him; and - let

it be said in impartiality, sad as the fact is - the said deputy was exposed often to the wanton distrust of those who employed him. A trades' deputation was commonly composed of intelligent and active workmen; or, as employers naturally thought them, "dissatisfied, troublesome fellows." While on deputation duty, of course, they must be absent from work. During this time they must be supported by their fellow-workmen. They were then open to the reproach of living on the wages of their fellows, of loving deputation employment better than their own proper work, which indeed was sometimes the case. Alas! poor trade deputy - he had a hard lot! He had for a time given up the service of one master for the service of a thousand. He was now in the employ of his fellows, half of whom criticised his conduct quite as severely as his employer, and begrudged him his wages more. And when he returned to his work he often found there was no work for him. In his absence his overlooker had contrived (by orders) to supply his place, and betrayed no anxiety to accommodate him with a new one. He then tried other mills, but he found no one in want of his services. The poor devil set off to surrounding districts, but his character had gone before him. He might get an old fellow-workman (now an overlooker) to set him on, at a distance from his residence, and he had perhaps to walk five or six miles home to his supper, and be back at his mill by six o'clock next morning. At last he removed his family near his new employ. By this time it had reached his new employer's ears that he had a "leader of the Trades' Union" in his mill. His employer calculated that the new advance of wages had cost him altogether a thousand pounds last year. He considered the weaver, smuggled into his mill, the cause of *that*. He walked round and "took stock" of him. The next week the man was on the move again. After a while he would fall into the state of being "always out of work." No wonder if the wife, who generally has the worst of it, with her increasing family and decreasing means, began to reproach her husband with having ruined himself and beggared his family by "his trade unioning." As he was daily out looking for work he would be sometimes "treated" by old comrades, and he naturally fell in with the only sympathy he got. A "row" perhaps occurred at the public-house, and somehow or other he would be mixed up with it. In ordinary circumstances the case would be dismissed - but the bench was mainly composed of employers. The unlucky prisoner at the bar had been known to at least one of the magistrates before as a "troublesome" fellow, under other circumstances. It is not quite clear that he was the guilty person in this case; but as in the opinion of the master-magistrate he was quite likely to have been guilty, he gave him the benefit of the doubt, and the poor fellow stood "remanded" or "committed." The chief shareholder of the *Mildam Chronicle* was commonly a mill-owner. The reporter had a cue in that direction, and next day a significant paragraph, with a heading to this effect, "The notorious Tom Spindle in trouble," carried consternation through the ranks of his old associates. The next week the editor had a short article upon the "kind of leadership to which misguided working men submit themselves." The case was dead against poor Spindle. Tom's character was gone. And if he were detained long in prison, his family was gone too. Mrs. Spindle had been turned out of her house, no rent being forthcoming. She would apply to the parish for support for her children, where she soon found that the relieving officers had no very exalted opinion of the virtues of her husband. Tom at length returned, and now he would be looked upon by all who had the power to help him, as a "worthless character," as well as a "troublesome fellow." His fate was for the future precarious. By odd helps and occasional employment when hands were short he eked out his existence. The present writer has shared the humble hospitality of many such, and has listened half the night away with them, as they have recounted

the old story. Beaten, consumptive, and poor, they had lost none of their old courage, though all their strength was over, and a dull despair of better days drew them nearer and nearer to the grave. Some of these ruined deputationists have emigrated, and these lines will recall in distant lands, in the swamps of the Mississippi, in the huts of a Bendigo digging, and in the "claims" of California, old times and fruitless struggles, which sent them penniless and heart-broken from the mills and mines of the old country. In the new land where they now dwell - a strange dream land to them - their thoughts turn from pine-forests, night fires, and revolvers, to the old villages, the smoke-choked towns, and soot-begrimed monotony in which their early life was spent. Others of the abolished deputationists of whom we speak turned news vendors or small shopkeepers. Assisted with a few shillings by their neighbours - in some cases self-helped by their own previous thrift - they have set up for themselves, have been fortunate, grown independent, and trace all their good fortune to that day which cost them their loss of employment.

## Chapter II - Appointment of a Deputation to Masters - Great Debate in the Flannel Weavers' Parliament

So much will enable the reader to understand the hopes and fears which agitated the Rochdale Flannel Weavers' Committee, when they appointed their deputation to wait upon the masters. "Who shall go?" No sooner was this question put than the loudest orators were hushed. Cries of "We will never submit" - "We will see whether the masters are to have it their own way for ever," etc, etc, etc - were at once silenced. Five minutes ago everybody was forward - nobody was forward now. As in the old fable, all the mice agreed that the cat ought to be belled, but *who* was to bell the cat? The collective wisdom of the Parliament of mice found that a perplexing question. Has the reader seen a popular political meeting when some grand question of party power had to be discussed? How defiant ran the speeches! how militant was the enthusiasm! Patriotism seemed to be turning up its sleeves, and the country about to be saved that night. Of a sudden some practical fellow, who has seen that kind of thing before, suggests that the deliverance of the country will involve some little affair of subscriptions - and proposes at once to circulate a list. The sudden descent of the police, nor a discharge of arms from the Chelsea Pensioners, would not produce so decorous a silence, nor so miraculous a satisfaction with things as they are, as this little step. An effect something like this is produced in a Trades' Committee, when the test question is put, "Who will go on the deputation?" The men knew that they should not be *directly* dismissed from, their employ, but *indirectly* their fate would probably be sealed. The first fault - the first accidental neglect of duty - would be the pretext of dismissal. Like the archbishop in "Gil Blas," who dismissed his critic - not on account of his candour; his grace esteemed him for *that* - but he preferred a young man with a little more judgment. So the employer has no abstract objection to the workman, seeking to better his condition - he rather applauds that kind of thing - he merely disputes the special method taken to accomplish it. The reader, therefore, understands why our Committee suddenly paused when a mouse was wanted to bell the cat. Some masters - indeed many masters - are as considerate, as self-sacrificing, as any workmen are, and they often incur risks and losses to keep their people in employ, which their people never know, and, in many cases, would not appreciate if they did. Many Trades' Unionists are ignorant, inconsiderate, and perversely antagonistic. It would be equally false to condemn all masters as to praise all men. But after all allowances are made, the men have the worst of it. They make things bad for themselves and for their masters by their want of knowledge. If they do not form some kind of Trades' Union they cannot save their wages, and if they do form Unions they cannot save themselves. Industry in England is a chopping machine, and the poor man is always under the knife.

We will now tell how the Flannel Weavers of Rochdale, whose historians we are, have contrived to extricate themselves somewhat.

Our Trades' Committee numbered, as all these committees do, a few plucky fellows, and a deputation was eventually appointed, and set off on their mission. Many employers made the required advance, but others, rather than do so, would let their works stop. This resistance proved fatal to the scheme, seconded as it was by the impetuosity of the weavers themselves, who did not understand that you cannot fight capital without capital. The only chance you have is to use your brains, and unless

your brains are good for something, are well informed and well disciplined, the chance is a very poor one. Our flannel weavers did not use their brains but their passions. It is easier to hate than to think, and the men did what they could do best - they determined to retaliate, and turned out in greater numbers than their comrades at work were able or willing to support. The cooler and wiser heads advised more caution. But among the working class a majority are found who vote moderation to be treachery. The weavers failed at this time to raise their wages, and their employers succeeded, not so much because they were right, as because their opponents were impetuous.

At this period the views of Mr Robert Owen, which had been often advocated in Rochdale, were recurred to by the weavers. Socialist advocates, whatever faults they else might have, had at least done one service to employers - they had taught workmen to reason upon their condition - they had shown them that commerce was a system, and that masters were slaves of it as well as men. The masters' chains were perhaps of silver, while the workmen's were of copper, but masters could not always do quite as they would any more than their servants. And if the men became masters to-morrow, they would be found doing pretty much as masters now do. Circumstances alter cases, and the Social Reformers sought to alter the circumstances in order to improve the cases. The merit of their own scheme of improvement might be questionable, but the Socialism of this period marked the time when industrial agitation first took to reasoning. [Chartists have always complained that their most active men were won from them by the new logic of the Social Reformers. Indeed, some Social Reformers conceived a distrust of political reform as absurd as that professed by many Chartists for social reform, but the 'Doctrine of Circumstances' had one moralising effect upon the multitude - it taught them to regard with pity many opponents whose throats they otherwise would have cut with pleasure. Coleridge has owned (*The Friend*, p. 263, vol. ii.) to the pacific influence of this doctrine on his own spirit when excited by a sense of injury received. When the Bishop of Exeter called attention to the evil he discovered in the 'Doctrine of Circumstances,' he omitted to notice that if it sometimes weakened moral effort, it always diminished hatred, a fact of great political importance in a country where class rivalry is intense, and where the poor grow poorer as the rich grow richer, except where private benevolence steps in to bridge over the Inequality.] Ebenezer Elliott's epigram, which he once repeated as an argument to the present writer, pointed to doctrines that certainly never existed in England:-

" What is a Communist? One who hath yearnings  
For equal division of unequal earnings;  
Idler or bungler, or both, he is willing  
To fork out his penny, and pocket your shilling."

The English working class have no weakness in the way of idleness ; they never become dangerous until they have nothing to do. Their revolutionary cry is always "*more work!*" They never ask for bread half so eagerly as they ask for employment. Communists in England were never either "idlers or bunglers." When the Bishop of Exeter troubled Parliament, in 1840, with a motion for the suppression of Socialism, an inquiry was sent to the police authorities of the principal towns as to the character of the persons holding those opinions (the same who built in Manchester the Hall of Science, now the Free Library, at an expense of £6000 or £7000). The answer was

that these persons consisted of the most skilled, well-conducted, and intelligent of the working class. Sir Charles Shaw sent to the Manchester Social Institution for some one to call upon him, that he might make inquiries relative to special proceedings. Mr. Lloyd Jones went to him, and Sir Charles Shaw said, that when he took office as the superintendent of the police of that district, he gave orders that the religious profession of every individual taken to the station-house should be noted; and he had had prisoners of all religious denominations, but never one Socialist. Sir C Shaw said, also, that he was in the habit of purchasing all the publications of the Society, and he was convinced, that if they had not influenced the public mind very materially, the outbreaks at the time, when they wanted to introduce the "general holiday," would have been much worse than they were, and he was quite willing to state that before the government, if he should be called upon to give an opinion.

The followers of Mr Owen were never the "idlers," but the philanthropic. They might be dreamers, but they were not knaves. They protested against competition as leading to immorality. Their objections to it were theoretically acquired. They were none of them afraid of competition, for out of the Socialists of 1840 have proceeded the most enterprising emigrants, and the most spirited men of business who have risen from the working classes. The world is dotted with them at the present hour, and the history of Rochdale Pioneers is another proof that they were not "bunglers." No popular movement in England ever produced so many persons able to take care of themselves as the agitation of Social Reform. Moreover, the pages of the *New Moral World* and the *Northern Star* of this period amply testify that the Social Reformers were opposed to "strikes," as an untutored and often frantic method of industrial rectification; as wanting foresight, calculation, and fitness; often a waste of money. And when a strike led, as they often have done, to workmen preventing those who were willing to work from doing so, the strike became indefensible save in view of the fact that employers did the same by Unionist workmen.

As there was a general feeling that the masters who had refused their demands had not done them justice, they resolved to attain it in some other way. They were, as Emerson expresses it, "English enough never to think of giving up." Hereupon they fell back upon that talismanic and inevitable twopence, with which Rochdale manifestly thinks the world can be saved. It was resolved to continue the old subscription of twopence a week, with a view to commence manufacturing, and becoming their own employers. As they were few in number, they found that their banking account of twopences was likely to be a long time in accumulating, and some of the committee began to despair; and, as nothing is too small for poverty to covet, some of them proposed to divide the small sum collected.

At this period a Sunday afternoon discussion used to be held in the Temperance or Chartist Reading Room. Into this arena some members of the weavers' committee carried their anxieties and projects, and the question was formally proposed, "What are the best means of improving the condition of the people?" It would be too long to report the anxious and Babel disputation. Each orator, as in more illustrious assemblies, had his own infallible specific for the deliverance of mankind. The Teetotalers argued that the right thing to do was to go in for total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks, and to apply the wages they earned exclusively to the support of their families. This was all very well but it implied that everything was right in the industrial world, and that the mechanic had nothing to do but to keep sober in order

to grow rich; it implied that work was sufficiently plentiful and sufficiently paid for; and that masters, on the whole, were sufficiently considerate of the workman's interests. As all these points were unhappily contradicted by the experience of everyone concerned, the Teetotal project did not take effect in that form.

Next, the Chartists pleaded that agitation, until they got the People's Charter, was the only honest thing to attempt, and the only likely thing to succeed. Universal Suffrage once obtained, people would be their own law makers, and, therefore, could remove any grievance at will. This was another desirable project somewhat overrated. It implies that all other agitations should be suspended while this proceeds. It implies that public felicity can be voted at discretion, and assumes that acts of parliament are omnipotent over human happiness. Social progress, however, is no invention of the House of Commons, nor would a Chartist parliament be able to abolish all our grievances at will; but Chartists having to suffer as well as other classes, ought to be allowed an equal opportunity of trying their hand at parliamentary salvation. The Universal Suffrage agitation scheme was looked upon very favourably by the committee, and would probably have been adopted, had not the Socialists argued that the day of redemption would prove to be considerably adjourned if they waited till all the people took the Pledge, and the government went in for the Charter. They, therefore, suggested that the weavers should co-operate and use such means as they had at command to improve their condition, without ceasing to be either Teetotalers or Chartists.

In the end it came about that the Flannel Weavers' Committee took the advice of the advocates of Co-operation. James Daly, Charles Howarth, James Smithies, John Hill and John Bent, appear to be the names of those who in this way assisted the committee. Meetings were held, and plans for a Co-operative Provision Store were determined upon. So far from there being any desire to evade responsibility, as working class commentators in Parliament usually assume, these communistic-teetotal-political co-operators coveted from the first a legal position; they determined that the society should be enrolled under Acts of Parliament (10th Geo IV c 56, and 4th and 5th William IV, c 40).

### Chapter III - The Doffers Appear at the Opening Day - Moral Buying as Well as Moral Selling

Next, our weavers determined that the Society should transact its business upon what they denominated the "ready money principle." It might be suspected that the weekly accumulation of twopences would not enable them to give much credit; but the determination arose chiefly from moral considerations. It was a part of their socialistic education to regard credit as a social evil - as a sign of the anxiety, excitement, and fraud of competition. As Social Reformers, they had been taught to believe that it would be better for society, that commercial transactions would be simpler and honester, if credit were abolished. This was a radical objection to credit. [A valued book, now in their Library, did not then exist, to teach them to distinguish between prejudice and a moral political economy. In the book referred to, the author says:- "Heartily do I wish that shop debts were pronounced after a certain day irrecoverable at law. The effect would be, that no one would be able to ask credit at a shop except where he was well known, and for trifling sums. All prices would sink to the scale of cash prices. The dishonourable system of fashionable debtors, who always pay too late, if at all and *cast their deficiencies on other customers* in the form of increased charges, would be at once annihilated. Shopkeepers would be rid of a great deal of care which ruins the happiness of thousands." *Lectures on Political Economy*, by Professor Newman, p. 255.] However advantageous and indispensable credit is in general commerce, it would have been a fatal instrument in their hands. Some of them would object to take an oath, and the magistrate would object to administer it; thus they would be at the mercy of the dishonest who would come in and plunder them, as happens daily now where the claim turns upon the oath. Besides, some of them had a tenderness with respect to suing, and would rather lose money than go to law to get it; they, therefore, prudently fortified themselves by setting their faces against all credit, and from this resolution they have never departed.

From the Rational Sick and Burial Society's laws, a Manchester communistic production, they borrowed all the features applicable to their project, and with alterations and additions their Society was registered, October 24th, 1844, under the title of the "Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers." Marvellous as has been their subsequent success, their early dream was much more stupendous - in fact, it amounted to world making. [In those days the working class were justified in their jealousy of those set "in authority over them," to an extent happily less credible now. So late as February, 1849, our co-operators stipulated that a clause should be inserted in a lease of premises they were about to take, to the effect that it should not be invalid upon a conviction of nuisance against them. Their pacific objects might be sworn as a "nuisance" by enemies, and magistrates on the bench, finding them legally defenceless, might listen to prejudice against them. Such cases have occurred elsewhere.] Our Pioneers set forth their designs in the following amusing language, to which designs the Society has mainly adhered, and has reiterated the same terms much nearer the day of their accomplishment (in the Society's Almanack for 1854). These Pioneers, in 1844, declared the views of their Association thus:-

" The objects and plans of this Society are to form arrangements for the pecuniary benefit and the improvement of the social and domestic condition of its members, by

raising a sufficient amount of capital in shares of one pound each, to bring into operation the following plans and arrangements:-

"The establishment of a Store for the sale of provisions, clothing, etc.

"The building, purchasing, or erecting a number of houses, in which those members, desiring to assist each other in improving their domestic and social condition, may reside.

"To commence the manufacture of such articles as the Society may determine upon, for the employment of such members as may be without employment, or who may be suffering in consequence of repeated reductions in their wages.

"As a further benefit and security to the members of this Society, the Society shall purchase or rent an *estate or estates of land*, which shall be cultivated by the members who may be out of employment, or whose labour may be badly remunerated."

Then follows a project which no nation has ever attempted, and no enthusiasts yet carried out:-

"That, as soon as practicable, this Society shall proceed *to arrange the powers of production, distribution, education, and government*; or, in other words, to establish a self-supporting home-colony of united interests, or assist other societies in establishing such colonies."

Here was a grand paper constitution for re-arranging the powers of production and distribution, which it has taken fifteen years of dreary and patient labour to advance half way.

Then follows a minor but characteristic proposition:-

"That, for the promotion of sobriety, a Temperance Hotel be opened in one of the Society's houses as soon as convenient."

If these grand projects were to take effect any sooner than universal Teetotalism or universal Chartism, it was quite clear that some activity must take place in the collection of the twopences. The difficulty in all working class movements is the collection of means. At this time the members of the "Equitable Pioneer Society" numbered about forty subscribers, living in various parts of the town, and many of them in the suburbs. The collector of the forty subscriptions would probably have to travel twenty miles; only a man with the devotion of a missionary could be expected to undertake this task. This is always the impediment in the way of working class subscriptions. If a man's time were worth anything at all he had better subscribe the whole money than collect it. But there was no other way open to them; and, irksome as it was, some undertook it, and, to their honour, performed what they undertook. [The executive policy of democracies is in a very crude state among the people. Time and zeal are wasted woefully. A committee of thirteen working men sometimes debate half an evening away as to whether ninepence or thirteen pence shall be expended upon a broom, Money ought not to be wasted upon brooms, nor ought hard reared zeal to be expended in the study of the petty cash book. Illustrations occur in the minutes of the Rochdale Society, "Resolved, that the two parties attending the Bank on business receive the sum of sixpence each, and the third party twopence." (June 10 1850.) Judging by the remuneration, the transactions could not have been very responsible, "Resolved, that the shopmen be presented with an apron and sleeves each in consideration of having to make up some bad money," (Feb, 28, 1850.) This is a very amusing instance of economical compensation, "Resolved, that we have two cisterns for treacle, two patent taps from

Bradford, a shovel for sugar, and one for currants and that the step-ladder be repaired," (May 9, 1850.) "Resolved, that the grate at the back of the wholesale warehouse be opened for air." (March 6, 1851.) "Resolved that there be a watering-can provided for the store." (March 28, 1852.) No doubt a protracted debate, five speeches each all round, seven or eight explanations, and heavy replies by the mover and seconder, preceded these momentous resolutions.] Three collectors were appointed, who visited the members at their residences every Sunday; the town being divided into three districts. To accelerate proceedings an innovation was made, which must at the time have created considerable excitement. The ancient twopence was departed from, and the subscription raised to threepence. The co-operators were evidently growing ambitious. At length the formidable sum of £28 was accumulated, and, with this capital the new world that was to be, was commenced.

