CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Manchester Model Secular School

1. Founding the school

The Manchester Model Secular School, opened in August 1854 by leading N.S.P.A. members, was not just a remarkable local venture in giving a first class education free to the lower working class but a clever device intended to drive a wedge into the Privy Council system of grants which was a major support of denominational schools, especially those of the Church of England. The wedge was an indirect means of opening the way for rate funded schools which was blocked at the legislative level. If its aims had been purely local, Cobden would not have been involved himself so fully in its establishment. The grand strategy was probably his, as had been that of the Manchester Society in 1837.

There were several reasons why many N.P.S.A. members were drawn to the idea of founding a school in the summer of 1853. The Select Committee had resulted in neither government action nor agreement with the M.S.C. There was a need, in the doldrums of educational progress, to engage in new activity in order to keep up enthusiasm and cohesion. Lord Russell's remark to the N.P.S.A. deputation on 3 June 1853 - attended by Cobden - that the association had not given any practical example of secular education, was suggestive in the prevailing mood. The allegation of working class indifference to day schools needed to be refuted. It must be shown that there was

a big potential working class demand for day schools providing an education which really helped their children to get on in life.

On 23 June, Cobden told Combe, who was staying in London at this time, that he favoured the establishment of secular schools like those promoted by William Ellis as examples of the schools which the working class preferred and as examples of what secular education really was. Combe immediately informed Ellis, who offered £5,000 for founding a school if Cobden agreed to lead the scheme. Cobden was shown Ellis' letter and on 30 June he promised Combe that he would recommend a model school to his friends in Manchester.[1]

For five years, William Ellis (1800-1881), a wealthy director of a London insurance company, had been a co-adjutor of Combe in spreading the gospel of secular education. He had spent a great deal of money in founding schools generally known as Birkbeck Schools, in honour of George Birkbeck, pioneer of Mechanics' Institutes, who died in 1841. The first of seven schools in London aided by Ellis was the day school opened in 1848 at the National Hall, Holborn, an institution for adult education managed by William Lovett, the "moral force" Chartist. Outside London, there were schools in Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh, Combe and J. Simpson were closely associated with the latter school, known as Williams School, after the headmaster.

Ellis had been a member of J.S. Mill's circle in the 1820's and 1830's but whereas Mill had nothing but contempt for Combe's phrenology and philosophy, Ellis was deeply

influenced by it. In political economy, he was influenced by the League's teachings and by Bastiat. He pioneered a new field in education by making a distilled essence of Combe and Bastiat's ideas which he called "social economy", first expounded in Outlines of Social Economy (1846). Like Combe, Ellis was strongly critical of the content and methods of the current school education of all classes - "Reading, Writing and Catechism for the poor.... Latin, Greek and mythology for the rich". He believed that the core of the curriculum after the basic three "R"s should be human physiology, natural science and social economy - the understanding by the individual of his own body, of physical nature and of the nature of society. The aim was to enable the child to promote his own wellbeing and that of society, there being no conflict between the two when individual and social interests were properly understood.[2]

Cobden had visited the Birkbeck school in Chancery Lane and Lovett's school with Combe on 2 June 1851 and was very pleased with what he saw. He urged the importance of teaching social economy to children in the House of Commons in May 1854. But he was not converted to the idea of winning over the middle class public to secular education by opening more of these private schools. He wanted to use such a school to show that the whole working class would gladly seize such education for its children if it was free. What was needed was a demonstration of a huge hidden demand for a good, practical education which the denominational schools, with a narrow curriculum and charging fees, could neither stimulate nor

satisfy.

Cobden's ultimate aim was to win the battle for ratepayers to establish schools at least in the industrial areas. He and the other leaders of the N.P.S.A. decided to open a free model school not because they doubted that a good school could be partly filled with fee paying working class children but because they wanted to show that large sections of the working class could not afford to sustain even small fees over several years. This problem could only be solved by schools which were "free" in the sense of being funded by the ratepayers. This, in turn, meant schools which parents of all religions or none had the right to use and which therefore could not teach doctrinal religion as part of the compulsory curriculum.

The specific strategy which Cobden had in mind was, if the school was a success, to challenge the Privy Council rule that grants could only be made to a school if there was religious instruction. Williams Secular School in Edinburgh had challenged the rule without success in July 1853 but it was thought that its use had been weakened by being a fee paying school and by no means mainly patronised by working class parents. Cobden thought that a Manchester free secular school could present a much more powerful moral challenge to the Privy Council. This strategy had a further subtle extension. If private secular schools were made eligible for public money, one of the main arguments for resisting rate supported education by the Church of England (outside Manchester) and by voluntary school opponents - that it would lead to secular education - would be undermined.

On 1 August 1853, Dr. J. Watts proposed the establishment of a secular school at a N.P.S.A. Executive Committee meeting and on 15 August a letter from Ellis offering £5,000 was read. There was some opposition to the NPSA establishing the school as it was not within the objects of the association. Subsequently, an independent Committee of Management was appointed in July 1854. Cobden wrote offering £100 for the school and arranged to meet supporters in Manchester on 21 October 1853. At this meeting, Cobden's motion for a free school, with facilities for ministers of religion to give instruction at separate hours, attendance at which would be voluntary, was passed and a provisional committee appointed. The members agreed to guarantee at least £500 per annum for three years to cover the running costs. Later on, the decision about allowing ministers in was reversed.[3]

Ellis was not pleased to learn of the decision to establish a free school and he tried to argue Cobden out of it. He understood the aim of altering the Privy Council rules but he feared that filling the school with the poorest children, with bad home influences and liable to irregular attendance would militate against its becoming a truly model school and would probably harm the public impression of secular education. But of course the Manchester men would not budge from their decision, and the result was that Ellis refused to provide £5,000. It would appear from the printed lists that he did not subscribe anything until 1857 when the financial situation was desperate.

