

To the modern reader the most striking thing about Owen's writings is not so much what he proposed to do in and about the reconstruction of society as the class of people to whom he addressed his proposals. Outwardly he seemed to make no discrimination between the different classes of society: workingmen, capitalists, and nobles all seemed alike to him in their possibilities for the work of social reconstruction—an indifferentism quite foreign to our mode of thinking, used as we are to draw rather sharp distinctions along class lines. But under this apparent indifferentism there *was* hidden a partiality toward one class—the nobility. Whatever Owen may have thought of the role of the working class in the process of social regeneration, one thing is certain—he undoubtedly had great faith in the survivals of the past, kings and nobles, as means and agencies of social reconstruction.

In his propaganda for a new order of things he was continually addressing himself to the purveyors of the old, and his addresses to them seem to be permeated with unbounded faith. One of the four essays contained in his first great work, the "Essays on the Reformation of Character," is dedicated to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent of the British Empire, afterward King William IV. of England. And he kept on knocking at the doors of the "great" throughout his active life. The dedication to the Prince Regent was written in 1813, and in 1818 we find him addressing two memorials "On Behalf of the Working Classes"—one to the Governments of Europe and America and one to a Congress of the Allied Powers which was then in session at Aix-la-Chapelle.

And it is not only in the classes addressed that we discover his faith in the "privileged orders." It shows itself in the manner of his address, in the content of his *message*, no matter what audience he addresses. So in an address "To the Working Classes," made a few months after his addresses *on behalf* of these classes, we hear him say:

"Let me, however, guard you against a mistake which exists to a great extent among the unprivileged orders. The privileged orders of the present day, throughout Europe, are not, as this

mistake supposes, influenced so much by a desire to keep *you* down, as by an anxiety to retain the means of securing to *themselves* a comfortable and respectable enjoyment of life. Let them distinctly perceive that the ameliorations which you are about to experience are not intended or calculated to inflict any real injury on them or their posterity, but, on the contrary, that the same measures which will improve you must, as they assuredly will, essentially benefit them and raise them in the scale of happiness and intellectual enjoyment—and *you will speedily have their co-operation* to carry the contemplated arrangements into effect. It must be satisfactory to you to learn that *I have had the most evident proofs from many individuals, high in these classes, that they have now a real desire to improve your condition.*"

Owen's allusion to the "most evident proofs" which he had from many individuals, high in the privileged classes, of a real desire to improve the condition of the working class is very interesting. For his propaganda was looked upon rather favorably by the "privileged classes," that is the landed nobility, and particularly in its highest ranks—in marked contrast to the hostile attitude which the out-and-out "captains of industry," "traders," and "shop-keepers" assumed toward it. Judging from the converts which Owen was making in the uppermost social circles, including the Earl of Kent and other members of his "set," it did look as if the ancient nobility, with the King as its recognized leader, were going to make *common cause* with the working class in a *common effort* to free the world from the domination of their *common enemy*—the capitalist class and its cursed and irrational individualism—and for the establishment of a *rational* system of society. It was only natural that Owen should, under these circumstances, and holding these views, frown upon the attempts which were then being made by such practical labor leaders as Francis Place to interest the working class in the fight of the bourgeoisie for the extension of the franchise and the reformation of Parliament. All this "political" turmoil seemed to him not only utterly foreign to the true nature of the struggle of the working class for the amelioration of its condition, but really prejudicial to its best interests.