Fifteen years ago, Toad Lane, Rochdale, was not a very inviting street. Its name did it no injustice. The ground floor of a warehouse in Toad Lane was the place selected in which to commence operations. Lancashire warehouses were not then the grand things they have since become, and the ground floor of "Mr Dunlop's premises," here employed, was obtained upon a lease of three years at £10 per annum. Mr William Cooper was appointed "cashier;" his duties were very light at first. Samuel Ashworth was dignified with the title of "salesman;" his commodities consisted of infinitesimal quantities of "flour, butter, sugar, and oatmeal." [These are the articles specified in the minutes of Dec. 12, 1844] The entire quantity would hardly stock, a homeopathic grocer's shop, for after purchasing and consistently paying for the necessary fixtures, £14 or £15 was all they had to invest in stock. And on one desperate evening - it was the longest evening of the year - the 21st of December, 1844, the "Equitable Pioneers" commenced business; and the few who remember the commencement, look back upon their present opulence and success with a smile at their extraordinary opening day. It had got wind among the tradesmen of the town that their competitors were in the field, and many a curious eye was that day turned up Toad Lane, looking for the appearance of the enemy; but, like other enemies of more historic renown, they were rather shy of appearing. A few of the co-operators had clandestinely assembled to witness their own *denouement*; and there they stood, in that dismal lower room of the warehouse, like the conspirators under Guy Fawkes in the Parliamentary cellars, debating on whom should devolve the temerity of taking down the shutters, and displaying their humble preparations. One did not like to do it, and another did not like to be seen in the shop when it was done: however, having gone so far there was no choice but to go farther, and at length one bold fellow, utterly reckless of consequences, rushed at the shutters, and in a few minutes Toad Lane was in a titter. Lancashire has its *gamins* as well as Paris - in fact, all towns have their characteristic urchins, who display a precocious sense of the ridiculous. The "doffers" are the *gamins* of Rochdale. The "doffers" are lads from ten to fifteen, who take off full bobbins from the spindles, and put them on empty ones. [To pull off a bobbin is, in the language of the mills to "doff" it; hence the phrase "doffers"] Like steam to the engine, they are the indispensable accessories to the mills. When they are absent the men have to play, and often when the men want a holiday, the "doffers" get to understand it by some of those signs very well understood in the freemasonry of the factory craft, and the young rascals run away in a body, and, of course, the men have to play until the rebellious urchins return to their allegiance. On the night when our Store was opened, the "doffers" came out strong in Toad Lane -

peeping with ridiculous impertinence round the corners, ventilating their opinion at the top of their voices, or standing before the door, inspecting, with pertinacious insolence, the scanty arrangement of butter and oatmeal: at length, they exclaimed in a chorus, ".Aye! the owd weaver's shop is opened at last."

Since that time two generations of "doffers" have bought their butter and oatmeal at the "owd weaver's shop," and many a bountiful and wholesome meal, and many a warm jacket have they had from that Store, which articles would never have reached their stomachs or their shoulders, had it not been for the provident temerity of the co-operative weavers.

Very speedily, however, our embryo co-operators discovered that they had more serious obstacles to contend with than derision of the "doffers." The smallness of their capital compelled them to purchase their commodities in small quantities, and at disadvantage both of quality and price. In addition to this, some of their own members were in debt to their own shopkeepers, and they neither could, nor dare, trade with the Store. And as always happens in these humble movements, many of the members did not see the wisdom of promoting their own interests, or were diverted from doing it, if it cost them a little trouble, or involved some temporary sacrifice. Of course the quality of the goods was sometimes inferior, and sometimes the price was a trifle high. These considerations, temporary and trifling compared with the object sought, would often deter some from becoming purchasers, for whose exclusive benefit the Store was projected. If the husband saw what his duty was, he could not always bring his wife to see it; and unless the wife is thoroughly sensible, and thoroughly interested in the welfare of such a movement, its success must be very limited. If the wife will take a little trouble, and bear with the temporary sacrifice of buying now and then an article she does not quite like, and will send a little farther for her purchases than perhaps suits her convenience, and will sometimes agree to pay a little more for them than the shop next door would charge, the co-operative stores might always become successful. Pure quality, good weight, honest measure, and fair dealing within the establishment, buying without haggling, and selling without fraud, are sources of moral and physical satisfaction of far more consequence to a well-trained person than a farthing in the pound cheaper which the same goods might elsewhere cost. How heavily are we taxed to put down vice when it has grown up - yet how reluctant are we to tax ourselves ever so lightly to prevent it arising. If there are to be moral sellers, there must be moral buyers. It is idle to distinguish the seller as an indirect cheat, so long as the customer is but an ambiguous knave. Those dealers who make it a point *always* to sell cheaper than any one else, must make up their minds to the risk of dishonesty, to the driving of hard bargains, or of stooping to adulterations. Our little Store thought more of improving the moral character of trade than of making large profits. In this respect they have educated their associates and customers to a higher point of character. The first members of the Store were not all sensible of this, and their support was consequently slender, like their knowledge. But a staunch section of them were true co-operators, and would come far or near to make their purchases, and, whether the price was high or low, the quality good or bad, they bought, because it was their duty to buy. The men were determined, and the women no less enthusiastic, willing, and content.

Those members of the Store who were true to their own duty, were naturally impatient that all the other members should do the same; they expected that every other member should buy at the Store whatever the Store sold, that the said member purchased elsewhere. Not content with wishing this, they sought to compel all members to become traders with the Store; and James Daly, the then secretary, brought forward a resolution to the effect that those members who did not trade with the Store should be paid out. Charles Howarth opposed this motion, on the ground that it would destroy the free action of the members. He desired co-operation to advance he said he would do all he could to promote it; that freedom was a principle which he liked absolutely, and, rather than give it up, he would forego the advantages of co-operation. It will be seen, as our little history progresses, that this love of principle has never died out, nor, indeed, been impaired amid these resolute co-operators. James Daly's motion was withdrawn,

## Chapter IV - The Society Tried by Two Well-known Difficulties - Prejudice and Sectarianism

In March, 1845, it was resolved that a license for the sale of tea and tobacco be taken out for the next quarter, in the name of Charles Howarth. This step evidently involved the employment of more capital; for though the members had increased, funds had not increased sufficiently for this purpose. The members, in public meeting assembled, were made aware of this fact; then, for the second time in the history of the Rochdale Store, do we hear of any member being in possession of more than twopence. One member "promised to find" half-a-crown. "Promised to find" is the phrase employed on the occasion - it was not "promised to pay, or subscribe, or advance." "Promised to find" probably alluded to the effort required to produce a larger sum than twopence in those parts. Another member "promised to find" five shillings, and another "promised to find" a pound. This last announcement was received with no mean surprise, and the rich and reckless man who made the promise was regarded with double veneration, as being at once a millionaire and a martyr. [I have rescued and shall preserve the name of this pecuniary hero - it was William Mallalieu, a trusted servant of John Feilden, M.P., now of Todmorden, who joined the Society at its fifth meeting, September 12th, 1844. It does seem like amusement to make this note, but those concerned know it to be ludicrously true. The present writer well remembers the feeling of exultation with which the important accession of £1 was accomplished; and there was only Mr Mallalieu in all Rochdale at that time willing and able to help the humble movement to that extent. They little expected, ten years later, to be able to put this minute upon their books - "Resolved, that A Hill and T Smithies wait upon the Board of the Rochdale Corn Mill Society, and give them notice that £1,500 lying in the Bank, belonging to this Society, is now at their command." - Minutes, *March 8th*, 1855] Other members "promised to find" various sums in proportion to their means, and in due time the husbands could get from the Store the solace of tobacco, and wives the solace of tea. At the close of 1845 the store numbered upwards of eighty members, and possessed a capital of £181 12s. 3d. [The Society paid no interest upon its shares the first year, and all profits were allowed to accumulate with a view to increasing capital. - *Vide* Minute of Committee Meeting, Aug. 29, 1844.] At first the Store paid 2.5 per cent. interest on money borrowed, then 4 per cent. After paying this interest, and the small expenses of management, all profits made were divided among the purchasers at the Store, in proportion to the amount expended; and the members soon began to appreciate this very palpable and desirable addition to their income. Instead of their getting into debt at the grocer's, the Store was becoming a savings' bank to the members, and saved money for them without trouble to themselves. The weekly receipt for goods sold during the quarter ending December, 1845, averaged upwards of £30.

"The Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, held in Toad Lane, in the Parish of Rochdale, in the County of Lancaster," made up its mind that a capital of £1,000 must be raised for the establishment of the Store. This sum was to be raised by £1 shares, of which each member should be required to hold four and no more. In case more than £1,000 was required, it was to be lawful for a member to hold five shares. At the commencement of the Store, it was allowed a member to have any number of shares under fifty-one. The chances of any member availing himself of this opportunity were very dreary. But the officers were ordered, and empowered, and

commanded to buy down all fifty-pound shares with all convenient speed; and any member holding more than four shares was compelled to sell the surplus at their original cost of £1, when applied to by the officers of the Society. But should a member be thrown out of employment, he was then allowed to sell his shares to the Board of Directors, or other member, by arrangement, which would enable him to obtain a higher value. Each member of the Society, on his admission night, had to appear personally in the meeting-room and state his willingness to take out four shares of £1 each, and to pay a deposit of not less than threepence per share, or one shilling, and to pay not less than threepence per week after, and to allow all interests and profits that might be due to him to remain in the funds until the amount was equal to four shares in the capital.

Any member neglecting his payments was to be liable to a fine, except the neglect arose from distress, sickness, or want of employment.

When overtaken by distress, a member was allowed to sell all his shares, save one.

The earliest rules of the Society, printed in 1844, have, of course, undergone successive amendments; but the germs of all their existing rules were there. Every member was to be formally proposed, his name, trade, and residence made known to everyone concerned, and a general meeting effected his election.

The officers of the Society included a President, Treasurer, and Secretary, elected half-yearly, with three Trustees and five Directors. Auditors as usual.

The officers and Directors were to meet, every Thursday evening, at eight o'clock, in the committee room of the Weavers' Arms, Yorkshire Street. Then followed all the heavy regulations, common to enrolled societies, for taking care of money before they had it. The only hearty thing in the whole rules, and which does not give *tic doloureux* in reading it, is an appointment that an annual general meeting shall be holden on the "first market Tuesday," at which a *dinner* shall be provided at one shilling each, to celebrate the anniversary of the grand opening of the Store. At which occasion, no doubt, though the present historian has not the report before him, the first sentiment given was "Th'owd weyvurs' shop," followed by a chorus from the "doffers."

The gustativeness of the members appears not to have sustained an annual dinner, for in 1847 [An early minute, Oct. 6, 1845, I find appoints an Anniversary Tea. It was "resolved Oct. 7, 1850, that neither tea nor dinner be provided to celebrate the anniversary" of that year. This festival must have been a modest one.] we find records of the annual celebration assuming the form of a "tea party," to which, in right propagandist spirit, certain Bacup co-operators were invited.

The store itself was ordered to be opened to the *public* (who never came in those days at all) on the evenings of Mondays and Saturdays only - from seven to nine on Mondays, from six to eleven on Saturdays. It would appear from this arrangement that the poor flannel weavers only bought twice a week in those times. A dreadful string of fines is attached to the laws of 1844. The value of a Trustee or Director may be estimated by the fact, that his fine for non-attendance was *sixpence*. It is plain that the Society expected to lose only half-a-crown if the whole five ran away.

However, they proved to be worth more than the very humble price they put upon themselves. Under their management members rapidly increased, and the Store was opened (March 3, 1845) on additional days, and for a greater number of hours:-

Monday	from	4 to 9 p.m.
Wednesday	from	7 to 9 p.m.
Thursday	from	8 to 10 p.m.
Friday	from	7 to 9 p.m.
Saturday	from	1 to 11 p.m.

On February 2nd, 1846, it was resolved that the Store be opened on Saturday afternoons for the meeting of members; an indication that the business of the Store was becoming interesting, and required more attention than the weavers were able to give it after their long day's labour was over. In the October of this year, the Store commenced selling butcher's meat. For the three years 1846-8, the Store was tried by dullness, apathy, and public distress. It made slow, but it made certain progress under them all. Very few new members were added during 1846; but the capital of the Society increased to £252 7s. 1.5d., with weekly receipts for goods averaging £34 for the December quarter.

In case of distress occurring to a member, we have seen that he was permitted to dispose of his shares, retaining only one. During 1847 trade was bad, and many of the members withdrew part of their shares. Nothing can better show the soundness of the advantages created by the Society than the fact that the first time trade became bad, and provisions dear, the members rapidly increased. The people felt the pinch, and it made them look out for the best means of making a little go far; and finding that the payment of a shilling entrance money, and threepence a week afterwards - which sum being paid on account of their shares, was really money saved - would enable them to join the Store; they saw that doing so was quite within their means, and much to their advantage. Accordingly, many availed themselves of the opportunity of buying their goods at the Store. The Store thereby encouraged habits of providence, and saved the funds of the parish. At the close of 1847, 110 members were on the books, and the capital had increased to £286 15s. 3.5d., and the weekly receipts for goods during the December quarter were £36. An increase of £34 of capital, and £2 a week in receipts during twelve months, was no great thing to boast of; but this was accomplished during a year of bad trade and dear food, which might have been expected to ruin the Society: it was plain that the co-operative waggon was surely, if slowly, toiling up the hill. The next minute of the Society's history is unexpected and cheering.

The year 1848 commenced with great "distress" cases and an accession of new members. Contributions were now no longer collected from the members at their homes. There was one place now where every member met, at least once a week, and that was at the Store, and the cashier made the appointed collection from each when he appeared at the desk. Neither revolutions abroad, nor excitement nor distress at home, disturbed the progress of this wise and peaceful experiment. The members increased to 140, the capital increased to £397, and the weekly receipts for goods sold in the December quarter rose to £80; being an increase of £44 a week over the previous year in the amount of sales.

The lower room of the old warehouse was now too small for the business, so the whole building, consisting of three stories and an attic, was taken by these enterprising co-operators, on lease for twenty-one years.

More new members were added to the Society in 1849. The second-floor became the meeting-room of the members, and also a sort of news-room, for on August 20th, it was resolved - "That Messrs. James Nuttall, Henry Green, Abraham Greenwood, George Adcroft, James Hill, and Robert Taylor, be a committee to open a stall for the sale of books, periodicals, newspapers, etc.; the profits to be applied to the furnishing the members' room with newspapers and books." At the close of 1849 the number of members had reached three hundred and ninety. The capital now amounted to £1193 19s. Id., and the weekly receipts for goods had risen to £179.

In the next year a very old enemy of social peace appeared in Rochdale. The religious element began to contend for exclusiveness. The rapid increase of the members had brought together numbers holding evangelical views, and who had not been reared in a school of practical toleration. These had no idea of allowing to their colleagues the freedom their colleagues allowed to them, and they proposed to close the meeting room on Sundays, and forbid religious controversy. The liberal and sturdy co-operators, whose good sense and devotion had created the secular advantages of which the religious accession had chosen to avail itself, were wholly averse to this restriction. They valued mental freedom more than any personal gain, and they could not help regarding with dismay the introduction of this fatal source of discord, which had broken up so many Friendly Societies, and often frustrated the fairest prospects of mutual improvement. The matter was brought before a general meeting, on February 4th, 1850. We give the dates of the leading incidents we record, for they are historic days in the career of our Store. On the date here quoted, it was resolved, for the welfare of the Society: - "That every member shall have full liberty to speak his sentiments on *all subjects* when brought before the meetings at a proper time, and in a proper manner; *and all subjects shall be legitimate when properly proposed.*" The tautology of this memorable resolution shows the emphasis of alarm under which it was passed, and the endeavour to secure by reiteration of terms a liberty so essential to conscience and to progress. The founders of the Society were justly apprehensive that its principles would be overthrown by an indiscriminate influx of members, who knew nothing of the toleration upon which all co-operation must be founded, and they moved and carried:- "That no propositions be taken for new members after next general meeting for six months ensuing." From this time peace has prevailed on this subject.

Very early in the history of co-operation - as far back as 1832 - the Co-operative Congress, held in London in that year, wisely agreed to this resolution: - "Whereas, the co-operative world contains persons of all religious sects, and of all political parties, it is unanimously resolved, that Co-operators, *as such*, are not identified with any religious, irreligious, or political tenets whatever; neither those of Mr. Owen, nor of any other individual." [Resolution of the third London Co-operative Congress 1832.]

Sectarianism is at all times the bane of public unity. Without toleration of all opinion, popular co-operation is impossible.

These theological storms over, the Society continued its success. The members increased in 1850 to six hundred; the capital of the Society, in cash and stock, rose to £2299 10s. 5d., and the cash received during the December quarter amounted to £4397 17s., or £338 per week.

In April, 1851, seven years after its commencement, the Store was open, for the first time, all day. Mr. William Cooper was appointed superintendent; John Rudman and James Standing shopmen.

This year the members of the Store were six hundred and thirty; its capital £2785; its weekly sales £308. Somewhat less than in 1850.

The next year, 1852, the increase of members' capital and receipts was marked, and they have gone on since increasing at a rate beyond all expectation. To what extent we shall show in Tables of Results in another chapter.