Ellis' profferred donation was obviously intended to

build a school and endow it. Now the promoters were forced to depend almost entirely on local subscriptions which Cobden knew would not be large. The middle class public of Manchester, split fairly evenly between the Church of England and dissenters, was no more prepared to support a secular school than it was the N.P.S.A. programme. The provisional committee was mainly composed of the N.P.S.A. leadership of Unitarians, Quakers, Jews and liberal minded dissenters and Anglicans such as R.W. Smiles (Secretary), Dr. J. Watts, R.N. Philips, R.M. Shipman, J. King, H.J. Leppoc, Rev. DR. W. McKerrow, Rev. J.R. Beard, Rev. W.F. Walker, Thomas Bazley, Joseph Whitworth, Cobden. Given the exclusion of revealed religion from the curriculum, and the general prejudice against free provision of a service for which some at least might be able to pay, it is not surprising that the committee only succeeded in getting fifty other subscribers by the end of 1854. However, just enough money was raised - £336 - to meet all initial and running expenses.

Significantly, the two Manchester MPs, John Bright and T. Milner Gibson, both N.P.S.A. members (Bright from January 1854) were not subscribers, almost certainly because of a reluctance to be too closely identified, from a local constituency point of view, with "secularism". Apart from Cobden, MP for West Riding, only two other MPs were subscribers: W. Brown (S. Lancashire) and W.A. Wilkinson (Lambeth). However, Mark Philips, former MP for Manchester, living in retirement in Warwickshire, and a member of the Manchester Society in 1837, was a loyal supporter. Two of Manchester's most enlightened

employers, Thomas Bazley and Joseph Whitworth, both outstanding for their declaration of the need for a superior education for workers in industry, were strong supporters. But apart from a handful of other manufacturers, including Sir John Potter, son of T. Potter, the claim of D.K. Jones in a recent short study of the school, that it "was the creation of the rising non-conformist provincial manufacturing and mercantile middle class, the representatives of "big capital" in South Lancashire" is unjustified. It was the creation of a tiny group among the professional and manufacturing middle class who had a vision of a higher standard of living for the working class of Manchester.[4]

The provisional committee decided to rent the Sunday School of the Society of Friends at the corner of Deansgate and Jackson's Row, in a very poor district (from the residential point of view) in the centre of the city. The accommodation comprised a hall with a gallery across one end for class teaching and some adjoining rooms, capable of taking nearly 350 pupils. A playground was added in 1855. The decision was also made to take boys only, presumably for practical reasons.

The most difficult task was to find a well trained and experienced headmaster prepared to run a school which would not receive grants for training pupil teachers (who were also entitled to gratuities) and would therefore have trouble in getting what were in effect assistant teachers. Cobden, living conveniently in London, took a hand in looking for such a teacher. He described to Combe the qualities needed: apart from moral and

intellectual abilities:

> "Other things being equal, give me a master with the voice and muscular power of a boatswain. There is a mesmeric power in physical energy which imparts itself to a school, and sends home the children so lifted above their ordinary dull spirits-level that even their uneducated parents become infected by it".

Cobden called on H. Dunn, still Secretary of the B.F.S.S. an occasion which must have thrown their minds back to 1837 when Cobden wrote to him from Manchester for advice.

Eventually, Benjamin Templar, headmaster of a large and successful British school in Bridport, Dorset, was selected and took up his duties towards the end of June 1854. Templar was instructed to visit the Educational Exhibition in St. Martin's Hall, London, a unique opportunity to inspect the most advanced books and apparatus from all countries.[5]

2. The school in operation.

The school was opened gradually after a dozen boys had been selected from the first applicants to be trained as monitors. The school opened for ordinary scholars on 21 August 1854 with 130 boys aged between seven and twelve. By March 1855 the school was almost full with 330 boys and four assistant teachers.

The school was initially advertised by a poster as a free day school for secular instruction. Application forms, which required details of the boy's family, poured in. The policy was to choose boys from decent homes where the parents or parent could not afford school fees but would be likely to exert sufficient parental discipline to ensure regular attendance. It proved so successful that in 1855-6 the attendance rate was 93%. The sacrifice by

parents of a child's income if working was considerable. Inevitably some were withdrawn to go to work. Of these, in 1855-6, 18 were aged 9-10 and 29 were aged 10-11. The Second Report printed some letters of appreciation from parents. One father, obliged to withdraw his son to work in his shop, wrote that the school exemplified "the only system of education that will embrace all classes". The success of the school doubled the number of subscriptions in 1855 but the sums donated were generally small. Ten shillings was given by the Operative Carpenters' and Joiners' General Union and £1.15s.4d. by the workpeople of Wadkin and King's, Chepstow Street.[6]

The First Report, published in March 1855, gave two aims of the school. First, to give the child an education quickening "the dormant energies of the mind".... whereby it "may be stimulated to observation, trained to habits of reflection, guided in the mode of acquiring information for itself...." Secondly, to show how children of different religious persuasions could be taught together without giving offence from a curriculum which nevertheless emphasised moral training and natural religion. The latter aim was confirmed by a table which showed that just over two-thirds of the children attended Sunday Schools of all denominations.

Naturally, the political objective was not mentioned in the First Report. To do so would have been unwise at any rate until the school was well established. But it was mentioned in the Second Report, published in August 1856, after the Committee had made its first unsuccessful application to the Committee of the Privy Council.