## Chapter V - Enemies Within and Enemies Without, and How They All Were Conquered

The moral miracle performed by our co-operatives of Rochdale is, that they have had the good sense to differ without disagreeing; to dissent from each other without separating; to hate at times, and yet always hold together. In most working classes, and, indeed, in most public societies of all classes, a number of curious persons are found, who appear born under a disagreeable star; who breathe hostility, distrust, and dissension: whose tones are always harsh: it is no fault of theirs, they never mean it, but they cannot help it; their organs of speech are cracked, and no melodious sound can come out of them; their native note is a moral squeak; they are never cordial, and never satisfied; the restless convolutions of their skin denote "a difference of opinion;" their very lips hang in the form of a "carp;" the muscles of their face are "drawn up" in the shape of an amendment, and their wrinkled brows frown with an "entirely new principle of action;" they are a species of social porcupines, whose quills eternally stick out; whose vision is inverted; who see everything upside down; who place every subject in water to inspect it, where the straightest rod appears hopelessly bent; who know that every word has two meanings, and who take always the one you do not intend; who know that no statement can include everything, and who always fix upon whatever you omit, and ignore whatever you assert; who join a society ostensibly to co-operate with it, but really to do nothing but criticise it, without attempting patiently to improve that of which they complain; who, instead of seeking strength to use it in mutual defence, look for weakness to expose it to the common enemy; who make every associate sensible of perpetual dissatisfaction, until membership with them becomes a penal infliction, and you feel that you are sure of more peace and more respect among your opponents than among your friends; who predict to everybody that the thing must fail, until they make it impossible that it can succeed, and then take credit for their treacherous foresight, and ask your gratitude and respect for the very help which hampered you; they are friends who act as the fire brigade of the party; they always carry a water engine with them, and under the suspicion that your cause is in a constant conflagration, splash and drench you from morning till night, until every member is in an everlasting state of drip; who believe that co-operation is another word for organised irritation, and who, instead of showing the blind the way, and helping the lame along, and giving the weak a lift, and imparting courage to the timid, and confidence to the despairing, spend their time in sticking pins into the tender, treading on the toes of the gouty, pushing the lame down stairs, leaving those in the dark behind, telling the fearful that they may well be afraid, and assuring the despairing that it is "all up." A sprinkling of these "damned good-natured friends" belong to most societies; they are few in number, but indestructible; they are the highwaymen of progress, who alarm every traveller, and make you stand and deliver your hopes; they are the lagues and Turpins of democracy, and only wise men and strong men can evade them or defy them. The Rochdale co-operators understand them very well - they met them-bore with them - worked with them - worked in spite of them - looked upon them as the accidents of progress, gave them a pleasant word and a merry smile, and passed on before them; they answered them not by word but by act, as Diogenes refuted Zeno. When Zeno said there was no motion, Diogenes answered him by *moving*. When adverse critics, with Briarian hands, pointed to failure, the Rochdale co-operators replied by *succeeding*.

Whoever joins a popular society ought to be made aware of this curious species of colleagues whom we have described. You can get on with them very well if they do not take you by surprise. Indeed, they are useful in their way; they are the dead weights with which the social architect tries the strength of his new building. We mention them because they existed in Rochdale, and that fact serves to show that our co-operators enjoyed no favour from nature or accident. They were tried like other men, and had to combat the ordinary human difficulties. Take two examples.

Of course the members' meetings are little parliaments of working men - not very little parliaments now, for they include thrice the number of members composing the House of Commons. All the mutual criticisms in which Englishmen proverbially indulge, and the grumbings said to be our national characteristic, and the petty jealousies of democracies, are reproduced on these occasions, though not upon the fatal scale so common among the working class. Here, in the parliament of our Store, the leader of the opposition sometimes shows no mercy to the leader in power; and Rochdale Gladstones or Disraelies very freely criticise the quarterly budget of the Sir George Cornwall Lewis of the day. At one time there was our friend Ben, a member of the Store so known, who was never satisfied with anything - and yet he never complained of anything. He looked his disapproval, but never spoke it. He was suspicious of everybody in a degree, it would seem, too great for utterance. He went about everywhere, he inspected everything, and doubted everything. He shook his dissent, not from his tongue, but his head. It was at one time thought that the management must sink under his portentous disapprobation. With more wisdom than usually falls to critics, he refrained from speaking until he knew what he had to say. After two years of this weighty travail the clouds dispersed, and Ben found speech and confidence together. He found that his profits had increased notwithstanding his distrust, and he could no longer find in his heart to frown upon the Store which was making him rich. At last he went up to the cashier to draw his profits, and he came down, like Moses from the mount, with his face shining.

Another guardian of the democratic weal fulminated heroically. The very opposite of Ben, he almost astounded the Store by his ceaseless and stentorian speeches. The *Times* newspaper would not contain a report of his quarterly orations. He could not prove that anything was wrong, but he could not believe that all was right. He was invited to attend a meeting of the Board; indeed, if we have studied the chronicles of the Store correctly, he was appointed a member of the Board, that he might not only see the right thing done, but do it; but he was too indignant to do his duty, and he was so committed to dissatisfaction that above all things he was afraid of being undeceived; and, during his whole period of office, he actually sat with his back to the Board, and in that somewhat unfriendly and inconvenient attitude he delivered his respective opinions. Whether, like the hare, he had ears behind has not been certified; but, unless he had eyes behind, he never could have seen what took place. A more perfect member of an opposition has rarely appeared. He was made by nature to conduct an antagonism. At length he was bribed into content - bribed by the only legitimate bribery - the bribery of success. When the dividends came in behind him, he turned round to look at *them*, and he pocketed his "brass" and his wrath together; and, though he has never been brought to confess that things are going right, he has long ceased to say that they are going wrong.

The Store very early began to exercise educational functions. Besides supplying the members with provisions, the Store became a meeting place, where almost every member met each other every evening after working hours. Here there was harmony because there was equality. Every member was equal in right, and was allowed to express his opinions on whatever topic he took an interest in. Religion and politics, the terrors of Mechanics' Institutions, were here common subjects of discussion, and harmless because they were open. In other respects the co-operators acquired business confidence as well as business habits. The Board was open to everybody, and, in fact, everybody went everywhere. Distrust dies out where nothing is concealed. Confidence and honest pride sprung up, for every member was a master - he was at once purchaser and proprietor. But all did not go smoothly on. Besides the natural obstacles which exist, ignorance and inexperience created others.

Poverty is a greater impediment to social success than even prejudice. With a small capital you cannot buy good articles nor cheap ones. What is bought at a small Store will probably be worse and dearer than the same articles elsewhere. This discourages the poor. With them every penny must tell, and every penny extra they pay for goods seems to them a tax, and they will not often incur it. It is of no use that you show them that it and more will come back again as profit at the end of the quarter. They do not believe *in the end of the quarter* - they distrust the promise of profits. The loss of the penny to-day is near - the gain of sixpence three months hence is remote. Thus you have to educate the very poor before you can serve them. The humbler your means the greater your difficulties - You have to teach as well as to save the very poor. One would think that a customer ought to be content when he is his own shopkeeper; on the contrary, he is not satisfied with the price he charges himself. Intelligent contentment is the slowest plant that grows upon the soil of ignorance.

Some of the male members, and no wonder that many of the women also, thought meanly of the Store. They had been accustomed to fine shops, and the Toad Lane warehouse was repulsive to them; but after a time the women became conscious of the pride of paying ready money for their goods, and of feeling that the Store was their own, and they began to take equal interest with their husbands. As usually happens in these cases, the members who rendered no support to the new undertaking when it most wanted support, made up by making more complaints than anybody else, thus rendering no help themselves and discouraging those who did. It has been a triumph of penetration and good sense to inspire these contributors with a habit of supporting that, which, in its turn, supports them so well. There are times still when a cheaper article has its attraction for the Store purchaser, when he forgets the supreme advantage of knowing that his food is good, or his garment as stout as it can be made. He will sometimes forget the moral satisfaction derived from knowing that the article he can buy from the Store has, as far as the Store can influence it, been produced by some workman, who, in his turn, was paid at some living rate for his labour. Now and then, the higgler will appear at the little co-operative stores around, and the Store dealers will believe them, and prefer their goods to the supplies to be had from the Store, because they are some fraction cheaper; without their being able to know what adulteration, or hard bargaining elsewhere, has been practised to effect the reduction.

Any person passing through the manufacturing districts of Lancashire will be struck with the great number of small provision shops; many of them dealing in drapery goods as well as food. From these shops the operatives, to a great extent, spread their tables and cover their backs. Unfortunately, with them the credit system is the rule, and ready money the exception. The majority of the people trading at these shops have what is called a "Strap Book," which, of course, is always taken when anything is fetched, and balanced as often as the operatives receive their wages, which is generally weekly, but in many cases fortnightly. A balance is generally left due to the shopkeeper, thus a great number of operatives are always less or more in debt. When trade becomes slack he goes deeper and deeper, until he is irretrievably involved. When his work fails altogether, he is obliged to remove to another district, and of course to trade with another Shop, unless at great inconvenience he sends all the distance to the old Shop.

It sometimes happens that an honest weaver will prefer all this trouble to forsaking a house that has trusted him. One instance has been mentioned to the present writer, in which a family that had removed from a village on one side of the town to one on the opposite side, continued for years to send a distance of two miles and a half to the old Shop for their provisions, although in doing so they had to pass through the town of Rochdale, where they could have obtained the same things cheaper. This is in every way a grateful and honourable fact, and the history of the working class includes crowds of them.

We are bound to relate that the capital of the Store would have increased somewhat more rapidly, had not many of its members at that time been absorbed by the land company of Feargus O'Connor. Many members of the Store were also shareholders in that concern, and as that company was considered by them to be more feasible, and calculated sooner to place its members in a state of permanent independence, much of the zeal and enthusiasm necessary to the success of a new society were lost to the co-operative cause.

The practice of keeping up a national debt in this country, on the interest of which so many are enabled to live at the expense of industrious taxpayers, and the often immoral speculations of the Stock Exchange, have produced an absurd and injurious reaction on the part of many honest people. Many co-operative experiments have failed through want of capital, because the members thought, it immoral to take interest, and yet they had not sufficient zeal to lend their money without interest. Others have had a moral objection to paying interest, and as money was not to be had without, of course these virtuous people did nothing - they were too moral to be useful, All this showed frightful ignorance of political economy. If nobody practised thrift and self-denial in order to create capital, society must remain in perpetual barbarism; and if capital is refused interest as compensation for its risk, it would never be available for the use of others; it would be simply hoarded in uselessness, instead of being the great instrument of civilisation and national power. The class of reformers who made these mistakes were first reclaimed to intelligent appreciation of industrial science by Mr. Stuart Mill's "Principles of Political Economy, with some of their applications to *Social* Philosophy." Most of these "applications" were new to them, and though made with the just austerity of science, they manifested so deep a consideration for the progress of the people, and a human element so fresh and

sincere, that prejudice was first dispelled by sympathy, and error afterwards by argument.

The principle of co-operation - so moralising to the individual as a discipline, and so advantageous to the State in its results - with what difficulty has it made its way in the world! Regarded by the statesman as some terrible form of political combination, and by the rich as a scheme of spoliation; denounced in Parliament, written against by political economists, preached against by the clergy; the co-operative idea, as opposed to the competitive, has had to struggle, and has yet to struggle its way into industry and commerce. Statesmen might spare themselves the gratuitous anxiety they have often manifested for the suppression of new opinion. Experience ought to have shown them that wherever one man endeavours to set up a new idea, ten men at once rise up to put it down; not always because they think it bad, but because, whether good or bad, they do not want the existing order of things altered. They will hate truth itself, even if they know it to be truth, if truth gives them trouble. The statesman ought to have higher taste, even if he has not higher employment, than to join the vulgar and officious crowd in hampering or hunting honest innovation. There is, of course, a prejudice felt at first on the part of shopkeepers against co-operative societies. That sort of feeling exists which we find among mechanics against the introduction of machinery, which, for want of better arrangements, is sure to injure them first, however it may benefit the general public afterwards. But, owing to the good sense of the co-operators, and not less to the good sense of the shopkeepers of Rochdale, no unfriendliness worth mentioning has ever existed between them. The co-operators were humbly bent on improving their own condition, and at first their success in that way was so trivial as not to be worth the trouble of jealousy. For the first three or four years after the commencement of the Store, its operations produced no appreciable effect upon the retail trade of the town. The receipts of the Store in 1847, four years after its commencement, were only £36 a week; about the receipt of a single average shop, and five or ten times less than the receipts of some shops. But of late years, no doubt, the shopkeepers, especially smaller ones, have felt its effects. In some instances shops have been closed in consequence. The members of the Store extend out into the suburbs, a distance of one or two miles from the town. It has happened in the case of at least one suburban shopkeeper, that half the people for a mile round him had become Store purchasers. This, of course, would affect his business. The good feeling prevailing among the tradesmen of the town has been owing somewhat to a display of unexpected good sense and moderation on the part of the co-operators, who have kept themselves free from the greed of mere trade and the vices of rivalry. If the prices of grocery in the town rose, the Store raised its charges to the same level. It never would, even in appearance, nor even in self-defence, use its machinery to undersell others; and when tradesmen lowered, as instances often occurred, their prices in order to undersell the Store, and show to the town that they could sell cheaper than any society of weavers: and when they made a boast of doing so, and invited the customers of the Store to deal with them in preference, or taunted the dealers at the Store with the higher prices they had to pay, the Store never at any time, neither in its days of weakness nor of strength, would reduce any of its prices. It passed by, would not recognise, would in no way imitate this ruinous and vexatious, but common resource of competition. The Store conducted an honest trade - it charged an honest average price - it sought no rivalry, nor would it be drawn into any, although the means of winning were quite as much in its hands as in the hands of its opponents. The prudent maxims of the

members were, "To be safe we must sell at a profit." "To be honest we must sell at a profit." "If we sell sugar without profit, we must take advantage covertly in the sale of some other articles to cover that loss." "We will not act covertly; we will not trade without profit whatever others may do; we will not profess to sell cheaper than others; we profess to sell honestly " - and this policy has conquered.

Some manufacturers were as much opposed to the co-operators' Store as the shopkeepers - not knowing exactly what to make of it. Some were influenced by reports made to them by prejudiced persons - some had vague notions of their men acquiring a troublesome independence. But this apprehension was of short duration, and was set at rest by the good sense of others. One employer was advised to discharge some of his men for dealing at the Store, who serviceably answered, "He did not see why he should. So long as his men did their duty, it was no business of his to dictate where they should deal. They had as much right as he had to spend their money in that market where they thought it would go farthest, and if they learned thrift he did not see what harm it would do them, and if they could save money they had a right to do so. Indeed, he thought it was their turn."

The co-operators have long enjoyed the good opinion of the majority of the manufacturers, and the higher classes of the town. The members of the Store are so numerous, that the masters come in contact with them at almost every turn. The co-operators work for nearly every employer in the town, and many hold the most trusty and responsible situations. The working class in general hold the Co-operative Society in high esteem, and what is more natural, since it aims at bettering their condition? Indeed, the Society exercises considerable influence in the town. As its members are spread over every part, every local or public movement is known to one or the other, and is communicated rapidly as they meet with their fellow members at the Store. Facts circulate - opinion is elicited - criticism follows - a general conviction upon particular points springs up - and thus many learn what is the right view to support, and support it with more confidence from the knowledge that numbers, upon whom they can rely, share it.

The slowness of the Rochdale movement for two or three years may be attributed to the want of confidence in any scheme originating among the working classes for the amelioration of their condition. The loss, trouble, and anxiety entailed upon the leading men of the previous co-operative societies in Rochdale, were still within the recollection of many. These reminiscences would naturally intimidate the cautious. There were others who were not aware that the former societies had been wrecked by the credit system. The "Equitable Pioneers" had most studiously avoided that shoal. In fact, so many co-operative experiments had been stranded by credit, that an almost universal opinion was prevalent, not only in Rochdale, but throughout the country and in Parliament, that co-operation was an exploded fallacy, and the poor co-operators, whose enterprise we report, were looked upon as dangerous emissaries of some revolutionary plot, and at the same time as fanatics deluded beyond all hope of enlightenment, who were bent on ruining themselves, and too ignorant to comprehend their folly or their danger. It was not until the small but unflinching stream of profits began to meander into all out-of-the-way cottages and yards - it was not until the town had been repeatedly astonished by the discovery of weavers with money in their pockets, who had never before been known to be out of debt, that the working class began to perceive that the "exploded fallacy" was a

*paying fallacy*; and then crowds of people who had all their life been saying and proving that nothing of the kind could happen, now declared that they had never denied it, and that everybody knew co-operation would succeed, and that anybody could do what the Pioneers did.

## Chapter VI - The Great Flour Mill Panic

Towards the close of 1850, a new Society takes its place in our narrative - namely, the "Rochdale District Corn Mill Society." A similar one had long flourished in Leeds, a history of which would be a very instructive addition to co-operative literature. [An account appeared in the local newspapers of 1849, of the success of the Leeds and Halifax Corn Mill Societies, which had effected a general reduction in the price of flour in those towns, thus serving the whole public, besides supplying to their own members pure flour cheaper than the public price, with added profits. These facts circulated by the newspapers led Mr. Smithies, Mr. Greenwood, and Mr Charles Howarth to initiate the discussion of a corn mill movement in Rochdale, at the Equitable Pioneers meetings.] The Rochdale imitation commenced its active operations about the close of 1850. This Corn Mill Society, meeting at the Elephant and Castle, Manchester Road, received encouragement from the Store. The Directors being unacquainted with the business, had, of course, to entrust it to other hands very much to its disadvantage. Our "Equitable Pioneers" invested, in the shape of shares in the Corn Mill, from £400 to £600.

In 1851 they began to lend to the Corn Mill Society, on account of goods to come in. Unfortunately, the goods sent in - namely the flour, was of an inferior quality. This was owing to two causes - first, the Corn Society being short of capital, was obliged to buy where it could get credit, instead of where it could get the best corn; being in the power of him who gave credit, they were often compelled to accept an inferior article at a high price. Second, there was a want of skill in the head miller - in the grinding department. The "Equitable Pioneer Society" decided to sell no flour but the "Rochdale Corn Mill Society's," and that being inferior, of course the sale fell off. [The deficiency of capital is always aggravated by miscalculation. After contracting for the machinery of £750, the millwright sent in a bill of extras of £140 - a dressing machine at £44 was overlooked; the result was that when the mill was ready no money existed with which to purchase grain] This is another of those little crevices in the walls of a popular experiment through which the selfishness of human nature peeps out. Of course a man who pays a dearer rate than his neighbour for any article taxes himself to that amount; but, in a public movement, this is one of those liabilities which every man who would advance it must be prepared to encounter. When the support of the purchasers at the Store began to drop off by this refusal to take the flour, it brought on a crisis in the Co-operative Society. By the end of the third quarter of 1851, the Corn Mill had lost £441. [The joy with which the Directors hailed the production of their first sack of flour was turned into dismay at this result.] This produced a panic in the Store, which was considered, by its investments, to be implicated in the fall of the Corn Mill. It was soon rumoured that the Store would fail, and some of the members proposed that the Corn Mill business be abandoned. Others suggested that each member of the Store should subscribe a pound to cover the loss, and clear out of it. But as the Corn Mill held its meetings at the Pioneers' Store, and its leading members belonged to the Store, Mr. Smithies considered that their honour was compromised if they were defeated; and insisted, with much energy, that the name of "Pioneers" must be given up, unless they went on altogether. Had the Mill been brought to the hammer at this time, there would not have been realised ten shillings in the pound. This was the point to try their faith in co-operation. The members did not fail. Some brought all the money they could

collect together to enable the difficulties to be conquered; a few, as usual in these cases, fell back. In the first place, amid those who distinguished themselves to avert the disaster of failure, all agree to name Abraham Greenwood, whose long and protracted devotion to this work cost him his health, and nearly his life. How much has depended, in the fate of the Store, on the honesty of its officers, may be seen from the disasters of the Corn Mill, arising from defects of character in some of its servants. One miller systematically went to Manchester, instead of to Wakefield, to buy his grain. By acting in concert with some seller, he got a commission in Manchester, and the Store suffered for it. The first great loss of the Mill was probably occasioned in this way. The next miller had a weakness for "toddy," and his successor was liable to faint perceptions of truth; so between the man who *would* not know what he was doing, and the man who *did* not know what he was doing, and the man who did not know what he was saying, the affairs of the Corn Mill got somewhat confused.

Another very usual error among the working class muddled every thing further. Thinking it economical to accept volunteer bookkeepers, they had their books kept by those who offered - who officiated in turns - and the books were duly bungled for nothing. The confusion was cheap but inextricable, and the perplexity of everything grew worse confounded. The directors acted with good sense and vigour as soon as they comprehended their position. The defective manager for the time being was dismissed, Mr. A. Greenwood, the president of the Society, acting in his place. A paid bookkeeper was appointed - debts were commenced liquidation by small instalments, when an unexpected disaster overtook them. One morning news was brought to town that the bailiffs were in possession - to the dismay of the struggling co-operators and secret satisfaction of the prophets of failure, who could not help felicitating themselves on so portentous a sign. The landlord, of whom the Corn Mill was rented, had neglected to pay the ground landlord his rent, and for three years' ground rent, amounting to £100, he had put in a distraint upon the property of the co-operators, who were not morally responsible. This enemy was in due time routed - perseverance triumphed, and successive dividends, from fourpence to one shilling in the pound, cleared off the loss of £450, and the day of substantial profits at length dawned.

When the Store was first opened, one shopkeeper boasted that he could come with a wheelbarrow and wheel the whole stock away, which was quite true. He had the command of ten times more capital. He threatened that he would sell cheaper, and break up the Store. It was quite true that he could sell cheaper, but the weavers held together, and he did not break up the Store. There were many unfriendly traders of this way of thinking. It often happens that men who do not exactly mean ill towards you become your enemies artificially. They begin by predicting that you will fail, and without exactly wishing you should fail, are sorry when you do not. As an abstract matter, they would perhaps be glad of your success; but having committed themselves to a prediction, they are disgusted when you falsify it, and they will sometimes help to bring about your ruin for no other reason than that of fulfilling their own Prediction. In 1849, when the public Savings' Bank in Rochdale so disgracefully broke, and many thousands of pounds of the hard earnings of the poor were swept away, [Out of £100,403 deposits, an officer had appropriated to his own use £71,717. The amount still due to the depositors (1877) is £38,287. Sir A. Ramsay has lately presented a petition to the House of Commons on the subject] the poor

and ruined people turned to the Store for protection. Since 1849 there has been no Savings' Bank in Rochdale.

Many of the weavers who, up to this time, had preferred investing their money in the bank, had now to look out for another place in which to deposit their savings. They felt that they had misplaced their confidence in the Savings' Bank, which was an institution without an adequate responsible security, or in which they had no controlling influence over the application of the money. As the Store offered both these advantages, and a higher rate of interest, many of their bank dividends [12s. 6d. in the pound is all yet paid.] found their way to the Store, and future savings also.

They had more confidence in the "Equitable Pioneers" than in the false Government bank. The failure of the Savings' Bank led to an accession of members and capital to the Store. This growth of confidence brought great discredit on the prophets to whom we have referred. No sooner, however, did the Corn Mill panic get rumoured about than they recurred with sinister emphasis to their old predictions, and their rumours brought about a run upon the Store. The humble Directors said nothing, but quietly placed their cashier behind the counter with orders to pay every demand. One man, who had twenty-four pounds in the Store, the whole of which he had made from the profits, began with a demand for sixteen pounds. He had some sort of sympathy for his benefactors, and thought he would leave a little in their hands.

"Are you about to commence some sort of business?" asked the cashier.

"No," said the man, "but I want my money." "Well, you are aware that notice is required?"

"Oh, yes, and I am come to give notice." He "would have his money."

"Well," said the cashier, "we avail ourselves of the notice when we are likely to be short; but we can dispense with notice now. You'd better 'tak brass now.'"

And they made the man "tak brass" then, and much to his astonishment, he was obliged to carry his money away in his pocket, and he went away half suspecting he had been playing the fool.

Eighteen months after, this man brought his money back: he had kept it in some stocking foot all that time (that celebrated "patent safe" of the poor), losing the interest. He himself then told the cashier the story of his taking it out; in consequence of being assured that the Store would break. He now tells the story to his comrades, far and near, and nobody has more confidence in the Store than he.

Next a woman appeared: she *would* have her money out then. It was at once offered to her - then she would not have it. She demanded her money because she had been told she could not get it; and when she found that she could have it, she did not want it. More sensible and quickwitted than the dullard man who carried his sixteen pounds home to his stocking foot, when *she* found there was no risk, she left her money. Another woman refused to draw her money out whether it was ill danger or not, though a shopkeeper said to her: -"It will be sure to break, and you had better draw it out."

From the depositors the panic extended to traders; but the panic among them did not last long. At that time, corn was bought for the Mill one week, and paid for the next.

The payments, at this time, were made at Wakefield, one week under the other. One week the buyer-in missed the paying. The old gentleman who was, in this case, the creditor, was told by millers about him that the Store had broken - he might depend upon it. He took an express train to Rochdale and a cab from the railway station, rushed down to the Store, and demanded his money. He was quietly asked for his invoice, and his money was at once paid him; and he was told if he knew any others wanting money on account of goods supplied to the Corn Mill, to be kind enough to send them in. The old gentleman went away very much astonished; he felt that he should never have another order; and he afterwards stated to the superintendent at the railway station he had ever since regretted the unfortunate journey he was induced to make.

About this time, the bank in Rochdale, with whom our "Equitable Pioneers" did business, did them a frank piece of service, which they have always remembered with appreciation. Some tradesmen being at the counter of the bank, a person remarked that he thought the Store was running down, evidently fishing from the bankers some confirmation of his suspicions. The answer given by one of the firm was, that he did not see why it should, as the Board had left £2000 in their hands for a long time, which they had never touched. This observation established confidence in influential quarters; and as the depositors who applied for their money at the Store invariably carried it back with them in their pockets, it soon restored confidence among their own order. The humble Directors of the Store, like all other honest men, had more pride and pleasure in paying money than in receiving it, and their firm and judicious conduct re-established the credit of the "Equitable Pioneers."

Here from one to two thousand working men had done what Sir John Dean Paul failed to do - kept an honest banking house. In point of morality, how infinitely superior are these Rochdale co-operators to that Lord of the Treasury who finally poisoned himself on Hampstead Heath! Surely these men are as fit for the franchise as Paul and Sadleir, as Hugh Innes Cameron and Humphrey Brown. What standard of electional fitness does the Government take, who gives the franchise to fraudulent bankers and knavish lords of the Treasury, and withholds it from honest working men?

The September quarter of 1852 showed a clear balance of gain for that quarter of £100 upon the Corn Mill. The energy of Mr. Greenwood and his colleagues had turned upwards the fortunes of the Corn Mill.

In the origin of their flour operations a curious circumstance occurred. Determined to supply all things genuine, they supplied the flour so. It might be inferior, as we have related it was, but it was pure; but being pure, it was browner than the usual flour in the market. It was rejected for its difference of colour. A friend of the present writer, disgusted with the spurious coffee of London, made arrangements to supply the common people with a genuine cup. To this end he opened a house in Lambeth, and ground up the real berries pure. But no one would drink his coffee, and he had to shut up his house. Accustomed to adulterated coffee until their taste was formed upon depraved compounds, the people rejected the pure beverage. So it happened to our Corn Mill. The unadulterated flour would not sell. The customers of the Store knew neither the colour nor taste of pure flour. Then there was a cry against the co-operators. It was said they could not compete with the usual millers; and if they

adulterated, the only way open of rendering their flour popular, there would be another cry out against them for adulterating it, and being as bad as other traders. For a short time they made their flour white in the usual way, but it was so much against their principles to do it that they discussed the folly of the preference with their purchasers at the Store, and the pure flour, of whatever colour, was taken into favour, and from that day to this it has been sold genuine.

## Chapter VII - Successive Steps of Success - the Rochdale Store on a Saturday Night

The Equitable Pioneers' Society is divided into seven departments: - Grocery, Drapery, Butchering, Shoemaking, Clogging; Tailoring: Wholesale.

A separate account is kept of each business, and a general account is given each quarter, showing the position of the whole.

The grocery business was commenced, as we have related, in December, 1844, with only four articles to sell. It now includes whatever a grocer's shop should include.

The drapery business was started in 1847, with a humble array of attractions. In 1854 it was erected into a separate department.

A year earlier, 1846, the Store began to sell butchers' meat, buying eighty or one hundred pounds off a tradesman in the town. After awhile, the sales were discontinued until 1850, when the Society had a warehouse of its own. Mr. John Moorhouse, who has now two assistants, buys and kills for the Society three oxen, eight sheep, sundry porkers and calves, which are on the average converted into £130 of cash per week.

Shoemaking commenced in 1852. Three men and an apprentice make, and a stock is kept on sale.

Clogging and tailoring commenced also in this year. The Wholesale department commenced in 1855, and marks an important development of the Pioneers' proceedings. This department has been created for supplying any member requiring large quantities, and with a view to supply the co-operative stores of Lancashire and Yorkshire, whose small capitals do not enable them to buy in the best markets, nor command the services of what is otherwise indispensable to every store - a *good buyer*, who knows the markets and his business, who knows what, how, and where to buy. The wholesale department guarantees purity, quality, fair prices, standard weight and measure, but all on the never-failing principle - cash payment.

After registering the Society under the 13 and 14 Vict., chap. 115, [An act which is itself an answer to those who would apply the maxim of *Laissez faire* (Let things alone) to politics, a maxim which, however advantageous in political economy, cannot, observes Professor Newman, be applied to politics without blundering or disingenuousness - *Political Economy*, p.188.] the Society turned its attention to a wholesale department, an operation which would have been impossible but for the legal protection of this Act, an Act which has called forth more expressions of gratitude to Parliament than any Act I have heard commented upon by working men. The Pioneers' laws say (we quote three of their rules):-

14. - The Wholesale department shall be for the purpose of supplying those members who desire to have their goods in large quantities.

16. - The said department shall be charged with interest, after the rate of five per cent. per annum, for such capital as may be advanced to it by the Board of Directors.

17. - The profits arising from this department, after paying for the cost of management and other expenses, including the interest aforesaid shall be divided quarterly into three parts, one of which shall be reserved to meet any loss that may arise in the course of trade until it shall equal the fixed stock required, and the remaining two-thirds shall be divided amongst the members, in proportion to the amount of their purchases in the said department.

In 1854, a conference was held in Leeds, to consider how the co-operative societies of Lancashire and Yorkshire could unite their purchases of produce and manufactures among themselves. Mr. Lloyd Jones lent his valuable counsel on this occasion, and at Rochdale, where a second Conference with this object was held in August, 1855. Of course the cardinal question was, *who* should find capital to carry out the idea of a wholesale department. Some stores were willing to contribute a proportional share, others had hardly cash to carry on their own operations; other stores, with a prudence very old in the world, proposed to see how the plan was going to succeed before joining in it. This is a cautiousness commendable in some cases, but were all to act upon it no advance would ever be made. The Equitable Pioneers accepted the initiative with their usual pluck. As many of the stores had the notion in their heads that all the Rochdale Pioneers took up succeeded, several stores joined, and put in a little money; but the principal capital was supplied by our enterprising friends, the Rochdale Equitables. As the law we have quoted shows, they stipulated for five per cent. on their advances. Differences, though not dissensions, arose. The Equitable Pioneers' Society felt dissatisfaction that stores not contributing a fair share of capital to work the wholesale trade should yet receive an equal dividend of profits in proportion to their trade with the department. As the Equitable Pioneers found nearly all the capital, they were by many thought entitled to nearly all the profit. On the other hand, it was urged that the five per cent. on their capital was all they had a right to, and they had no claim to the profits made by the trade of other stores. The Store of the Pioneers dealt with the wholesale department, and had, in common with other stores, their profits upon the amount of their own trade. It was true that many stores only bought articles that yielded little profit, while the Rochdale Store bought so generally and largely as to create the chief profits itself, besides risking its capital, which seemed at first to be in danger. For in the March quarter of 1856, £495 10s. 4d. were lost through purchasing sugars, syrups, treacle, soaps, etc., when prices were high, which prices came down before the goods could be sold. A committee of inquiry at a later date reported that several stores had increased their purchases from the wholesale department of goods, which yielded even more profit than the purchases of the Pioneers' Store. Mr. William Cooper, the Secretary, defended the proceedings and position of the department, and it was ultimately agreed that the District Stores had dealt fairly by the wholesale department on the whole, although they had not supported it by capital to the extent the promoters could have wished. Still many remained dissatisfied, although they were unable to show what was wrong, and at an adjourned quarterly meeting, so late as October, 1856, it was "Resolved, that the wholesale stock be dispensed with." Owing to the energy of Mr Samuel Stott and others, this resolution never took effect. The department being founded by an enrolled rule, it could not be dispensed with without an alteration of the rules, and before an alteration in the rules can take place the three-fourths of the whole members specially convened must

consent to it. The opponents of the department despaired of getting this wide ratification of their partial dissatisfaction, and the department continued. The loss of £495 10s. 4d. has by the end of the March quarter of 1857, in one year's operation, been reduced to £141 14s. 1d. In half a year more, the loss will be cancelled, and profits beyond the interest on capital accrue. The stores, to their credit, continue to trade with the department, just as though they were receiving a dividend in addition to the interest on the capital, which they will shortly do; were they to receive no dividend, it would be to their advantage to trade with the department. The most important officer of a store is the purchaser. He must be acquainted with his business and the markets. No honesty, if he has not tact and knowledge, will prevent him from damaging the prosperity of a store by bad purchases. Small stores cannot always find a man, nor support him when they do. But a wholesale department, by keeping a few such, can serve all stores, can enable the smallest to command genuine articles equally with the greatest, and to command them even cheaper, as well as better, as large, united, wholesale, purchases can be made more advantageously, of course, than small ones. It is clear, however, that this admirable and well-devised department must have fallen but for the wise provision of the Act of Parliament upon which Mr. Stott and his colleagues fell back. This useful law gives stability to a society, it prevents short-sighted sections from destroying general purposes, and enables the errors of a few to be revised and rectified by the decision of a veritable majority of all concerned.

The members of the Store attracted from a distance make their purchases - some once a fortnight, and have their goods sent home ; others unite together and employ a carter to deliver them. The desire to obviate this inconvenience, and the difficulty of serving the great increase of members at Toad Lane (the Central Store), Branch Stores have been lately opened. In 1856, the first Branch was opened in the Oldham Road, about a mile from the centre of Rochdale. In 1857, the Castleton Branch, and another in the Whitworth Road, were established, and a fourth Branch at Pinfold.

An idea of the appearance of a Branch Store may be gathered from the next page. On each side the door a narrow upright sign, the height of the entrance, gives the following information:-

Equitable Pioneers' Co-operative Stores  
[Copied from the doors of the School Lane Branch]

Enrolled according to Law

*Objects*

To improve the social and domestic condition of its members

Five per cent interest paid on shares

Remaining profits divided amongst purchasers in proportion to the money expended

No second prices

All purchases paid for on delivery

## Dividends declared quarterly

The "owd weyvurs' shop," or rather the entire building, was (in 1849), as we have related, taken on lease by the Store, in a state sadly out of repair. One room is now pleasantly fitted up as a newsroom. Another is neatly fitted up as a library. [*Vide* Almanack 1954] Every part has undergone neat refitting and modest decoration, and now wears the air of a respectable place of business.

The Corn Mill was, of course, rented, and stood at Small Bridge, some distance from the town - one mile and a half. The Society have since built in the town an entirely new mill for themselves. The engine and the machinery are of the most substantial and improved kind. It is now spoken of as "the Society's New Mill in Weir Street, near the Commissioners' Rooms." The capital invested in the Corn Mill is £8,450, of which £3,731 15s 2d. is subscribed by the Equitable Pioneers' Society. The Corn Mill employs eleven men.

The Almanack of 1855 announced the formation of a "Manufacturing Society," enrolled pursuant to the 15 and 16 Vic., chap. 31. Every Branch of the (we are entitled to say now) Great Store's proceedings are enrolled pursuant to some Act or other. This was their first formal realisation of the design announced eleven years before, of attempting the organisation of labour. Now they avail themselves of the Industrial and Provident Societies' Act for carrying on ill common the trades of cotton and woollen manufacturing. The capital in this department is £4,000, of which sum £2,042 has been subscribed by the Equitable Pioneers' Society. This Manufacturing Society has ninety-six power looms at work, and employs twenty-six men, seven women, four boys, and five girls-in all, forty-two persons.

In 1854, the Store commenced to issue an almanack, in which their announcements to members were made, and from which the reader might gather the historic sympathies of the co-operators from the memorable men and dates selected. Now a considerable portion of dates is occupied with their Store, and Corn Mill, and other meetings. Advertisements of the different operations of the Society are given; a little history of its origin is crowded into one corner; the ancient objects of the Society are repeated in another place; such principles and extracts from the laws as are suitable for the information of strangers find due place upon the same broad sheet. In 1855 they announce their Central London Agents: - "The Central Co-operative Agency, No. 356 Oxford Street." In 1856 they add, "and the Universal Purveyor (William Islip and Co.), No.33 Charing Cross." In 1853 the Store purchased, for £745, a warehouse (freehold) on the opposite side of Toad Lane, where they keep and retail their stores of flour, butcher's meat, potatoes, and kindred articles. Their committee-rooms and offices are fitted up in the same building. They rent other houses adjoining for calico and hosiery, [In 1855 the drapery stock was ordered to be insured in the Globe for £1000.] and shoe stores. In their wilderness of rooms the visitor stumbles upon shoe-makers and tailors, at work, under healthy conditions, and in perfect peace of mind as to the result on Saturday night. Their warehouses are everywhere as bountifully stocked as Noah's Ark, and crowds of cheerful customers literally crowd Toad Lane at night, swarming like bees to every counter. The industrial districts of England have not such another sight as the Rochdale Co-operative Store on Saturday night.

At seven o'clock: there are five persons serving busily at the counter, others are weighing up goods ready for delivery. A boy is drawing treacle. Two youths are weighing up minor articles and refilling the shelves. There are two sides of counters in the grocer's shop, twelve yards long. Members' wives, children of members, as many as the shop will hold, are being served; others are waiting at the door, in social conversation, waiting to go in. On the opposite side of the Lane, three men are serving in the drapery department, and nine or ten customers, mostly females, are selecting articles. In the large shop, on the same side of the street, three men are chopping and serving in the butcher's department, with from twelve to fifteen customers waiting. Two other officers are weighing flour, potatoes, preparing butter, etc., for other groups of claimants. In other premises adjoining, shoemakers, cloggers, and tailors are at work, or attending customers in their respective departments. The clerk is in his office, attending to members' individual accounts, or to general business of the Society. The news-room over the grocery has twenty or more men and youths perusing the newspapers and periodicals. Adjoining, the watch club, which has fifty-eight members, is collecting its weekly payments, and drawing lots as to who shall have the repeaters (manufactured by Charles Freeman, of Coventry), which the night's subscription will pay for. The library is open, and the librarian has his hands full in exchanging, renewing, and delivering books to about fifty members, among whom are sons, wives, and daughters of members. The premises are closed at ten o'clock, when there has been received during the day for goods £420, and the librarian has lent out two hundred books. In opposite districts of the town, the Society has now open four Branch Stores for the convenience of outlying members, where, on a lesser scale, the same features of sales are being repeated.