Even then, it was not mentioned at the beginning, where the two above aims were again stated, but a little later. It was claimed that parents had a right as citizens to establish schools paid for out of the rates.[7]

3. The curriculum

The school did not claim to give a complete education, as boys left at the age of twelve and earlier. But it tried hard, within limited means, to follow the ideal it upheld - "the utmost development possible to each individual nature.... this alone can enable every individual member of the community to render to society the utmost service of which his nature is capable". In practice, it meant laying such a foundation as would encourage self-education and evening education in the future.

The curriculum reflected the most advanced educational thought, although one might not suspect the fact from the matter of fact way in which it is described. Perhaps the Committee was concerned about the prejudices of potential subscribers who might feel that the provision was too expensive for poor, non-fee paying children. Reading, writing, spelling and, to some extent, arithmetic were taught by monitors. The children were taught to regard these "not as ends in themselves, but as necessary means for acquiring and communicating knowledge". Mr. Templar gave class lessons to the older or more advanced pupils in physical science, the uses and properties of common things, human physiology, geography, original composition, social economy, practical morality and religion. In the class lessons, diagrams, models and real objects were used as illustrations. One lesson on respiration used

a sheep's thorax, dissected in the lesson. Question and answer technique, to stimulate logical thinking, was employed in all class lessons.

Religious education was obviously based on Combe's concept of religion, but there was never any mention of phrenology in the reports, it being a controversial subject and deemed by many to be fundamentally irreligious. "Lessons are given upon God's wisdom and goodness, as shown in the beauty and certainty of natural laws, - in the formation of our bodies, - in supplying their constantly recurring wants, - in the faculties of the mind,- in the gift of friends, and other social enjoyments; all of which are shown (and it is believed felt) to be so many reasons for gratitude, love, and obedience to Him." Other lessons were given on such topics as Conscience, Truth, Honesty, Kindness.

The school encouraged visits by parents, ministers of religion and the public generally. On 19 November 1855, 200 parents responded to an invitation to come to the school in the evening to meet staff and Committee members. Some visitors were surprised to find that "corporal punishment is scarcely ever resorted to in it." The emphasis was on moral suasion and on making some forms of punishment be seen as discipline necessary for proper learning.[8]

That the school was solely working class was the deliberate policy of the Committee but it must not be assumed that it believed that a public system of education must have class segregated schools. Cobden and certainly many NPSA members believed that the ideal of a common

school could be realised in the future. In 1851 and 1854, Cobden spoke publicly about the merits of schools in which children of all classes were taught together, thus helping to abate class prejudices.

W.B. Hodgson, now living in Edinburgh, wrote in the Westminster Review in 1853 that the middle and upper classes should take heed of the education being given to working class children in the Birkbeck schools "lest their sons be sadly beaten in the education and social race". But the fact of these schools and the Manchester Secular School being run by the middle class (with perhaps the exception of W. Lovett), and patronised by the working class, has given rise to a modern belief that because social economy was taught in them, then it must have been a deliberate attempt to teach the poor the necessity of their low place in society.

This belief is based on the wrong identification of Ellis and Templar's social economy with the political economy of Ricardo or J.S. Mill. As has been pointed out in Chapter Eleven, Bastiat used terms like supply and demand but within a quite different social and economic paradigm. When Templar wrote of "accounting for the obvious unequal distribution of wealth", he was not justifying the status quo but using the facts of contemporary society to show how working people could progress, particularly by placing their labour in greater demand through acquiring skills valuable to their employer. One of the persistent ideas he wished to counteract was that "luck" played a leading role in success or failure in life, including lethargy or fatalism.[9]

Templar's Reading Lessons in Social Economy for the Use of Schools (1858), like Bastiat's works, are based on the essential identity of interests, rightly understood, of all classes. Social progress must come through co-operation of employers and workers, capital and labour, and not through conflict. Hence the severe criticism of trades unions which, in the 1850's, appeared to assume that conflict was inevitable. But the workers legal right to strike was not questioned.

A short original composition by a nine year old boy printed in the Second Report is quoted in full by D.K. Jones as an example of "brainwashing" in Ricardian political economy" and "the iron law of wages":

> "If all the cotton workers were to strike for more wages the masters would have to give them; that he may keep his former profits, he would have to raise the price of his goods. This rise in price would cause people to buy less, that is the demand would decrease, and the manufacturers finding the demand small would decrease the supply and would have to put their men upon short time; and although they were getting the high rate of wages upon short time, they would not be earning as much as they would upon full time at their former rate of wages.
>
> Generally the results of a strike are, that the people become poor, run into debt, spend all they have saved, and are thrown out of work, because their places are filled up by the other people who are willing to work for the wages they refused, and by machinery."

This accurately reflects one topic in Templar's Reading Lessons. But it is certainly not an illustration of Ricardo's law of wages which taught that wages are a result of the ratio of population to capital and that as population usually increases faster than capital does, the "fund" for the payment of wages must get smaller. There is no such doctrine in Bastiat's, Ellis' or Templar's writings. What Templar taught in other lessons

was that large profits and high wages went together and that the surest way for the workers to raise their real wages was to become more productive workers, welcoming new machinery and co-operating in making their employers' business more profitable and prosperous. The delusion of trades unions was that they could permanently raise real wages and maintain full employment irrespective of these facts. Ellis and Templar did not, as D.K. Jones suggests, "deny the right to strike", but only argued the short and long term futility of strikes. Obviously this particular composition was printed in order to convince the majority of sceptical employers in Manchester that there was some useful teaching in the school which deserved support.[10]

4. Applications to the Committee of Privy Council

In February 1856, the Committee felt confident enough to make an application to the Committee of Privy Council for the school to be permitted to receive grants for pupil teachers. It was argued that monitors could only be encouraged to stay on at school and increase its efficiency by this means. R.W. Smiles gave a summary of facts about the school and appended the First Report and testimonials from its leading supporters. On 17 June 1856, R.R.W. Lingen replied on behalf of the Committee of Privy Council stating that there was no new feature in the school which justified any change in the negative reply given to Williams Secular School in 1853. He was careful to change in this reply the vital point about the necessity of instruction in "religion" to "revealed religion", as R.W. Smiles had emphasised "the moral

and religious influence" of the teaching given.