But it is not the brilliance of commercial activity in which either writer or reader will take the deepest interest; it is in the new and improved spirit animating this intercourse of trade. Buyer and seller meet as friends; there is no overreaching on one side, and no suspicion on the other; and Toad Lane on Saturday night, while as gay as the Lowther Arcade in London, is ten times more moral. These crowds of humble working men who never knew before when they put good food in their mouths whose every dinner was adulterated whose shoes let in the water a month too soon, whose waistcoats shone with devil's dust, and whose wives wore calico that would not wash now buy in the markets like millionaires, and, as far as pureness of food goes, live like lords. They are weaving their own stuffs, making their own shoes, sewing their own garments, and grinding their own corn. They buy the purest sugar, and the best tea, and grind their own coffee. They slaughter their own cattle, and the finest beasts of the land waddle down the streets of Rochdale for the consumption of flannel weavers and cobblers. [Last year, the Society advertised for a Provision Agent to make purchases in Ireland, and to devote his whole time to that duty.] When did competition give poor men these advantages? And will any man say that the moral character of these people is not improved under these influences? The teetotalers of Rochdale acknowledge that the Store has made more sober men since it commenced than all their efforts have been able to make in the same time. Husbands who never knew what it was to be out of debt, and poor wives who, during forty years, never had sixpence uncondemned in their pockets, now possess money sufficient to build them cottages, and go every week into their own market with coins jingling in their pockets; and in that market there is no distrust, and no deception; there is no adulteration, and no second prices. The whole atmosphere is honest.

Those who serve neither hurry, finesse, nor flatter. They have no interest in chicanery. They have but one duty to perform-that of giving fair measure, full weight, and a pure article. In other parts of the town, where competition is the principle of trade, all the preaching in Rochdale cannot produce moral effects like these. [The Arbitrators of the Societies, during all their years of office, have never had a case to decide, and are discontented that nobody quarrels. The peaceableness of the co-operators amounts to what elsewhere would be termed "contempt of court."]

As the Store has made no debts, it has incurred no losses; and during thirteen years' transactions, and receipts amounting to £303,852, it has had no law suits.

Children are not generally sent to shops when adults can be spared for the errand, as it is very well known children are put off with anything. The number of children who are sent to the Store to make purchases is a proof of the honourable family confidence it has inspired. A child is not sent to the Store with a message to go to a particular man with grey whiskers and black hair, and get him to serve, and to be sure and ask him for the "best butter." Everybody has grey whiskers and black hair at the Store; the child cannot go to the wrong man, and the best butter is given to everyone, old and young, without its being asked for, for the best of all reasons - they keep no bad.

The meetings of the Store were quite a family feature during the first few years. Afterwards, when the members much increased, the meetings assumed a more commercial character. Of course the Store will not now hold its eighteen hundred members. They are numerous enough to make a large public meeting; and the Public Hall, at Rochdale, has to be engaged when a general meeting is held. The perfect freedom of intercourse maintained, the equality of all, which has ever been undisturbed, both in the board room and on every occasion of intercourse, have imparted an air of independence of feeling and manner to the whole. Eighteen hundred workmen are brought into weekly intercourse with each other, under circumstances which have raised the tone of society among them all.

The Directors of this important and encouraging movement are the same modest and unassuming men they were thirteen years ago; shining in oil, or dusted with flour, or flannel jackets and caps, they in no way answer the expectations of strangers in appearance, however they surpass expectation in moral and commercial capacity.

*The following Tables show the progress of the Store from 1844 to 1857 - a period of thirteen years.*

Year	No of Members	Amount of Capital	Amount of Cash Sales in Store. Annual	Receipts per Week in December Quarter	Amount of Profit. Annual
		£ s.d.	£ s.d.	£ s.d.	£ s.d.
1844	28	28 0 0			
1845	74	181 12 5	710 6 5	30 0 0	32 17 6
1846	80	252 7 1.5	1,146 17 7	34 0 0	80 16 3.5
1847	110	286 5 3.5	1,924 13 10	36 0 0	72 2 10

1848	140	397 0 0	2,276 6 5.5	80 0 0	117 16 10.5
1849	390	1,193 19 1	6,611 18 0	179 0 0	561 3 9
1850	600	2,299 10 5	13,179 17 0	338 0 0	889 12 5
1851	630	2,785 0 1.5	17,638 4 0	308 0 0	990 19 8.5
1852	680	3,471 0 6	16,352 5 0	371 0 0	1,206 15 2.5
1853	720	5,848 3 11	22,760 0 0	524 0 0	1,674 18 11.5
1854	900	7,172 15 7	33,364 0 0	661 0 0	1,763 11 2.5
1855	1400	11,032 12 10.5	44,902 12 0	1,204 0 0	3,106 8 4.5
1856	1600	12,920 13 1.5	63,197 10 0	1,353 0 0	3,921 13 1.5
1857	1850	15,142 1 2	79,788 0 0	1,491 0 0	5,470 6 8.5

Total sales in thirteen years, £303,852. Total profits, £19,888 16s. 11.5d.

*The Capitals of Three Departments. 1856-7.*

Store	Corn Mill	Manufacturers	Total of Capitals
1856 - £12,920	£8,450	£4,000	£25,370
1857 - £15,142	£8,450	£5,500	£29,092
Weekly Receipts of the Same 1856-7			Total Annual Returns
1856 - £1,353	£850	£360	£133,276
1857 - £1,491	£1,184	£300	£153,088

These Returns will be much higher for 1858 as the Balance Sheet for the first quarter shows an increase of more than £10,000 for the year, for the Store alone.

## Chapter VIII - Anecdotes of the Members - the Working Class Stand by the Store and they "Know the Reason Why"

It is as instructive as it is gratifying to notice the kind of replies frequently made by persons who have been served by the Store. One woman who had about £50 in the Store to her credit, was told the "Store would break," by persons who wished it would do so. She answered, " Well, let it break; I have only paid one shilling in, and I have *fifty pounds* in it. It'll break with it's own, if it do break." These anecdotes are common. Many poor people, whose confidence was sought to be tampered with, have answered alarmists, who have tried to shake their trust - "Well, if it do smash it may smash with all it has of mine, for it has paid me out more than ever I paid in." These answers not only show good sense, but gratitude and generosity of sentiment. In all service of the people there will be ingratitude displayed. Every man finds it so, sometimes among his private and chosen friends ; no doubt, it will be so with the public, whom you serve at random. In publicism in all human relations a man who will not be cast down needlessly must learn to look on both sides. He will in every crowd find many whom he cannot respect, and who do not deserve respect; and numbers of poor, yet devoted, trusting, toiling, manly, impassable, grateful men and women, whom you might worship in the fulness of the sentiment of admiration with which they inspire you.

Another fact ought not to escape notice, which none but those having considerable experience are aware of - *viz.*, it is seldom that the people whom you expect to help forward a movement do it. Exactly those on whom you most rely - commonly those whom you elect for appeal - deceive you, or fail to help when you expect, and when the crisis requires it.

The effects of the Store in improving the finances of its members was seen in the instance of one known as Dick, who has lived in a cellar thirty years, and was never out of debt. He one morning astonished his milkman by asking him to change him a £5 note. The sly dog never had one before, and he felt a pardonable pride in displaying his first possession, Dick has now twenty pounds of "brass" in Store. And most of those who have the largest balances standing to their credit are persons who have never paid many shillings in. The whole is the accumulation of their profits.

The following cases, designated by the numbers belonging to the particular member, were taken by the present writer from the books of the Store in 1853, and communicated to the *Leader* newspaper:-

"No.12 joined the Society in 1844. He had never been out of a shopkeeper's books for forty years. He spent at the shop from twenty shillings to thirty shillings per week, and has been indebted as much as £30 at a time. Since he has joined the Pioneers' Society he has paid in contributions £2 18s.; he has drawn from the Society as profits £17 10s. 7d., and he has still left in, the funds of the Society £5. Thus he has had better food and gained £20. Had such a Society been open to him in the early part of his life, he would now be worth a considerable sum.

"No. 22 joined the Society at its commencement. He was never out of a shopkeeper's debt for twenty-five years. His average expenditure with the shopkeeper was about ten shillings per week, and was indebted to him forty shillings or fifty shillings generally. He has paid into the Society £2 10s.; he has drawn from

the Society £6 17s. 5d. ; he has still left in the funds of the Society £8 0s. 3d. He thinks the credit system made him careless about saving anything, and prevented his family from being as economical as they would have been had they been compelled to pay ready money for their commodities. In this he agrees with No.12. Since he (No.22) has joined the Society, he has enjoyed other advantages, having a place accessible, where he can resort to, instead of going to the public-house or beer-shop for information and conversation.

"No. 114 joined the Society in 1848. Paid in fifteen shillings, has drawn out £11 14s. 11d., has still in the funds of the Society £7 2s. 11d. Gained in two years £18.

"No.131 joined the Society at its commencement in 1844. He says he was never out of debt with a shopkeeper for fourteen years. He spent on an average about nine shillings per week with the shopkeeper, and generally owed him from twenty to thirty shillings. He has paid into the Store as contributions at different times £1 18s. 4d.; and has drawn from it £1 12s. 1d.; and has still in the funds of the Society £3 1s. 10d. He thinks the credit system one reason why he was always poor, and that since he joined the Society his domestic comfort has been greatly increased; and had he not belonged to the Society in 1847, he would have been obliged to apply to the parish officers for relief.

"Thus the members derive all the advantage of a sick as well as a benefit society. It is thus that the Society give to its members the money which they save." [These instances were quoted by *Chambers's Journal* at the time of their appearance.]

A mother who had always sent her child to the neighbouring shop, at length began to send her child to the Store, which was more than a mile away from her house. The child asked the mother why she should be sent so far away for things instead of going into the shop next door. The mother explained to the child that the profits made at the Store would come to them. The child understood the lesson, and would come down in a morning to fetch the food for breakfast, and the family at home would wait till she returned; and, as Sir James Graham would express it, both mother and child knew the reason why. A butcher's wife expressed her new experience thus; - "Instead of having to take her 'strap' book with her, she now had money in her pocket and money in the Store." One member has £50 in the Store, all of which he has made by profits, he having drawn out for his own use all that he ever paid in. In one case a woman withdrew £5 from her savings in the Store, not so much because she had special occasion for the money, as for the pleasure of having £5 in her possession. She had traded at shops for nearly half a century, and she declared it was the first time she had ever had £5 of her own in her hands in her life.

A husband who dealt at the Store, and had accumulated money in it, had a wife who did not believe in co-operation, and was easily persuaded that the Store was unsafe, and she took the opportunity of drawing her savings from the Store and placed them, for more safety, in the Savings Bank. Before long the Savings Bank broke. The poor woman's faith was made whole by the mishap. She gathered up the tardy dividends of the bank and placed the residue in the Store, where since they have remained.

George Morton, an old man above sixty, says that had there been no Store, he does not know how he could have lived without going to the poor-house. The profits he has received from the Store on goods purchased has nearly kept him out for the last eleven years - that is, from 1845 to 1856. He has, during that time, received in

dividends £77 3s. 6d., and has remaining in the Society £11. He has never paid into the Society more than £5 16s. 7.5d. altogether.

Of the confidence in the dealings of the Store, Mrs. Mills, a widow, gives this testimony. She came to the Store for a steak, but as the Store butchers had none, and she wanted it for a sick person, she went into the public market and bought a pound and a half. On reaching home she weighed her purchase, and found that the pound weighed fourteen ounces, and the half-pound only seven ounces. She now says that when there is no steak at the Store, "they lump it;" meaning that they make shift until the Store is replenished. This authentic anecdote gives no bad idea of a Rochdale sickness, to which a pound and a half of steak seems congenial. The vegetarians might take a turn there.

Speaking of beef - the other day I was standing at the upper window of the Store, when the Store butchers, who had just come from the Society's abbatoirs, drove up with an immense waggon full of "prime joints." Upon looking over the chief butcher's bill, I found he reported himself as having "killed four cows and a half," which led me to inquire by what co-operative process he was enabled to kill half a cow at a time. The explanation was this. Some butcher in the town wanted half a cow for that day's market, the Store wanted four cows and a half only, so the fifth cow was divided and both parties served, which the butcher called "killing half a cow."

"The Tillicoultry Co-operative Society" admits no member who is immoral in his conduct. A female householder is admitted a member, but is refused a vote. The Baking Company of the same place has a similar ungallant and uncivil rule. [*Vide* rules 1845-6 of the above societies.]

The Rochdale Store renders incidental but valuable aid towards realising the civil independence of women. Women may be members of this Store, and vote in its proceedings. Single and married women join. Many married women become members because their husbands will not take the trouble, and others join it in self-defence, to prevent the husbands from spending their money in drink. The husband cannot withdraw the savings at the Store standing in the wife's name unless she signs the order. Of course, as the law still stands, the husband could by legal process get possession of the money. But a process takes time, and the husband gets sober and thinks better of it before the law can be moved.

Many single women have accumulated property in the Store, which thus becomes a certificate of their conjugal worth. And young men, in want of prudent companions, consider that to consult the books of the Store would be the best means of directing their selection. The habits of honourable thrift acquired by young men, members of this Store, renders it unlikely that they would select industrious girls in marriage for the purpose of living in idleness upon their earnings or savings, as happens elsewhere. [*Vide* letter of S.H. Musgrave, read by Sir Erskine Perry at the public meeting to consider the laws relating to the property of married women, held at 21 Regent Street, London, 31st May, 1856 - *Law Amendment Journal*, No. 14, p.94.]

What quality is it that makes a poor woman pay her way? Ladies do not always do it; many bankruptcies in London are occasioned by their neglect; the poor woman who has been born with that faculty, or who has acquired it, is a treasure and a triumph of

good sense and social cultivation. The difficulty of bringing about this result many working class husbands can tell. The art of living within your income is a gift. The woman who has it, will do it with £1 a week; she who has it not, will be poor with £20. Peter Noakes, tired of finding himself always in debt, wants to get his wife one week in advance with the world. He wants to stand clear on the shopkeepers' books. He knows that the small tradesman cannot pay his way unless his customers pay theirs. He therefore saves, by carefulness and secret thrift, a little money, and one week delights his wife by giving her double wages, that she may pay in advance for her things. What is the result? Next week he finds her running into debt as usual. He complains, and then she tells him the everlasting story of a thousand working-class homes "What could she do? Mr. Last's bill for Tommy's boots had never been paid, the account for Billy's jacket had stood over till she was ashamed of it, little Jane's shoes were out at the toes, and poor Polly, she was the disgrace of the family for want of a new frock, and as for Mrs. Noakes herself, her own bonnet was not fit to be seen, she would rather stop in the house for ever than go out in that old fashioned thing any longer." Poor Peter is overwhelmed - he had never thought of these things. In fact, Mrs. Noakes tells him "he never does think of ally thing. He gets up and goes to work, and comes home and goes to bed, and never thinks of anything in the house." What can Peter do? He does the only thing he ought - he allows that his wife ought to know best, confesses that he is very stupid, kisses her in confirmation of his repentance, and promises to save her another week's wages, and she shall try what can be done the next time. In the course of a few weeks, Peter, by over-work and going without customary half-pints of beer, saves up another week's wages, when, alas! he finds that the shoemaker has sent in another bill, and the tailor another account- that :Master Tommy's trousers have grown too short for him, young Billy's jacket is out at the elbows, Jane's shoes let in water, Miss Polly (bless her sweet soul!) is still the disgrace of the family, and Mrs. Noakes, although Peter thought she never looked so young nor so pretty as she did last Sunday, declares her bonnet "perfectly hateful; indeed, there is not such another fright as herself in the whole neighbourhood, and if Peter was like anybody else, he would be ashamed to see his wife go out in such a condition." And the little book still goes to the shop, Peter eats cheese tough as guttapercha, she buys tea that has been used to boiling before it was sold to her, the coffee tastes grievously of burnt corn, Tommy's boots are a long time being mended, Mrs. Noakes never has sixpence to bless herself with, her money is all condemned before it comes in; Peter, degraded and despairing, thinks he may as well drink a pint as a half-pint - things can't be worse at home. He soon ceases to take interest in public affairs. How can he consistently help the public who cannot help himself - How can he talk of independence, who is the slave of the shoemaker and the tailor - How can he subscribe to a political or social society, who cannot look his grocer in the face? Thus he is doubly destroyed. He is good neither for home nor parish. So ends many domestic experiments for paying in advance. When children are sick, or the husband is out of work, a wife will submit to any amount of privation. If she would submit to half as much from pride of independence as she will from affection, thousands of families, now always poor, would be in possession of moderate competence. But to starve your household when you can help it, to prevent them being starved one day when you cannot help it, implies good sense, strength of will, and courageous foresight, which many women certainly display, but which is yet so rare a quality that one cannot but marvel and applaud the Rochdale co-operators, who have taught so many families the art of getting out of debt, and inspired them with the pride of keeping out.

Let the enemies of co-operation ponder on this fact, and learn wisdom; let the friends of co-operation ponder on this fact and take courage; the fact that the members in a short period learn provident habits by connection with these societies - habits which, in some cases, forty years of competition have failed to teach.

## Chapter IX - Rules and Aims of the Society

The founders of the Society were opposed to capital absorbing all profit arising from trade, and to hit upon a plan that should give proportionally the gain to the persons who make it, was a problem they had to solve. After meeting several times for the purpose of agreeing to laws, Mr. Charles Howarth proposed the plan of dividing profits on purchase - that is, after paying expenses of management, interest on capital invested, at a rate of five per cent., the remaining profits to be divided quarterly among the members in proportion to their purchases or dealings with the Society. This plan continues the feature of the Rochdale Store.

The division of profits is made quarterly from the net proceeds of all retail sales in every department, after paying: -

- 1, Expenses of management.
- 2, Interest on loans.
3. Reduction in value of fixed stock.
4. Dividends on subscribed capital.
5. Increase of capital for the extension of business.
6. Two and a half per cent. (of the remainder after the above are provided for) applied to educational purposes.

The residue thus accruing is divided among the members of the Store in proportion to the amount of their respective purchases during the quarter.

The Pioneers prudently established early in their career a "Redemption Fund," which consists of the accumulation of entrance fees of one shilling from each member, The last two pounds drawn from the Society by a retiring member are liable to a forfeit of one shilling each pound. The trade of non-members of the Society affords some profit. These sums go to the Redemption Fund, which is a reserve to meet the depreciation of the fixed stock. In all financial reports of the Society a broad allowance is always made for depreciation of stock, and the fixed capital at stock-taking is always estimated below its real value, so that if the Society broke up, it is calculated that every subscriber of £1 invested in the Society would receive twenty-five shillings as his dividend.

A new member must now hold five £1 shares in the capital, He pays one shilling deposit on these on entrance, and threepence a week afterwards, or three and threepence a quarter, until the £5 are paid up; but these payments are assisted by all the profits he makes by dealing at the Store, and any interest, which is fixed at 5 per cent., accruing to him as successive pounds are made up. All profits and interest are not paid to the member, but carried to the credit of his shares, until the £5 are paid. The Board of Directors may suspend any member whose conduct is considered to be injurious to the Society, and a general meeting may expel him, after which he has great difficulty in obtaining re-admission, if he desires it.

Any co-operative society can buy to any extent through one of its members, who, however, must become a member of the "Equitable Pioneers' Society."