The Privy Council veto may seem petty and mean but, of course, the education officials and Lord Palmerston's government knew perfectly well what was really at stake: whether secular schools should receive the blessing of the state and whether schools responsible to ratepayers should be encouraged. Whitehall knew that the Model Secular School might as well be named the Model Rate School.[11]

On 2 September 1856, R.W. Smiles wrote again asking if the involvement of religious bodies in the management of the school would entitle it to aid. Again came a negative reply: the question at issue was the nature of religious instruction.

The financial situation of the school was now serious. In April 1857, Smiles wrote to Cobden informing him that the Committee would meet soon to decide whether the school should be closed in June, when the three years period ended for which the promoters had guaranteed £500 per annum to run it.

> "Some of our friends here think it of great importance politically that the schools should be continued as as free school for at least another year.... I have now paid some hundreds of these visits [to the houses of parents submitting applications] and am satisfied that an inevitable result of the closing of the school would be that very many children attending it.... would be left to the training of the streets".

Cobden's reply has not been found. The school continued.

In November 1857, Smiles applied to the Committee of Privy Council for the third time, on the grounds that certain Mechanic's Institute classes in East Lancashire were getting grants. The reply was that these grants were in aid of adult education only. Soon after Lord Derby's

Conservative government came into office in 1858, the Committee tried for the fourth and last time. A Memorial from the supporters spoke of the "heavy personal cost to individuals" of maintaining the school for four years and the important work done in a "poor and neglected district". The Privy Council reply came so promptly that W.R. Wood, now Secretary, enquired if Their Lordships had properly considered the Memorial. A curt answer came equally swiftly.

Though the end of the road was surely in sight, the school did not abandon its exclusion of revealed religion until 1861. The Committee then decided to have selected passages from the Bible read daily, thus making it eligible for Privy Council inspection and grants. The school was renamed the Manchester Free School. Templar stayed as Headmaster until 1864. Although the "free" principle remained controversial, its political purpose as a wedge for a secular rate system had gone.[12]

Summary

The Model Secular School was an attempt to break out of the stalemate resulting from the rival groups in Manchester. It was hoped that a free school would show that there was a large hidden working class demand for a high standard of education but that the majority of parents could not afford the fees. A successful school (from an attendance point of view) would give moral weight to an application to the Committee of Privy Council to relax its rule against grants to schools not teaching revealed religion. This would effectively open the way

for rate funded secular schools. The curriculum was broad and innovative and showed that a minority of the middle class was anxious to give working class children an education which increased their chances in life. But the school proved to be a political failure in that applications to the Privy Council for a relaxation of the grant rules were unsuccessful.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Cobden's last bid for a national education act.

1. The "circle of blind instincts".

In the years 1854-57, Cobden experienced the worst blows to his ideas, political standing and family. The frenzy of public opinion against Russia before and during the Crimean War was harsh evidence of the total failure of Cobden's teaching since 1847 and of the Peace Congress movement. His stand against the war, in which he was nobly and eloquently supported by John Bright, and continued opposition to Palmerston's forceful foreign policy, particularly in China, was punished by ejection from Parliament in the general election of 1857. In April 1856, Cobden's son Richard died of scarlet fever at school in Germany. His wife was so badly shaken by this, that her mental and physical health was affected for more than a year.

The domination of foreign issues thrust the national education question into the background. Nevertheless, Cobden persisted in education reform. In co-operation with Sir John Pakington, a Conservative statesman, he introduced into Parliament in 1857 a bill fated to be sucked down in the vortex of the China issue and the snap election.

Cobden's attack on Palmerston's foreign policy and of peace and non-intervention
his advocacy was not an unnecessary diversion from the schooling of the nation's children. He was deeply disturbed by the popularity of Palmerston's foreign

policy among all classes. The growth of prosperity since the repeal of the Corn Laws had bred not just national pride but arrogance and aggression towards other nations. Cobden believed that Palmerston exploited it for his own political ambition and also to maintain the power and status of the aristocratic class to which he belonged. It had manifold evil effects on British society: distracted attention from domestic reform, raised taxation (mainly indirect) to pay for the armed services, diverted capital from productive investment, disrupted trade, caused unemployment and, most important of all, corrupted the values of society.

War was ennobled by the idea that it was the best means of freeing enslaved nations like Poland, Hungary or Italy from foreign rule and that it was a corrective to an over-commercial, "selfish" or "money-grubbing" society. Cobden was shocked to find such ideas expressed by ministers of religion, so-called radicals and even such a distinguished poet as Tennyson, who, in the middle of the Crimean War, welcomed in his poem Maud, that "the long, long canker of peace" was over. Cobden thought this line of reasoning was incredible unless "we are prepared to pronounce the New Testament a fable and Christ's teachings an untruth".[1]

Until the manipulation of the people by the aristocracy and an unprincipled daily press was stopped, and the corruption of values halted, there could be little chance of any government investing national resources in educating the people. It was not simply a matter of school buildings and trained teachers but of introducing

a curriculum which would acknowledge the truths of Combe and Bastiat. That schools reflect society was a truism to Cobden.

To his friend J.B. Smith, he wrote:

"And so we go round and round in the circle of blind instincts coming back to the starting place and flattering ourselves all the while that we are progressive beings. There is only one thing that could effectually cure us of our arrogance and intermeddling policy. It is that which we have so often spoken of viz. the competition of the United States. But I suppose that country will indulge, in its own good time, in the follies which we are perpetrating".

But Cobden found that Combe's idea of directing the national "propensities" to their "proper objects" would not work in the American case. He was accused of wanting to "Americanise" Britain - to abolish the monarchy and set up a republic, disestablish the Church of England, introducing rough egalitarianism and destroy "culture".[2]

In public speeches and in his long pamphlet or booklet What Next? And Next? (1856) Cobden found it best to simply eliminate the wrong object of British policy, Russia. He set out to show that Britain could have no military advantage in trying to advance into Russia from the Crimea and that a just and sensible peace should be negotiated as soon as possible. But the factual, practical approach made no difference. He was denounced as a "peace at any price" man, a traitor to England, a man who loved a trade ledger better than British honour.[3]

The great irony of the next century was hidden from Cobden, although he would have understood it perfectly, that governments would be forced by the pressures of "total war" to expand state education as one factor in strengthening the country's industrial and military power.

It was not until the 1960's that arguments similar to Cobden's about the need to invest in education in order to meet world industrial competition became prevalent.[4]

2. The N.P.S.A. in the doldrums.

Given the hostility of public opinion, it is surprising that Cobden should have continued to concern himself with school education, especially as the N.P.S.A. had exhausted itself by its unsuccessful efforts up to 1854. Two main reasons probably swayed him. The first was that two leading politicians, Lord John Russell and Sir John Pakington were active in that field, although as individuals and not as Whig and Tory party representatives. The second was that Cobden could not ignore his friends in the N.P.S.A. and a leading figure of the M.S.C., Canon Richson, who were still looking out for political opportunities.

Cobden saw one lying in a possible alliance of Pakington, the N.P.S.A. and the M.S.C. if they all agreed to compromise their demands. Pakington rather than Russell was the ally he needed. Not only might Pakington sway a big section of his party into a measure of local rating - a sort of Sir Robert Peel of education - but his ideas were ultimately more flexible than those of Russell, the Whig leader. A just and flexible system of rating had to be based on the following conditions. The Church would not generally accept any rating system which did not permit the Catechism to be taught, as well as the Bible. The voluntaryists - still the most powerful group among the dissenters - would never agree to any rate paying for religious instruction, so there needed to be general

acceptance of the principle of timetable separation from the rest of the curriculum. Central or local authorities would not inspect religious instruction.

In any case, there should be no obligation for a school committee to provide for religion in the ordinary curriculum. In urban areas, where there might be many Roman Catholics, it was essential to have a system where the schools could close on certain days in order to allow religious instructions to be given by ministers and priests elsewhere.

Cobden's position, embracing as it did all these points, was more flexible than the N.P.S.A.'s official position which laid down that all new schools established by rate authorities should be either secular or permit simple non-denominational Bible teaching. The N.P.S.A. had not made the tremendous concession which Cobden had committed himself to publicly in 1854 - that Church schools receiving rate aid should teach the Catechism (with the proviso of a conscience clause) in rural areas where there were few or no dissenters and open new schools on that basis.

Lord Russell advocated local rating but he did not offer concessions to the voluntaryists, secularists or Roman Catholics. As a leading patron of the B.F.S.S., he stood by its basic rule that religious instruction should be confined to reading the Authorised Version of the Bible, with a conscience clause for Jews, Catholics and others. But in 1856 Russell went a bit further. On 6 March, he introduced Resolutions on National Education in the Commons, one of which made an important

concession to the Church, in that it allowed locally elected committees to add to the normal reading of the Authorised Version "other provision" for religious instruction. This implied that the Catechism could be taught. But Russell made no provision for time-table separation which was essential for implementing the principle that doctrinal religion be not directly aided out of taxes.[5]

Cobden, feeling as strongly opposed as the N.P.S.A. to this resolution, tabled a motion against it. However, on the morning of 10th April, 1856, the day allotted for it, Cobden got sudden news of his son Richard's death in Germany. He immediately left to tell his wife at Dunford. His motion lapsed.

Sir John Pakington's educational views were very progressive for a Churchman and noted Conservative politician but, superficially at least, they offered little hope for Cobden. Pakington was as opposed as Russell to secular schools and the principle of no payment out of public funds for religious instruction. He had been M.P. for Droitwich since 1837 and Secretary for War and Colonies in Lord Derby's government of 1852. There was little to distinguish him from other Tory magnates except his very tolerant attitude to the claims of non-churchmen to receive equal treatment in national education. In 1847 he was the only Conservative to speak in support of Lord Russell's plan and within the National Society he pressed unsuccessfully for a relaxation of the rule enjoining the teaching of the Catechism to all children attending the Society's schools. In 1853, he joined the Church of

England Education Society which had adopted more liberal views and was especially anxious to aid Church schools which were having difficulty in obtaining Privy Council grants.

Pakington spoke during the debates on the Manchester and Salford bill in February 1854. He disliked its restrictions of religious instruction in new rate built schools to Bible reading only but declared it was a model for a better bill. During 1854, he was probably impressed by Cobden's non-party and open-minded views - his declaration about the Catechism, for example - and marked him as a possible ally in a new bill. In the autumn of 1854, he spoke to Cobden about education and in January 1855 sent him an outline of the bill he intended to introduce. Cobden was sympathetic but he warned that "to attempt to levy rates for teaching creeds and catechisms would be very like casting a new Church rate as a bone of strife amongst the sects". He urged Pakington to write to Canon Richson and learn of his conversion to the principle of separation.[6]

But Pakington made no concessions in the bill he introduced on 16 March 1855, a month after Lord Russell had introduced his own. The N.P.S.A. had already been spurred into action by the news of the forthcoming bills. It negotiated with the M.S.C. for an agreed bill but found that some of the M.S.C. leaders had not gone through Richson's conversion in the matter of permissive rate aid for secular schools. So the N.P.S.A. introduced on 29 March its own Free Schools (England and Wales) Bill, carrying Cobden's and T. Milner Gibson's names on

it. There were no important changes from the N.P.S.A. bill of 1852. The object was to publicise, by contrast with the other bills, the fairer position on religious instruction adopted.