A member, being in distress, may withdraw any sum he may have in the funds of the Society above £2, at the discretion of the Board of Directors. In the great distress period of 1849, many applications were made to be allowed to draw all out except £1. Though it is rarely that any Director puts a question as to the personal affairs of an applicant, yet narratives were volunteered of so painful and remarkable a character, that the Directors learned to esteem that co-operation which had placed in their hands a wholesome power of relief. To this day these Directors recur to the experience of that year when defending the Society. Members may withdraw any sum above £5 according to the following scale of notice:-

£2 10s. at once on application to the Board  
£2 10s to £5 at 2 weeks' notice  
£5 0s to £10 at 3 weeks' notice  
£10 0s to £20 at 4 weeks' notice  
£20 0s to £30 at 5 weeks' notice  
£30 0s to £40 at 6 weeks' notice  
£40 0s to £50 at 7 weeks' notice  
£50 0s to £60 at 8 weeks' notice  
£60 0s to £70 at 9 weeks' notice  
£70 0s to £80 at 10 weeks' notice  
£80 0s to £90 at 11 weeks' notice  
£90 0s to £100 at 12 weeks' notice

No member can hold more than £100 [A recent Act of Parliament has increased this amount to £200] of shares in the Society except by way of annuity, nor, under any circumstances, shall his interest in the funds exceed £30. The Directors can obtain loans, but not exceeding four times the amount of the paid up subscriptions of the members for the time being.

All disputes are settled -

- 1, By the Directors, or
2. By appeal at a general meeting.
3. By arbitration.

Complaints and suggestions relative to the qualities or prices of goods, or conduct of servants of the Society, are required to be made in writing to the Directors, who record their decision thereupon; if not satisfactory, the question is referred to a special general meeting, whose decision is final.

The question of liability to Income Tax occupied the attention of the Store for several years. Its apparently final solution may be useful information to other Stores. In August, 1850, the Board applied to editors of newspapers, who are the popular lawyers of the poor, to learn whether co-operative societies were liable when the individual members have not the requisite amount of income. Answers so obtained could not have the force of law, but they had the quality of direction. The Society paid Income Tax regularly, but as the separate income of each member was far below the amount at which the Government commences its assessment, the Society appealed against it. Still the local Commissioners forced its payment. They were told, indeed, that each member might demand a form of Exemption, and claim the amount of his assessment back again. But this, on the part of a thousand members, involved

too much trouble, as the Exemption claims must have been filled up for them in most cases. One year the members went to the Appeal office in a body, but the Commissioners refused to admit them, and required one representative to be appointed. It ended in the old order to pay being enforced. Opinions of Members of Parliament were obtained, who said the Society was liable, and the opinions of lawyers, who said they were not liable. As their numbers and importance increased, their confidence grew, and, in 1856, they resolved to make a stand against the exaction, and, if need be, carry it to trial. An adjourned meeting of the Board, held in October, appointed Messrs. Smithies and Ellis "to appeal against the Income Tax." These officers, who were trustees of the Society, presented themselves on Appeal day, and argued that the Society was exempt, being enrolled under the Industrial and Provident Societies' Act, which forbid any member receiving more than £30 annually in any or all forms from the Society. The case was adjourned to another day, when it was to be heard first. The day came, but Messrs. Smithies and Ellis were edified by the opportunity of hearing numerous cases disposed of without their case being called on. They were told to come the following day. On the "following day" they were told they should receive notice when required to appear, as the Commissioners were in correspondence with London. Messrs. Smithies and Ellis had the happiness never to be sent for. However, the Income Tax Collector could not refrain from making his accustomed demand, and insisted that it must be paid, giving the Society the gratifying assurance that, if illegal, they could get it back again. The Society, however, were not to be gratified in this way. They thought it audacity on the part of the collector to make the demand, so long as the case was undecided, and attempt to use his legal position to intimidate uneducated men. Mr. William Cooper reported the case to the Pioneers' Board, who put on their minutes, December 4th, 1856, this very English resolution: - "Resolved, that we do not pay the Income Tax until we are made." The next Saturday, the collector again called and demanded the money. He was told the decision of the Board. He replied, in professional terms, that "he wanted no unpleasantness, but the Society had no alternative but to pay, and that, if his demand was not paid in a few days, he should seize the goods of the Store." On the Board being informed of that, they resolved, Dec. 18th, 1856, "That the Income Tax Collector take his own course." He has not taken his course to this day, nor have the Commissioners made any sign of having a course to take.

One most honourable feature of the Society, which proves the earnest desire of the members for self-improvement, is the reservation of a portion of their funds for educational purposes. The 2.5 per cent. of their quarterly profits assigned for division among the members, together with the fines accruing from the infraction of rules, constitute a separate and distinct fund, called the "Educational Fund," for the intellectual improvement of the members of the Store, the maintenance and extension of the Library, [A minute of Sept. 20th, 1853, orders a motion to be made at the quarterly meeting for awarding £40 to the Library.] and such other means of instruction as may be considered desirable.

#### GENERAL FINANCIAL ACCOUNT OF THE EDUCATIONAL FUND.

	<i>Receipts</i> £ s.d.		<i>Disbursements</i> £ s.d.
Donations	1 2 6	Paid for Books	308 11 9

2.5 per cent from Educational Fund	424 18 11.5	Paid for Bookbinding	20 12 3.5
Catalogues and Fines	17 19 11	Paid for Book Case	25 9 11
Sale of Newspapers	2 14 3	Paid for Wages	28 5 4.5
Sundry Receipts	3 7 9	Paid for Catalogues, etc	6 0 6
		Paid for Newspapers *	17 5 2.5
		Paid for Sundry Dispersements	2 8 8
		Cash on Hand	41 9 8
	<b>£450 3 4.5</b>		<b>£450 3 4.5</b>

\* The News-room has become chargeable on the Education Fund only within the last six months (1857). The quarterly meeting passed a resolution that the News-room should be free to members, and supported from the Education Fund.

Their News-room is as well supplied as that of a London Club and the Library contains 2,200 volumes of the best, and among them, many of the most expensive books published. The Library is free. In their News-room, conveniently and well fitted up a member may read, if he has the time, twelve hours a day, also free.

From 1850 to 1855, a school for young persons was conducted at a charge of twopence per month. Since 1855, a room has been granted by the Board for the use of from twenty to thirty persons, from the ages of fourteen to forty, for mutual and other instruction, on Sundays and Tuesdays.

Any readers of these pages, who may contemplate forming stores in their own neighbourhood, will, on application to the Secretary of the Equitable Pioneers' Society, Toad Lane, Rochdale, obtain the laws at present in force, and other printed documents from which executive details may be learned, not necessary to be included in this history; but a personal visit to the Store ought to be made by all who would initiate similar establishments. Many Members of Parliament, political economists, and some distinguished publicists, have made journeys of late years to the Rochdale Store. The officers receive with courtesy, and give information with enthusiasm to, all inquirers. Indeed, they are often found travelling thirty miles from their homes to give evening explanations to some workmen's meeting desirous of information in practical co-operation, and of forming societies themselves. It will greatly promote the extension of co-operative societies if the Rochdale Pioneers will train officers who may be transplanted to the towns commencing stores, to organise and conduct them. This co-operative colonisation will save both waste and failure in many places.

Though an element of self-sacrifice for the good of others - a feeling that justice rather than selfishness should pervade industrial intercourse, if it is to be healthy - animates these co-operators, who are neither dreamers nor sentimentalists. This may best be shown by a quotation from a letter by one of their leaders, to whom we elsewhere refer - Mr. Smithies. "The improved condition of our members is apparent in their dress, bearing, and freedom of speech. You would scarcely believe the alteration made in them by their being connected with a co-operative society. Many well-wishers to the cause think that we rely too much upon making ourselves capitalists; but my experience among the working classes for the last sixteen years has brought me to the conclusion, that to make them act in union for any given

object, they must be bound together by chains of gold, and those of their own forging."

In 1855, a co-operative conference was held at Rochdale. A Committee was appointed to carry out certain resolutions agreed to. Abraham Greenwood, President, James Smithies, Secretary, published a declaration of the principles on which the proceedings of the said Committee would be regulated. We shall quote them to the credit of co-operation. They were these:-

- I. That human Society is a body consisting of many members, the real interests of which are identical.
- II. That true workmen should be fellow-workers.
- III. That a principle of justice, not of selfishness, must govern our exchanges.

We think these three sentences honourably illustrate how much higher is the morality of co-operation than that of competition. When did any commercial firm ever issue, and, what is more, act up to, a manifesto like this?

The co-operative conference of 1855, held in Rochdale, was called by the Equitable Pioneers; the delegate from London was Mr. Lloyd Jones, [Mr. Lloyd Jones being the manager of the Manchester branch of the Co-operative Central Agency of London, and subsequent traveller for that firm, has frequently visited the working and co-operative societies of the North of England, and addressed the members at their anniversary meetings, On these occasions, and at the several co-operative conferences held in London Manchester, Rochdale, Leeds, and Bury, he has exercised an important influence in the development of the co-operative idea, The "Wholesale department" of the Rochdale Store, so important a step in organisation, was carried out under his advice.] who has as continually aided, as he has serviceably defended, these associations. On this occasion, the Rochdale Society, in addition to the manifesto of its own principles and public aims, which entitled it to distinction above all other societies, took the opportunity of paying a just tribute to the labours of others, to which they had themselves been indebted, as well as the public :-

"They were convinced that the Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations had, during the period of its active existence, conferred great benefits on the Co-operative cause by gathering all sorts of valuable information, and spreading it throughout the country amongst the various Co-operative bodies; by urging on the attention of Parliament, through members favourable to the cause, the legal hindrances to the movement; and by helping to procure such alterations of the laws relating to Friendly Societies as to give freer action and greater security to the men who have embarked in the Co-operative undertaking. Not only have they done these things, but they have likewise drawn up model laws suitable for either distributive or productive associations, so as to facilitate the safe enrolment of all Co-operative bodies, and to secure the highest degree of legal accuracy with the smallest possible cost; in addition to which, they have at all times given legal advice freely to such of the Societies as stood in need of it—a matter, it must be acknowledged, of great value to bodies of working men.

"The Rochdale Equitable Pioneers feel deeply the value of the services rendered to Co-operation by the Council of the Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations; and, as the fullest and most acceptable acknowledgment, they considered that the best thing they could do would be to attempt to continue the work

which the Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations had begun, and perfect, if possible, the design which they were unable to complete."

Never was testimony more nobly deserved than this thus borne to the services rendered to working men by the gentlemen known in London as "Christian Socialists," Professor Maurice, Mr, Vansittart Neale, the Rev. Charles Kingsley, Mr. Furnival, Mr. Ludlow, and others. Guided by their wisdom and sustained by their wealth, efforts for "Promoting Working Men's Associations," for which the people will be more grateful as they acquire more knowledge to appreciate their sympathy, their generosity, their patient and costly services, the Working Men's College of London is the crowning tribute of their catholic love of the people.

The Rochdale Store has done business for several years with "The Universal Purveyor," instituted by J .L. St. André, [And sustained by the Rev. Charles Marriott, Fellow of Oriel, one of those Churchmen who commend the priestly character by uniting a clear faith to works of human interest.] author of the "Prospects of Co-operative Associations in England," a volume remarkable for comprehensive views of industrial organisation. In the words of one who knew him, "M. St. Andre, whatever may be his enthusiasm, or his over-estimate of what can be done with men as they are, appears to have the merit of a sincere desire to draw associations together in a spirit of unselfish co-operation, and at the same time *to place them in a healthy connection with the external world.*" ["The Co-operative Principle not opposed to a true Political Economy," by the Rev. Charles Marriott, B.D.;, Fellow of Oriel - pp. 35-6.]

We record, and rightly, the names of inventors and discoverers - we record the names of those who signalise themselves on the field of battle - it is no less useful to record the names of those who have discovered, or perfected, or, at least, improved the art of self-help among the people, and conquered in the field of industry by providence and good sense, where so many fail and perish. Every name represents the continuity of small duties well fulfilled - a quality more valuable to society than the emulation of sublime virtues. Every member of this Store has been a co-worker equally with the officers, but we can only enumerate those who have taken the lead in the most successful experiment conducted by the people. Their perseverance must give a new idea of the capacity of the working class.

The first general meeting of the founders of the Store was held in the Social Institution, Rochdale, on Sunday, August 11th, 1844. The first resolutions upon their minutes are as follows: -

Resolved, 1st - That the following persons be appointed to conduct the business of the Society now established - Mr. John Holt, Treasurer, Mr. James Daly, Secretary, Mr. Miles Ashworth, President, Messrs. Charles Howarth, George Ashworth, and William Mallalieu, be appointed Trustees.

2nd - That Messrs. James Tweedale, James Smithies, James Holt, James Bamford, and William Taylor, be appointed Directors.

3rd - That John Bent and Joseph Smith, be appointed Auditors.

(Signed) Miles Ashworth, Chairman.

ARBITRATORS OF 1844.

Mr. James Wilkinson, shoemaker, High Street; Mr. Charles Barnish, weaver, Spotland; Mr. George Healey, hatter, Sudden-brow; Mr. John Garside, cabinetmaker, High Street; Mr John Lord, weaver, Cronkey Shaw.

The present arbitrators (1858) are - Thomas Livsey, Esq., Alderman, Rochdale, late Chief Constable [The most radical and popular chief constable of the day.]; John Garside, cabinetmaker [Known among old social reformers as "Father Garside."]; Rev. James Wilkinson, Unitarian Minister; John Lord, publican; Samuel Tweedale, foreman.

First among the arbitrators of the Co-operative Manufacturing Society, and of the Corn Mill Society, of which we have yet to speak, stands the name - universally esteemed among the working classes of Lancashire - of Jacob Bright, Mayor of Rochdale.

#### OFFICERS' NAMES FROM OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS OF THE STORE, ETC.

John Holt (Treasurer), Benjamin Rudman, James Standring. Names appended to the Laws of 1844.

John Cockcroft, Henry Green, John Kershaw. Names attached to the Laws of 1848. William Cooper and Abraham Greenwood. From Laws of 1855.

George Adcroft (President), James Hill, Robert Taylor, John Whitehead, Robert Hoyle, Thomas Hollows, James Joyce Hill, George Morton, James Mittall, John Clegg. Names attached to Corn Mill Rules.

Abraham Hill, Treasurer; John Tweedale, Robert Woolfenden, Trustees; Robert Law, Thomas Hill, James Whittaker, Directors ; Samuel Ashworth, Superintendent. Store officers from the Almanack of 1854.

Samuel Fielding, David Hill, John Hollows, Trustees; Peter McKenzie, Robert Whitehead, William Ellis, Adam Grindrod. Directors. Store officers from the Almanack of 1855.

James Manock, Trustee; John Smith, Secretary; Thomas Glegg, Isaac Tweedale, John Worsnip, Directors; Emeryk Roberski, [An intelligent young Polish exile, exiled through the Hungarian struggle, to whom employment was given in the Store, and who rose to be superintendent. He has lately emigrated to Australia.] Superintendent. Store officers from Almanack of 1856.

Edward Farrand, Clerk. Corn Mill advertisement. *Vide* Almanack, 1856,

William Whitehead, Secretary. *Vide* Manufacturers' advertisement, 1856.

John Aspger, Librarian; William Holt, Samuel Newton, Robert Glegg, Samuel Glegg, Robert Howarth, Thomas Halliwell, Committee of Library. *Vide* Almanack, 1856.

John T. W. Mitchell, Secretary; John Kenworthy, Trustee; Jonathan Crabtree, Thomas Fielding, Thomas Cheetham, Samuel Stott, Directors. Store officers from the Almanack of 1857.

James Glegg, George Watson, Matthew Ormerod, William Briggs, William Hoyle, Abraham Howard, Edmund Kelly, Thomas Whittaker. Library Committee from Almanack of 1857.

These names are given here in the order of time in which they appear in the public documents cited, and with the office annexed the person happened to hold in the list quoted. Each name is given but once, though most of them occur again and again, some in connection with every office. For instance, Mr. James Smithies, to whom the

members, some time ago, presented a valuable watch and chain, in testimony of their regard, has held offices during twelve years. Mr. Abraham Greenwood, mentioned in connection with the Corn Mill, has been an officer nine years. Mr. William Cooper has been an officer in the Store from the commencement. To the last-named persons I have been mainly indebted, and especially to Mr. W. Cooper, the present Secretary, for the sources of the leading facts of these pages.

## Chapter X - The Old Co-operators - Why they Failed - the New Co-operators - Why they Succeed

"That were a noble achievement which should originate a system of more wages and less work, that the labour of the handicraftsman might be lighter on his hands, and his earthly blessings and little comforts be increased; and that were a still more worthy achievement which should teach him to till his intervals of time with the study of philosophy, and the pursuit of literature and science." Thus wrote Dr. Chalmers.

"This that they call organisation of labour is, if well understood, the problem of the whole future, for all w ho would in future govern man." Thus wrote Thomas Carlyle.

"It appears from actual experiment, that a thousand subscribers of from one penny upwards will yield a weekly revenue of £5. In Great Britain there are 6,000,000 adult males. Take of these, including such females as choose to subscribe, 4,000,000 ; these will yield £20,000 weekly, or £1,040,000 a-year. Now, £1,040,000 a-year, with compound interest, would amount,

	£ s. d.
In 10 years, to	18,232,413 14 11
In 20 years, to	65,522,599 8 3
In 30 years, to	188,181,161 18 8
In 40 years, to	506,325,883 12 8
In 50 years, to	1331,511,365 15 1
In 60 years, to	3471,129,995 18 4

Now this sum would buy all the property of the kingdom. Do not suppose for a moment that 4,000,000 of working men will soon be found steadily subscribing their penny or twopence a-week for this object; but these figures show what a fund there lies in the smallest co-operation of the millions, and which the devotion of the sums expended merely on spirits and tobacco might accomplish for mankind." So calculates the Leeds Redemption Society, and seeks to win by figures those whom argument fails to reach.

"Wait no longer on the banks of the great and ever-growing river of poverty for the golden boat of the capitalists to carry you over, till you perish. Awake to the fact you may become capitalists yourselves - that you can and must help yourselves." Thus exhorts the *People's Journal*, in its genuine sympathy for the working classes.

Upon how many thousands of our countrymen have these words of wise direction fallen, as upon', stony ground." The more, therefore, the esteem with which the public will regard the men of Rochdale, upon whom they have not fallen in vain.

That co-operation was the secret whereby the poor could make money was known to old co-operators, though the Rochdale Society has been the most skilful in turning it to *progressive* account; for as early as 1831, one William Shelmerdine, storekeeper of a society, meeting at 7 Rodger's Row, Deansgate, Manchester, reported that their members, with a stock of only £46 12s., and subscriptions of £26 10s., had made, in twelve months, £20 2s. of profits. Eight members founded the Society, and thirty-six

had joined it by the end of the year. The second Co-operative Congress was held in Birmingham, in October, 1831. The first appears to have been held in Manchester, in May, in the same year. In this year, the *Lancashire and Yorkshire Co-operator* appeared - a small fortnightly penny paper, calling itself the advocate of the useful classes, and bearing this sensible motto; -  
"Numbers without Union are powerless-  
And Union without Knowledge is useless."

The true warning is here, though twenty-six years of experience has not supplied the necessary wisdom to profit by it.