Pakington's bill was the only one given a second reading. But it was opposed by Churchmen for undermining the hold of the Church on education and by voluntaryists for its advocacy of rate aid. On 2 July 1855, all three bills were withdrawn. An attempt to get a Select Committee failed.

Lord Russell, Pakington, Cobden and Milner Gibson now realised that the mounting war fever had destroyed the minimal prospects of any bill aimed to apply rates to education. Cobden did not speak in any of the debates on the bills probably to avoid making statements which might hinder a future cross party bill. He regarded Pakington's avowed non-party principle as one which must inevitably steer him eventually towards the only fair bill, that is, one which strictly separated secular from doctrinal religious instruction both in the time-table and rate support. Significantly, Cobden, in the debate on Supply on 26 July 1855, praised Pakington's liberal principle in declaring that all schools receiving public money should be open to all children without compromising their religious faith.[7]

4. Pakington's and Cobden's compromise bill

Cobden bided his time. He published What Next? And Next? in January 1856. He worked for the establishment of The Morning Star newspaper. With the end of the Crimean War in March 1856, educational reformers stirred

again in Manchester. The common problems of finance which faced all schools in Manchester, whether Church, dissenting or secular, forced a mood of co-operation and compromise. It was probably helpful that the MSC had been dissolved in 1855.

In May 1856, a private conference was held in Thomas Baxley's house in Manchester attended by some NPSA members, Canon Richson and former M.S.C. members. The upsshot was Marginal Notes for an Educational Billprinted for circulation by J.A. Nicholls. It was a minimum programme indeed, and indicated just how desperate Manchester educationalists were. It was a plan to permit the fees of poor children in existing schools to be paid for out of the rates. The children of the Model Secular School were eligible for assistance as no criteria of religious instruction was mentioned. This initiative did not develop possibly because neither of the two Manchester Liberal M.P.s, Milner Gibson and Bright, supported rate aid for religious instruction. Bright was also ill at this time.[8]

Cobden saw an opportunity to capitalise on the new Manchester mood of compromise. Surely there was scope for a bill which went further than Marginal Notes but which was more flexible than the now impracticable N.P.S.A. plan. If only Pakington could be convinced, as Richson had been, that secular schools were worthy of rate aid. But Cobden was obliged to influence events from a distance. He spent the last three months of 1856 with his wife at Glyn Garth near Bangor in North Wales. She had been suffering from shock ever since young Richard's death and Cobden thought a long holiday in the

countryside of her childhood and youth would restore her spirits.

In November 1856, Cobden wrote to Pakington suggesting that he use the opportunity of his invitation to speak on national education at the Manchester Athenaeum to meet local educationists and visit the Model Secular School. Cobden also explained this move to his old friend William McKerrow who could be relied on to rally N.P.S.A. mambers.

Pakington visited the Model Secular School on 19 November together with several of the school's promoters. The same day he attended a conference at the York Hotel presided over by T. Bazley and attended by N.P.S.A. members and also by Canon Clifton who came in place of Canon Richson who was absent owing to the illness of a relative.

Five resolutions were passed:

"1. That a rate for education is desirable.
2. That all schools deriving aid from the rate, shall be subject to inspection, but such inspection as is paid for out of the rate shall not extend to the religious instruction.
3. That all schools shall be entitled to aid out of the rate, provided the instruction other than religious, shall come up to a required standard and that no child shall be excluded on religious grounds.
4. That distinctive religious formularies, where taught, shall be taught at some hour, to be specified by the managers of the school in each case, in order to facilitate the withdrawal of those children, whose parents or guardians may object to their instruction in such distinctive religious formularies.
5. That there be no interference with the management or instruction of schools, other than may be needed to carry out the principles of the foregoing resolutions."

Pakington told Cobden that:

"I did not concur in the resolutions.... without some anxiety, and I fear they will excite considerable opposition, but my subsequent reflection has strengthened my

opinion that the concessions involved are not greater than ought in charity and in wisdom to be made at such a crisis of such a subject."

The fourth resolution implicitly conceded rate aid to secular schools but the word 'secular' was deliberately omitted at Pakington's suggestion. Pakington emphasised to Cobden that he was far from being a convert to secular education:

"I am willing to say and have said, that I heard religious instruction in the secular school at Manchester which, as far as it went, was excellent, but it would be said "Why exclude the Bible?" I confess it appeared to me that the religious teaching to which I refer was not free from inconsistency. It was supported by the authority of the Bible, and yet the Bible is not permitted to be read.... I could not help thinking, "if they do not read the Bible here, where will they read it?" The answer of course would be "in the Sunday School". My rejoinder would be: "That is not true with regard to all, and where it is true, it is not enough."

On 15 December 1856, a general meeting of supporters was held under the chairmanship of T. Bazley. Men prominent in the N.P.S.A. attended, such as McKerrow, Beard, Davidson and R.W. Smiles, and old M.S.C. men such as Canon Richson, W. Entwisle and James Heywood. It was agreed that the six resolutions formed the basis of a bill and a committee was appointed to draw one up. Bazely visited Cobden in Wales to discuss the position.[9]

The scheme was a daring compromise which had to be defended both against those who felt the principles of the N.P.S.A. - its noble vision of a structured system of schools for all under the control of ratepayers - had been betrayed and against those Churchmen and dissenters who thought aiding secular schools was a dangerous precedent. McKerrow defended the compromise in three letters in the Manchester Examiner and Times, explaining that the fourth

and fifth resolutions embodied the chief compromises. The fourth was a concession to the N.P.S.A. and "seculars" and the fifth to the religious denominations. McKerrow did not discuss the second resolution which was an attempt to assure voluntaries that the state would not formally take notice of religious instruction - in other words, a separation of state and church was practically recognised in this particular matter. This resolution was almost certainly a compromise and much weaker than the wording which Cobden and the N.P.S.A. would have preferred. This might have followed Clause 16 of the N.P.S.A. Free Schools Bill of 1855, which ruled that no rate money be applied for the purpose of teaching doctrinal religious instruction.

R.W. Smiles, Secretary of the N.P.S.A. was in an especially embarrassing position. He confided to Cobden that realising the N.P.S.A. plan was unattainable, he was reluctantly ready to accept the compromise bill. "I am glad I can honestly say that I wish we may yet get a system such as that imperfectly indicated in the new bases and I feel disposed to do my best for its attainment". On 20 January 1857, Smiles resigned as Secretary of the NPSA and became Secretary of the General Committee on Education, the steering committee for the proposed bill. The N.P.S.A. was now in fact defunct, although it was not formally wound up until 1862, only seven years before the establishment of its stronger successor in Birmingham, the National Education League.

Neither Milner Gibson nor Bright, the Liberal M.P.s for Manchester, took any part in promoting the bill. Bright's reservations were no doubt the same as Gibson's,

that the basis of the bill failed to ensure that rate money did not assist, however indirectly, religious teaching. The greater part of the dissenters in Manchester still supported the voluntary principle and so stood aloof from the new movement.

On 1 January 1857, on his way south from Wales, Cobden met Pakington at his home in Droitwich to discuss developments. He returned home with his wife to Dunford but she was still ill. Soon he was staying with her at a hydropathic nursing home at Sudbrook, Surrey. He was thus obliged to continue following the movement in Manchester from a distance.[10]

On 21 January, Pakington met the newly appointed General Committee in Manchester. Resolutions were passed authorising a bill to be introduced in Parliament as soon as possible. It was announced that Pakington and Cobden would take charge of it. Then on 6 February a "great education meeting" was held in the Free Trade Hall, presided over by T. Bazley. The leaders of the movement (except Cobden) were present and also a large number of Church and dissenting clergy. The chief guest was Sir J. Kay-Shuttleworth. Letters were read from Cobden and Lord Stanley M.P. (son of Lord Derby, the Conservative leader) who also added his name to the bill. Cobden praised Manchester's effort to create a united party to tackle "the greatest and most difficult political problem of the present day", the solution of which was demanded by the "ever-widening streams of crime, vice and misery which are overflowing the land". Both Pakington and Kay-Shuttleworth praised Cobden's work in encouraging

the United party.

The formal enthusiasm of Cobden's letter did not of course reveal his private doubts. He knew the bill had little chance of success. Kay-Shuttleworth had said so openly at the February meeting. How conscious he must have been of the twenty wasted years since the great meeting in the Theatre Royal, Manchester, in 1837. Twenty years during which the state could have covered the land with a fine system of schools. Although the meeting of 1857 was more broadly representative of the religious denominations, particularly the Established Church, than that of 1837, the national situation was far worse. In 1837 there was a general stir in the country for educational legislation. Now there was a general indifference in the working class and in the ruling Whig and Tory parties. He told Samuel Morley in April 1857 that "I never knew the working class so dead to politics. They literally seem to have no leaders. I suppose we must attribute this quiescence to the general prosperity of the country". True, Palmerston's government had established the new office of Vice-President of the Committee of Privy Council in 1856, but this was simply to provide a Commons spokesman for the steadily increasing Privy Council expenditure on education. It was not the quality and extent of schooling which was of concern.

The bill to which Cobden had put his name was very far from what he considered desirable. It was only permissive - could be adopted by petition of ratepayers in Cities and Boroughs. It left out the greater part of the country, the rural parishes where educational

deficiency was as great as in Manchester. It was to aid existing schools, not to build new ones. There was no guarantee for improved teaching methods as it gave school committees no influence over the management of denominational schools. But at least Clause 40(7) laid down that the curriculum "shall include the following subjects: Reading, Writing, English Grammar, Arithmetic, Geography, English History, as well as Book-keeping for the boys, and Needlework for the girls".

The fear of the promoters that the bill's permission of rate aid for secular schools would rouse fierce opposition, was shown by the very indirect way in which the matter was dealt with in Clause 40(5). The paragraph began with the significant phrase that "if any distinctive religious formulary be taught", it will be taught at times specified in the time-table, thus allowing easy withdrawal of children of other denominations. Then the list of compulsory subjects listed in Paragraph 7, quoted above does not include religion.

Nevertheless, Cobden valued the bill for being the thin end of the wedge. Its enactment would establish locally elected school committees, a fact capable of indefinite extension. This was mainly why the Church of England (except in Manchester) and the landed aristocracy would not support it. The Church leaders knew that such a system would probably undermine the Church's control of popular education. Like the common schools of the United States, it would foster religion without doctrine or no religion at all. The aristocracy also associated the system with republican institutions, with universal

suffrage and "democracy". There would also be opposition from another quarter - from the majority of dissenters who would judge it to be a new endowment of sectarian religion.[11]

The bill was introduced in the Commons on 18 February 1857 by Pakington and Cobden. The debate was fairly low key. Two of the main speakers, W.Cowper, Vice-President of the Council and Lord Russell, perceived that the possibility of secular schools was not clearly spelt out in the bill and that further study before the second reading was necessary. Pakington and Cobden avoided comment on this crucial matter but both stated that the bill would not allow rate aid to be applied directly to the teaching of doctrinal religion. However, there was no clause which prevented this, not even the restriction of government inspection to non-religious subjects. There was much that was enigmatic about the bill and it is inconceivable that it would have passed a second reading.