At the third London Co-operative Congress, 1832, there was reported the existence of a "Rochdale Friendly Co-operative Society," which sent, as a delegate to London, one William Harrison. It had a secretary of the gentle name of T. Ladyman, whose address was 70 Cheetham Street, Rochdale. The Society was formed October, 1830. In 1832 it had fifty-two members. It employed ten members and families. It manufactured flannel. It had thirty-two volumes in its library. It had never discussed the "principles of exchange;" and there were two societies in its neighbourhood. In 1832, there existed in Birkacre a society, whose secretary was Ellis Piggot, Printer's Arms, Salford, which had 3,000 members and £4,000 of funds. This society were silk and calico printers.

At the third London Co-operative Congress there were sixty-five societies represented, of which nine were in London. Of the delegates or secretaries, the following names are still known :- W. Lovett, B. Cousins, T. Whitaker.

Why have so many stores one after the other disappeared? Some have not known how to turn their prosperity to a progressive account, and have grown tired of a monotonous success. There have been of late years failures around Rochdale; the leading cause assigned is the system of credit.

The Oldham Mechanics' Store, and the Bolton Store, were broken up through the strike of the amalgamated ironworkers; but it was said they paid twenty shillings in the pound. The Brighton Store did not acquit itself so well on its failure, which was attributed to its giving credit to its members. Mr. Smithies, who is certainly the most competent and practical authority we can follow, said, writing in 1855: - "Nearly all the Stores - there is hardly one exception - are now on the ready-money principle. We find that those Co-operative Societies which commenced by giving credit, but have since adopted the ready-money plan, have all improved since doing so. I look upon the strap book," says he, "as one of the greatest evils that can befall a working man. He gets into debt with the shopkeeper, and is, for ever after, a week behind; and, as we express it here, eats the calf in the cow's belly."

Hence arose that just terror of credit which the Store from the first betrayed. In their first book of laws - the laws of 1844 - the grand fine, the lion fine of the list there given, was to be inflicted on any officer, who, on any pretence, should either purchase or sell any article except for ready-money; which prohibition, as usual when they are emphatic, is given twice over.

The Liverpool Co-operative Store, rising every year in importance and usefulness, gives credit to the amount of two-thirds of the paid-up shares of the members. The Store connected with Price's Patent Candle Manufactory acts upon a similar rule. This, of course, is a safe form of credit, but it involves a great additional amount of book-keeping, and stops short of that moral discipline which ready-money payments exercise upon the poor and naturally improvident.

In Rochdale, each workman in the manufacturing department is required to become a capitalist. Either by weekly subscription or other payments he is required to hold five shares in the Society. Each of these artisan shareholders receives 5 per cent. upon the amount he has invested. After the payment of this interest, and the wages of the workmen at the usual average of the district, and all trade expenses, the surplus of profit is divided according to the wages received by each workman. The amount of profit over 5 per cent. interest, which is first paid to the shareholders, is divided equally between the shareholders and the workmen. One half goes to the shareholder [Though capitalists were twice paid (a bad example to set) they rose up and took away from the workman his share, as soon as they proved numerous enough.] according to the number of his shares; the other half goes to the workman or workwoman according to the wages paid to him or her. The dividend in the Rochdale Co-operative workshops, paid January, 1857, was one shilling and sixpence upon every pound of wages received by workman or workwoman.

An important difference in the division of co-operative profits in Padiham and in Rochdale should be noticed. In Padiham, workmen who had made small savings, and other minor capitalists, subscribed a fund among them, bought machinery, and employed workmen. The chief profits were reserved by the subscribers of the capital for themselves. The workmen they employed had better situations and somewhat higher wages than at other mills. This arose from most of the proprietors being workmen, and having sympathy with the persons they employed. In other respects, the Padiham Cotton League Company, under the Joint Stock Companies' Act, paid their profits wholly to the capitalists or shareholders. All the societies enrolled under this act are understood to pursue this rule. It is no part of their plan to acknowledge the labourer's right to a share of the profits his labour creates, which is the Rochdale principle.

By precautions and good sense, the Rochdale Co-operators have succeeded, notwithstanding the impediments the prejudices of their class put in their way. During the period known among them as "the Corn Mill Panic," Mr. Coningham, M.P., to whom the country is indebted for valuable personal reports of the Working Men's Associations of Paris, consented to make an advance of capital to assist in the exigence of the Corn Mill, but on being very naturally required to submit their securities to the examination of his solicitor, the Board objected to "having anything to do with a lawyer," yet their securities were ample and good, and they knew it.

Confidence among the members was sought the first year of the existence of the Store by establishing and showing plainly that checks upon the honesty of the officers existed. Drawers conveniently constructed are now used by each salesman, provided with brass or tin coins according to the nature of his sales, of which he hands to each purchaser an amount exactly representing the cash expended.

The Treasurer and Secretary of the Store, the Corn Mill, and manufacturing departments, balance their cash accounts weekly. This rule, which enables errors to be corrected as they may arise, has operated very beneficially.

Security is now taken from £10 to £200 from each officer employed, according to his measure of responsibility. Each officer in charge of a shop till gives £10 security. Where other guarantee is not provided the Society holds the deposits of the officer in the Society, and if he has not a sufficient amount paid in, he is required to make up such amount by periodical payments. For sums so lying in the hands of the Society, interest is paid as in the case of shares. This is a very efficient regulation of securities, for no man will find it answer his purpose to rob himself. The early Boards of Directors assisted the shopmen in their duties. Economical in all their improvements, it was not until 1854 that they lowered the floor of their flour store, for the convenience of children and the aged members coming to make purchases.

Numerous stores have at times sprung up around the Rochdale one, and in consequence of its example; but none have been conducted with the same ability, nor have achieved more than a tithe of its success. This is owing to no fault in the principle, but to deficiency on the part of those who apply it, to want of sense, of union, of patience, and enterprise. There are numerous instances in which the Stores have not only succeeded, but, in the opinion of the members, have succeeded too well. They have made more money than they know what to do with. Not knowing how to employ their savings advantageously, they have been returned to the members, who have commenced saving again. Their Directors have lacked the talent of expanding their operations, and making their capital reproductive. The Rochdale weavers appear to have been born with a special talent for co-operation.

One cause of the striking success of these co-operators is, no doubt, to be found in the great economy of their trade expenses. The proportion of the salaries they pay to their receipts is very small. [The cost of distribution at the central Store is 1.75 per cent. upon the returns, and with the branch shops, about 2.5 per cent.; so that for 2 per cent. all working expenses of rent, rates, wages, etc., are defrayed. - John Holmes's paper, read before the British Association for the Advancement of Social Science, at Birmingham, which we commend to the reader.] It would be impossible to maintain the same rate in the metropolis, where rents and wages are higher, and the rate of poor men's provisions, in leading articles, the same. In answer to a question put to him on this point, Mr. W. Cooper writes me - "I see no reason why the people of London cannot carry on a Co-operative Society as well as people who live in the provinces. In a small town, some dozen or twenty persons will meet, and agree that if a Co-operative Provision Store could be commenced it would be a good. These twelve or twenty do commence one. They work on together, determined to make the thing do. When it has worked on awhile, people who doubted begin to see that it can be carried out, and they join too. I see no reason why a number of earnest men in London cannot act in the same way." In answer to other questions, the same informant writes - "At the commencement of a co-operative store or manufacturing society, it is essential that the members be visited or brought together often, so that contributions may be collected to establish and carry on the society, and that the members may become acquainted with the objects, position, and requirements of the society. With this kind of management a store easily acquires

sufficient capital to work its business with, because the members have gained confidence, and pay in subscriptions on their own account without being much looked after."

To get people together in this personal and continuous manner is the difficult problem in London. Making some allowance for higher expenses in proportion to profits, the thing might be done if a number of the working-class could be got to act together, and *keep together*, for this end. It requires to convert a number of them to a clear view of their own personal interest, to be promoted in no other way, and a deep sense of duty towards their order, whose character is elevated by such successes. Compare Rochdale with Liverpool for instance. In Rochdale, a little bridge that spans, like a rocking horse, an imaginary stream, in which there is nothing liquid but the mud, situated in an invisible part of the town, is the only picturesque object in it. There is, indeed, a church with a flight of steps to it, so narrow, steep, and interminable, that you can never get to it, or if you do, it is a question as to whether you will ever get back. The remainder of the town is made up of roads that lead to nowhere, ornamented with factories apparently built before the dawn of architecture. There is not a building in Rochdale upon which it will do any eye good to look. The town is in the shape of a teacup, with a gutter at the bottom and a burying-ground upon the rim. In such a place, if people are disposed to act together, there is nothing in the way of striking attraction around them to prevent them. The people are immensely before the town, which like many other manufacturing towns in the North, has grown into importance anyhow; but will, no doubt, yet assume the magnificence which is gradually being imported into Bradford, Leeds, and other places, which, twenty years ago, were quite as unpromising as Rochdale. Now pass to Liverpool, with the bright and busy Mersey - its migratory population - its magnificent buildings - its open halls, surpassing in variety those of London. Plainly, it requires more devotion among the few to carry a store to success in Liverpool than it does in Rochdale. Then if you compare the ordinary provincial town, fixed, stolid, and tame, with London and its countless attractions, the difficulty is greater. The people are "too clever by half" to be useful. Will a dozen men stick to a plan of reform year after year, never failing on the weekly night of meeting to be at their posts, amid the charms of the metropolis? Dickens is making a speech at Drury Lane, or reading his "Christmas Carol" at St. Martin's Hall - Thackeray is lecturing on the "Four Georges" at the Surrey Gardens, with Mr. Spurgeon to succeed him - Robson is coming out in a new character - Mr. Saunders has a new play at the Haymarket - Cardinal Wiseman is preaching in the next street - Dr. Cumming is to prove that the end of the world will occur on Saturday, and the People's Subscription Bands play in the Parks on Sunday - Neal Dow is at Exeter Hall, and George Dawson at the Whittington Club - there are Cremorne, Rosherville, and Kew - the National Gallery and the British Museum, and the Houses of Commons and Lords, South Kensington Museum, and public meetings, where you may hear speakers never to be heard before, and of tell never again - and countless other allurements. A man must have self-denial as well as interest, who steadfastly grinds coffee berries and watches the sale of tea and sugar, and sits for years upon Candle and Treacle Committees, amid this confluence of celebrities and novelties, though it be duty and religion to do it. This is why popular movements in London, which depend upon the working and middle classes, make such uncertain progress. Unless a man be wise enough to choose a side and discharge its obligations as a sacred duty, undertakes to win others to act in concert with him and pursues his object with the

fidelity of a soldier, nothing can be depended upon. In fine, it requires working men in London to be as superior to the average of their class in the metropolis as the Pioneers of Rochdale are superior to the average of their own class in Lancashire, and then co-operation may carry its moral discipline and physical comfort among the poor of London.

The Leeds Corn Mill Society - the Padiham Co-operative Manufacturers - the Galashiels Co-operators - present features of success worthy to be placed side by side with the Rochdale Store. Whether in being originated and conducted by purely working men - whether in the variety and development of their operations - whether in propagandist spirit - they are to be compared or placed before the Rochdale Pioneers, are matters I leave for others to determine. The public will be glad to hear more about these experiments than these pages can communicate. [For the History of the People's Flour Mill Society of Leeds, the reader can consult the paper mentioned in the note on p. 59. It may, probably, be had of the author, James Holmes, Leeds, or the printer, David Green, 38 Boar Lane, Leeds.]

Just as the farmers, some years ago, could not be prevailed upon to make returns of their crops, lest their interests should be prejudiced in Parliament by the fact, so the Co-operators in some districts, having the fear of the Income Tax Commissioners before their eyes (the Rochdale issue of this question not being known, or not being considered settled), or distrust of Government, object to make reports. Mr. T. Barker, of Todmorden, in an unfilled return sheet before me, assigns this reason for its incompleteness. Todmorden, Walsden, Bridge End, Alma Works, and Commercial, are mentioned in his return. Mr. Smithies, of Rochdale, whom I had requested to get certain forms filled up for me, despairs on these grounds of succeeding.

Working men are often injudiciously treated by employers in this way. Where the men dressed with some taste, and maintained an appearance of social comfort, masters would infer that they were doing too well, and would reduce their wages. This had a disastrous influence on the men, who come to regard careless habits and indigence of dress as means of keeping up wages. How were working men to be raised from improvidence while those who ought to incite them to improvement suggested to them the policy of keeping themselves poor, in order to avoid being made poor. A master whose pride or ignorance was put to the blush by superiority in the manners of his men, would reduce their wages in order to lower their tone. This, however, has changed now; and masters are prouder of being enabled to say, "all my men are worth money," than that "half of them are in debt." Throughout mankind the tendency is universal to help those who can help themselves. The poorest man that exists will, if he reflects, find himself unconsciously acting on this feeling. The very beggar will not give to the beggar if he has reason to think that what he gives him will do him no good. There is no benevolence, high or low, that will many times repeat the act of pouring the water of charity into a sieve. This fact, so common to every man's experience, should teach the working class that if they display the habits of thrift, others may display the disposition to help. Moral statistics will assure the intelligent workman that where one employer reduces the wages of his men because of their social aspirations, there are more who made it a pretext to reduce them because they see no resulting improvement.

Writers who speak with the authority of political science have testified to the utility of these efforts of self-help. One to whom the working classes are indebted both for instruction and defence, remarks: - "We think, moreover, that these Co-operative Associations may be one of the most powerful of the many influences now at work for the education of the lower orders of the people; that wisdom will be gained, if not wealth, from the industry, self-control, and mutual forbearance needed to conduct them. [W. R. Greg, "Investments of the Working Classes," p. 120.]

This is the place where one may usefully cite words which one of the sincerest friends of the people has written, and which cannot be too widely known among them, as this grave truth is not to be disputed.

"I lately heard the case of a letter-printer, who used to employ in his trade the savings of his workmen with mutual advantage. At one time he had thus in his hands as much as a thousand pounds, the property of one of the workmen. A master manufacturer at Manchester assured me that he would gladly employ in his business any sums which his men would entrust him with, but that it was out of the question, although, personally, he was on excellent terms with them. To invest money in their master's business would be binding themselves to his interests, and separating themselves proportionably from that of their own order. Such a step might even expose them to resentment, and, at any rate, their party feeling was too alive. They had an indefinable suspicion that the master would be able to take advantage of it. Many of them, perhaps, did not like the master to know how rich they were." [Professor F. W. Newman's lectures on "Political Economy," pp 321-2.]

Perhaps no sentence written about the people is more likely to serve them than the following words by Mr. J. S. Mill: - "In Europe the time, if it ever existed, is long past, when a life of privation had the smallest tendency to make men better workmen or more civilised beings." This sentence strikes at the root of that intellectual apathy about the condition of the people which has checked, and still checks, so many endeavours for their elevation. The gentlemen of England are, as a class, probably less indolent and sensual than the poor. Opulence, and the means of physical ease, have not robbed them of enterprise. No spur of privation remains to stimulate them, but the spur of intellect, of art, of high cultivation, excites them, occupies them, interests them - a new pride possesses them, and a lofty consciousness of nobler powers than those which poverty simulated, now carries them on to a destiny undreamed of, and, indeed, undesired before. When this truth is applied to the common people, when it is no longer an article of parish faith, that "privation" is the sole incentive of labour, the social policy of our rulers will be changed, and the systematic elevation of the people begin.

When, a few years ago, Mr. Carlyle began, with his noble insight, to write of "Captains of Industry," he was considered to have visions of the most hopeless class of chieftains ever pictured in romances. But his ideas, grafted on the age, have taken root. Modern employers, if they wished, might found chieftainships, nobler far than those of feudal days, and will, no doubt, do it yet. The Crossleys, Akroyds, and Salts of the North, are already taking proud places in the industrial history of the people. A few years ago, the "hives" of Lancashire and Yorkshire, Halifax, Bradford, Leeds, and Manchester, were dreary as penal settlements - as Oldham, Ashton-under-Lyne, Hyde, Stockport, and crowds of smaller towns, are still. Of late years, however, the

warehouses of Manchester, and Bradford, and Leeds have assumed an air of magnificence. Buckingham Palace does not look half so imposing as does the regal structure erected by Sir John Watts, of Manchester. Towering in variegated marble, head and shoulders above all surrounding structures - occupying the site of sixty-three former tenements - it stands the Monarch of Warehouses. The factory worker grows taller by looking up at it - the most insensible inspire pleasure in walking by it. Must not the beef-built, square-headed, shrewd Bradford man, grow somewhat refined, and even proud, if he has a spark of national spirit in him, as his way home lies by noble structures every day rising up on his path, and raising the industrial glory of his native town and land? Are we not all far away, proud to think that trade is not all mammon worship and gross materialism. Is it not a relief to see the careful saving merchant, wooing the arts, and obtain from the brain of the designer glorious structures, in which to enjoy his patiently earned wealth? Let not the pallid, often stunted, hot-air-stewed factory lands of Hyde, on precarious nine shillings or fourteen shillings a-week, nurse a sense of perpetual despondency. Their turn is coming. When the noble warehouse has, for some time, been admired, public attention will be turned to the factory, and next to the "factoryhand," and will be found quite ready to admire both, if they will bear admiring; and then it will never do for the proud and rich employer to say, "Oh, I keep dainty rooms to store my cottons in; but as for the people who make them, any murky, sooty, unventilated, and dreary den will do for them." The day is coming when no employer in the North will like to say this. Mr. Titus Salt has been the first to feel this, and Saltaire; the noble factory and dwellings he has erected point to what will one day be done. Workmen think it a privilege to get an engagement in Mr. Salt's mill. The town of Bingley has been deserted by men who prefer Saltaire. The workmen's rooms, in which the factory operations are carried on, are nobler, higher, healthier, pleasanter rooms, than were the drawing-rooms of the gentlemen of the North fifty years ago. Any workshop in Saltaire is pleasanter than any room in the house you pass at Bury, where the late Sir Robert Peel was born.

A man, whose soul is affluent as well as his circumstances, will supplement his stately warehouse by a stately and healthy factory; from being an artist in his premises, he will, to use Mr. Thornton Hunt's words, become "an artist in flesh." He will covet that his men shall, in their way, look as well and bear themselves as gracefully as his machines, and then that they shall dwell in homes as tasteful, as salubrious, and as suitable as those accorded to spinning-jennies: he will covet that the ring of his money shall echo with the contentment of those who aided to earn it. Thus, were the advocate silent, and the plea of humanity disregarded, and social rights ignored, a principle of artistic consistency will, one day, enforce universal co-partnership in the produce of industry and the conquests of science.

## Chapter XI - An Illustrative Chapter

During the progress of this little book through the press, some new incidents in the career of the Store and its departments have arisen, which deserve brief notice.

(1857.) The Store has been attacked in local newspapers, and on placards, by anonymous writers, who appear to seek the destruction of the Society by sowing disunion and creating distrust of its financial security. The attacks were commenced during the recent panics. In the December quarter the Board reported that although unfavourable reports had been circulated respecting the Stores, the number of members on the books was greater by forty-eight than at the commencement of the quarter - making a total of 1,848. Had the placard writers here referred to succeeded in their design, considerable injury would have been done to a large body of the working class at a time when firms were daily breaking. Had the credit of any commercial house been attacked in the same way, a jury would have given considerable damages, had the case been brought before them: and we think the Board of Directors would do well to regard themselves as entitled to the usual protection of commercial houses, and to make an example of the first responsible assailants to whom they can trace similar wanton aggressions. There is fear that enemies to the success of the Pioneers, enemies on competitive grounds, will, now that the Pioneers have become really formidable, seek to destroy them by disunion. It requires great good sense and mutual powers of forbearance to sit silent and see statements published which appear to the public more than half true, and which you know to be wholly false. The temptation to go into controversy in self-defence is very great; and the ease with which controversy slides into personalities we all know - then time is wasted, temper lost, and only scandal gains, and the enemy triumphs. Any shrewd opponent may naturally calculate that amid 2,000 persons, some will be found who may, by taunts of want of courage, or want of truth, be seduced into a disastrous newspaper or placard war. It is said of the first Napoleon, that in the early part of his Italian campaign he was followed by numerous letters, some criticising him, some abusing him, and all perplexing him very much to answer. After a good deal of time had been consumed in replies, which time might have been much better employed upon maps and strategy, and actual war with the enemy, it occurred to him to throw all his letters into a capacious basket, and let them lie there for six weeks: at the end of which period he found that time and events had answered them nearly all. We suggest some such plan as this to the Board of Directors of the Rochdale Store. We recommend them to refer all matters of controversy to a committee of three clear-headed, dispassionate men, whose duty it should be to give very brief explanations of any point really misunderstood; and if any controversy seemed called for, to enter upon it only once a year, and to lay by all placards, newspapers, letters and articles, until December, and then reply, to what time and success may not have confuted, and what the public may not have forgotten (which will be found to be nine-tenths of the whole), and then let silence and peace prevail for twelve months more.

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE PIONEERS' SOCIETY.

Equitable Pioneers' Co-operative Stores,  
Nos. 8, 16, and 31 Toad Lane,  
Rochdale, April 17th, 1858.

SIR - By this post I send the report of the R. D. C. C. M. S. (Rochdale District Co-operative Corn Mill) for March, 1858, from which you will see that the Society is making progress - as is the co-operative principle as a whole. I think I told you that our next step forward will be to extend the operations of the "Manufacturing Society" here, and, while I write, a Committee is sitting to consider proposals which have been made in response to an advertisement for a capitalist to build us a mill, which we purpose to fill with machinery and work. The working classes may at times lose by having over confidence, but do not they lose much more who never have any confidence? The five thousand members of the Co-operative Societies within ten miles of Rochdale, representing twenty-five thousand persons, could not derive the benefits they now receive unless they had confidence in each other and in the principle of co-operation.

WILLIAM COOPER.

To Mr. G. J. Holyoake.

THE OPINION AND ADVICE OF LORD GODERICH, M.P. [Since Marquis of Ripon.]  
(*A later Letter from the Secretary of the Store.*)

We (writes William Cooper of Rochdale), received a long letter from Mr. Holmes, of Leeds, this morning, April 26th, 1858, which shows that they are aiming at Co-operative Stores to distribute their groceries in preference to the agency principle, which they adopted to distribute the flour made at their own mill. In the course of his letter Mr. Holmes remarks: - "The other day your West Riding Member, Lord Goderich, being in the town, visited our mill, and met the Board in a conference. We had a very interesting meeting and conversation. His lordship told us we, Leeds and Rochdale (or rather Rochdale and Leeds, for we cheerfully give way to Rochdale superiority), were the objects of frequent conversations both in the House and out of it; that our success was most welcome to some good statesmen, who see if the people are doing well, all else must be well. Our prosperity was pointed at as proving the people can, and will, manage their own affairs. If we fail, the reputation of the principle will be seriously damaged, and when our contentions and difficulties are mentioned, it ties their hands. He told us it was not ourselves alone we should consider; we were now held up and closely watched by other societies, and other people would follow us if we succeed, or be disheartened if we fail. We had a most kind and strong exhortation to go on, economise, save, and extend - to be shrewd, wise and peaceful. It would take me long to tell you all, but he promised us good service should we need it, and he be able to do us good. By the way, I could recommend you to send reports to Lord Goderich, Mr. Conningham, M.P., Mr. Slaney, M.P., and other good friends in London. It affords them pleasure, and their sympathy is deserving of return."

I make you this copy of Mr. Holmes's letter, which will interest you, as showing you that our progress bears some fruit.

WILLIAM COOPER.

To Mr. G. J; Holyoake.

The cordial interest taken by Lord Goderich in the welfare of the working classes is well known, not only in the West Riding but throughout England. We choose to close

this brief history of the first thirteen years of the Rochdale Pioneers with the above transcript of Lord Goderich's wise and influential words of encouragement and advice.

## Chapter XII - An Old Pioneer's Account of the Origin of the Store

Mr John Kershaw, the last but one of the Pioneers, sent to Mr. Abraham Greenwood various MSS. (1891-2) records relating to the period preceding the formation of the Equitable Pioneers, which he wished should reach my hands. Many things are new, all told by him with the vividness of a witness, and the circumstantiality of one who took part in them. The story adds to our knowledge of the old Pioneers, and is confirmatory of all that has been published of them, The pictures given of Rochdale life and meetings of working men, are scenes from the past well worth preserving. "I began," Mr, Kershaw writes, "to work as a tearboy at the Gate Printworks before I was seven years old, and went to work in the pit before I was eight years old, So you will see there was not much time for my schooling had any schoolmaster been about."

The Rochdale Pioneers began their work when distress was wide spread. The hand-loom weaver seemed to be the worst off of any of the working class. Improved machinery had driven him to the lowest point at which he could live. The condition of things in Rochdale would be incredible did it not rest upon authority. Sharman Crawford, the member for the borough, declared in the House of Commons in the debate Sep. 20, 1841, that in Rochdale there were 136 persons living on 6d. per week, [Mr. Kershaw took it from Mr. Lloyd Jones' "Life of Robert Owen." Mr. Lloyd Jones took it from the late John Noble's "National Finance." I verified it by going to Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. It seems incredible now how any human being could have on the sums named. Dr. Abernethy advised a fat alderman "to live on sixpence a day and earn it." But a prescription of sixpence a week would have killed the patient. However did 136 Rochdale persons - not fat and full like Abernethy's alderman, but lean and hungry - contrive to live on a penny a day and nothing for Sunday?.] 200 on 10d. per week, 508 on 1s. per week, 855 on 1s. 6d. per week, and 1,500 were living on 1s. 10d. a week. Five-sixths of those he spoke of had scarcely any blankets, eighty-five families had no blankets, forty-six families had only chaff beds, with no covering at all. No wonder the country was full of agitations, and in Rochdale, where there was intelligence as well as unrest, all agitations seemed to rage. There was a great local agitation against the new Poor Law. There was one for the Charter. Temperance had its advocates. The Socialists had their society. The Anti-Corn-Law agitation was rife in the town. The Ten Hours Bill was fiercely discussed. Two social facts stood out very clear - labour was cheap, but bread was dear. Yet bread was almost the only article of food the people were able to get.

"In 1842, at an Anti-Corn-Law meeting, a proposal was made to close factories to compel Parliament to repeal the Corn Laws. The chairman was about to put the motion, when an elderly gentleman, who seemed to have more forethought than the rest, said it would never do, as the work-people would soon be starving, and very soon there would be rioting. Another speaker said that employers would reduce the wages lower than they were."

In the summer of 1843, Rochdale was placarded, announcing a discussion on "The best means of obtaining the People's Charter." Mr. Kershaw says "I attended that discussion; so did Charles Howarth, James Smithies, and James Daly. It was there I first heard the principles of the Pioneers announced; Charles Howarth taking the

lead, was well supported by Smithies, Daly, and others. Mr. Howarth showed, as I thought, very clearly that it was the only lever whereby the working class could permanently improve their social and political condition. His scheme and its details were so well studied out and clear that it commanded assent. It was said at this meeting that a co-operative society had been in existence in Rochdale not more than two years before, and that it had gone down. Howarth at once showed us the reason why. He seemed thoroughly acquainted with the cause, and was well prepared with a new principle which would keep continually infusing new life into the movement. A few days before Christmas, 1843, a circular was issued calling a delegate meeting to be held at the Weavers' Arms, Cheetham Street, near Toad Lane. Each trade was invited to send two delegates. The colliers sent me (John Kershaw). The promoter of this meeting was a strong trade unionist, and a unionist chairman was at once appointed. His address pointed out what the colliers had just done in getting their wages increased nearly double the amounts they were receiving a few weeks before. He praised the colliers to the skies, as it were. It appeared from what he said that he thought all other workers could do the same, if they took the same means."

After a deal of talk, a collier (Mr. Kershaw) was asked to show how they had managed to get advances in their wages without a strike. He said he could not recommend them all to do just what the colliers had done, for if all branches of industry did the same, they would be worse off after the advance than they were before. This seemed to puzzle the meeting not a little, which could not see how they would be worse off with higher wages, and asked the speaker to explain. He said: "Suppose you were all getting £1 a week, and with it you could just pay your way. Then suppose you got at, advance of 4s. a week, but at the same time the price of all the articles you needed to buy cost you 5s. a week more, you would be worse off after the advance than you were before." The plan of the colliers was this - the Huddershaw Moor Colliery just employed thirty coal getters at that pit. For every quarter each got (a quarter contains fifteen loads) the collier was advanced 2d. per quarter, and the masters advanced the coal 2d. per load or 2s. 6d. per quarter. That is for every 2d. they paid the collier they charged the public fifteen twopences. The collier got 2d. and the coalowner 2s. 4d. "I say," said the speaker, "that if everything is raised upon the same principle we shall all be worse off after the advance than we were before." Whereupon a great tumult arose in the meeting, and the colliers were called everything that was bad, and were even charged with conspiring with the masters to rob the public.

No one seemed to perceive that all employers could not charge the public 2s. 6d. for every 2d. extra they paid the workmen. The collier speaker himself did not appear to see that if he had 4s. extra wages he would not have to spend 4s. for the coal he burnt in his house every week, probably not 1s., and he would be 3s. the better. In every trade the same argument applied. The poor collier had got into his head the nonsense employers always talk. They always say the higher your wages the worse you will be off, and the only way to improve your condition is to work for nothing. Those who smile to-day at the poor colliers' muddle-headedness should remember that political economists in those days talked the same nonsense, and they talk the same thing still in the House of Commons, when they say that any advance in wages will drive trade to other countries. The wages of all men are double now what they were that day, and according to that theory all trade should have left the country long ago.

Hearing how the increased price of coal had come about, a tumult arose, and the colliers were accused for having incited the masters to raise the price of coal. When it did subside Mr. Kershaw cried out:

" Hold on a bit, there are some of you talking of what you know nothing about. If anyone is more to blame than another for what has been done, that man is I, for I gave the colliers the advice upon which they acted. Up to the present time I have not uttered a single word to any master, nor has any master said anything to me upon that subject. But the masters were not slow to take advantage of what we had done. It is well known that our wages have been doubled and the price of coal has risen in the market."

Then a new charge was made, that the colliers had neglected their duty to the public in not exposing the conduct of the masters in raising the price of coal so exorbitantly beyond what they had given to the men. The denunciation of this neglect was loud and fierce. This roused Mr. Kershaw's indignation, and he replied with great force and directness. He said "the colliers owed no obligation whatever to the public. The public cared nothing about the colliers, and why should the colliers care anything about the public? All the public cared for in connection with colliers was cheap coal. Cheap coal was all their aim.

"Only a few months before this time, I was," Mr. Kershaw said, "getting a two-foot seam of coal, doing all the bye work, paying the banksman; in fact, delivering it into the boats. All I was paid was thirteence a ton, but never did any of the public come and say 'Here, Kershaw, you were not properly paid for that coal that was got so cheap. Here's sixpence for you.' No; it was cheap coal they wanted. It did not matter to them what became of the collier."

Mr. Kershaw relates "that in going home Howarth and he discussed the colliers' duty to the public." Mr. Kershaw maintained that they owed no obligation to the public and the public cared nothing for the producer, which was amply proved by the fact that the hand-loom calico weaver was driven out of his trade; when, if the public would have given 0.5d. per yard more for hand-loom woven calico than they gave for steam-power weaving, the hand-loom calico weaver would have held his own. No, the public preferred the cheaper article, and the hand-loom weaver was driven from the industrial field. Mr. Howarth well knew that the hand-loom flannel weaver could maintain his ground if the public would give 1d. a yard more for hand-woven flannel, but the public cared for cheapness, and not for the lives of the workers. The result was that the hand-loom flannel weaver was going after the hand-loom calico weaver. Mr. Howarth acknowledged he had never seen the question in that light.

At the meeting above described, some trade unionist opposed co-operation and some co-operators were against trade unions Mr. Kershaw remarking, "All you can justly say of trade unions is they are a never-ending contention between employer and employed, without producing any corresponding benefit." He did not see then, very few workmen did, that organised unionism would one day become a powerful defender of workmen, and the regulator of wages.

"The question arising, what could be done to amend things it was said that Charles Howarth had a plan, but as the night was far advanced it was arranged to hear it explained another evening. Howarth came well prepared. The trade unionists were there with a considerable opposition. They said co-operation had been tried and had failed; the shop had been closed two years ago. Charles Howarth showed very clearly why and how it had gone down, and always would go down, he said, so long as the rich, in the character of shareholders, ran away with all the profits. Under his scheme the larger the family the greater would be its gain, while the investments of the richer members would receive a fair remuneration, profits remaining among members according to their purchases."

Mr. Kershaw asked the question, " Suppose all working men were in earnest, and paid threepence a week until they were able to start a co-operative store, and then allowed all the profits to accumulate and be relaid out productively - that is, in establishing co-operative workshops - how long would it take to get the land and workshops of the country under the control of the working people?" Charles Howarth and Macnaught (who was present) took pencil and paper to calculate the result. Macnaught was the first to raise his head, and said that in fifteen years, if all working men went into the project, they might get command of the workshops if their contributions and store profits were laid out productively." At the next adjourned meeting, a week later, Charles Howarth, proceeding upon his own and Macnaught's calculation, brought a tract ready written, showing how working men might become their own employers in fifteen years. The paper was read, earnestly discussed, and it was resolved to print it. Each man, who could, paid 5s. down there and then, The meeting was a thin one, but £3 was given to Howarth that he might get as many printed as he could for that sum and bring them to the next meeting. The largest quantity were consigned to Mr. Kershaw, with the understanding that he would distribute them and collect them in the way tract collectors did. He did. this for several weeks, allowing each tract to remain a fortnight before calling for it. Every alternate week he might be seen collecting these tracts and re-delivering them at houses where they had not been before. At one house, at Clegg Hall, he met with a very strong rebuff. On collecting the tract he asked whether it had been read. The answer was mostly "Yes." He then asked what was thought about it, and frequently a little debate followed; but at Clegg Hall, when the occupant, a man about fifty years old, was asked what he thought about it, he said, "Such folks as Kershaw and his friends were unfit to live. It was such men who made things as bad as they were. It was all their fault that times were so bad." He deprecated any new agitation for amending social and industrial evils, lest it should made matters worse - a doctrine which, if it was generally acted upon, would make oppression of long life, and reform or improvement of any kind impossible. Those who were in the wrong would never find it out, nor be disquieted in doing wrong ; and those who found doing wrong agreeable to their interests would be guaranteed an easy time of it. The burglar is ensured a charmed life when people, whose houses he is looting, are advised not to interrupt him, nor call in the police, lest he should be irritated and matters made worse. The poor workman Mr. Kershaw encountered was of this way of thinking. The simple-minded Clegg Hall man had probably learned this kind of chatter from people far more astute than he. It is a commonplace of governments, capitalists, monopolists, and all who have some interest to defend, or some improvement or act of justice to resist. The Government say, "You need not agitate, the time has not yet come; you only make irritation and indispose people to do what you want." When,

after a lapse of time, those who act upon this advice ask the fulfilment of the implied promise, they are told "their demand is perverse; nobody is asking for the change" - thus making the silence they asked for an argument for refusing the very thing which they were told agitation prevented them conceding. In the same way as a partisan of an interest or an injustice is officiously saying, to any who ask redress, "You indispose those in office to concede what you request by perpetually agitating for it." If you listen to them they sharply tell you "nobody cares for the improvement you seek or they would be asking for it." It is agitation that makes opinion, and it is opinion alone which compels those to do justice whose interest it is to withhold it. This kind of argument could not impose upon the intelligent Rochdale co-operators of that day; and Mr. Kershaw at once said, "I know things are bad, since I cannot earn 10s. a week, and that is not sufficient to maintain a family upon. That state of society which compels a man to work for so little wants altering," and he for one was determined that it should be altered, so that an honest man should be able to earn sufficient to live upon by honest means. It transpired afterwards that the Clegg Hall man was a steady workman, who had been imposed upon by those who knew better, and he was afraid that agitation would make things worse with him than they were.

At another meeting the subject discussed was the "habits of the people," when Mr. Pennington said, "the man who lost a quarter of a day's work, or spent or wasted a sixpence unnecessarily, was a fool to himself, a rogue to his family, and a knave to his fellowmen." These honest men who had industry in their blood, who coveted sixpences, and had to economise them, were justly indignant that other people, because they had a little capital, were able to amass pounds out of their unrequited labour and they be unable to help it. Accordingly they decided to become the pioneers of a new co-operative store. There was then a building in Toad Lane, three storeys high; the topmost storey a Bethel school; the middle a day school; the ground floor unoccupied. It had been a warehouse, and had a pair of large doors as an entrance. These would have to be removed, and proper shop doors and windows be put in. Charles Howarth and others were appointed to go and see the landlord. As soon as he was told the name of the society, and what they proposed doing, he said he could not think of letting the room to them. At this point Charles Howarth sprang to the front and said: "Will you take me for a tenant, and I will pay you a quarter's rent in advance?" "Yes," said the landlord, "I will do that." So it was agreed that the new society should have the place for three years, Howarth being the tenant, and paying the rent each quarter in advance. It was decided to open only at nights. Samuel Ashworth and William Cooper volunteered to act as shopmen, and if the business did not pay the first three months they would take nothing for their services, but if it was able to pay a dividend, they were to receive threepence an hour, which, if they were on duty three hours, would be ninepence a night, and the salary of a permanent night shopman would be 4s. 6d. a week. The Store was opened on the evening of St. Thomas's day, 1844.

New societies who think they are not going to succeed because their first dividends are small, may take courage from Kershaw's story.

At the end of the first quarter the Rochdale Society did pay a dividend of 3d. in the pound, after reducing the value of the fixed stock to what they thought it would bring under the hammer. The second dividend was 4d., the fourth 7d., the fifth 9d., the

sixth 11d., the seventh 1s. 2d., the eighth 1s. 4d., the ninth 1s. 6d.; 1s. 8d. was the largest dividend they ever calculated upon getting; but for many years afterwards it ranged from 2s. to 2s. 6d. They arranged their rules so that they could devote one-tenth of their profits to educational purposes. But when sent to Mr. Tidd Pratt, the Registrar, he refused to certify them. The contest with him lasted for some months. The rules were altered again and again. The Society tried to edge in education in several different ways; but he always struck it out. "We were not allowed to educate ourselves, but the Society was very loth to part with its education clause. We had considerable correspondence with Mr. Tidd Pratt on the subject, but he would never give way." These were the days when the law prohibited workmen from educating themselves and the Government refused them the franchise on the ground of their want of knowledge.