But a sudden political crisis prevented the second reading on 4 March. During January and February 1857, a steady stream of news came about the high-handed actions of British officials in China which culminated in the bombardment of Canton. The Palmerston government's defence of all the proceedings was a gift to all opponents. Lord Derby and the bulk of the Conservatives saw a splendid opportunity to damage and perhaps topple the government. Lord Derby moved a censure motion in the House of Lords on 24 February which was debated for three days, resulting in a small government majority.

In the Commons, Cobden moved a double-barrelled motion censuring the government and calling for a select committee into commercial relations with China. In the early hours of 4 March, the government was beaten by sixteen votes. The Parliamentary time-table was put out. When Pakington rose to speak on the Education Bill at 4 a.m. on 5 March, he rightly asked for the reading to be deferred for a week. But later that day, Palmerston resigned and Parliament was dissolved.[12]

4. The China affair and Palmerston's "snap" election

Before discussing Pakington's and Cobden's eventual decision about the bill, it is important to have a clear view of Cobden's motivation over the China affair, since it might be inferred that he had recklessly thrust that issue in the way of the bill. The connection between foreign and domestic policy in his thinking must always be remembered. As long as the public could be enthralled by war and foreign excitements, domestic reforms like education could be brushed aside. Cobden knew that with Tory help there was a possibility of the government being defeated and the Education Bill being shelved. But he also knew how unlikely were the prospects for the bill's success.

There were great issues at stake behind the Chinese seizure of the crew of the alleged British licenced ship "Arrow" and the British Representative Sir John Bowring's demand for an apology and compensation and the subsequent bombardment of Canton. Palmerston and a sizeable body of British merchants wished to use the quarrel to force a new treaty on the Chinese to replace that of 1842 which

the Chinese had not properly observed. Cobden wanted to stop what he might, in anticipation of historians a century later, have called "the imperialism of free trade". He feared that the pacific ideals of free trade were being betrayed by British policy in the Far East. In his Commons speech of 26 February, he argued that guns had not, and would not, enlarge British trade with China. What was needed was better expertise in selling manufactured goods (not opium) to the Chinese, coupled with respect, patience and understanding due to an ancient civilisation.[13]

Cobden took Palmerston's "snap" general election as a challenge. Palmerston did not present any new policies but relied on an appeal to simple patriotic prejudices - "Palmerston and British rights". Cobden thought that the electorate could be swung against Palmerston if the true facts of the China affair were made plain. He got a crowded and almost unanimously sympathetic audience at a public meeting called by him on 16 March at the Freemasons' Hall in Great Queen Street, London. The next day he rushed up to Manchester and spoke to 5,000 people in the Free Trade Hall on behalf of Bright's candidature - Bright was convalescing in Italy. There was a nasty situation there, because the more "Whiggish" Liberals (backed by the Manchester Guardian) had put up Sir J. Potter and J.A. Turner to run against Bright and Milner Gibson, the sitting M.P.s.

Cobden seems to have toyed with the idea of not standing for Parliament because of his wife's continued illness. He also had four young daughters aged between

four and thirteen to look after. His West Riding election committee long knew of his decision not to stand for that county constituency again. He had never been happy or comfortable during the ten years he had sat for this huge constituency. Apart from the free trade issue in 1852, he got little strong backing from Yorkshire Liberal politicians and much criticism since his unpopular opposition to the Crimean War. Whilst at Manchester, he was prevailed upon to contest Huddersfield, a small one member borough in the West Riding. His opponent was Edward Akroyd, a Halifax manufacturer and public benefactor, and a very strong local Liberal candidate. Cobden campaigned vigorously until his voice failed and he had bouts of giddiness.

The blast of ridicule and condemnation directed at Cobden, Bright and Milner Gibson (who had seconded Cobden's motion of 16 February) in the majority of newspapers and in Punch is well exemplified by one election poster at Huddersfield. It was a long litany of accusations against "Gibson, Cobden and Bright" (whose names form the responses) for appeasing the Russians and representing Emperor Nicholas as

> "a mild gentlemanly Sovereign".... "Who would leave our Countrymen Abroad unprotected? Who would abuse our Merchants and will not protect our Foreign Trade?.... Electors! Be true to your Trade, your Commerce, your Countrymen Abroad, your interests at Home, and the honour of your Country! Uphold Economy, Commerce, and England's honour - BUT NOT Gibson, Cobden or Bright".14

Considering the overwhelming hostile publicity, it is remarkable that this "unholy trinity" won so many votes compared to the Palmerstonian victors. At Huddersfield, Cobden lost by 590 to 823 votes and at Manchester, Bright

and Gibson together polled 11,046 votes to 16,222 for Sir J. Potter and J.A. Turner. As the Conservatives voted for Potter and Turner, it is possible that Bright and Gibson secured at least two-thirds of the Liberal vote.

Cobden's bitterness about Bright's defeat was aimed at the wealthier Liberal oligarchy of Manchester which had "fixed" the alliance with the Conservatives. This oligarchy had been made wealthy by free trade which Bright had fought for and now it had turned Tory. It was the end of Cobden's dream of 1835 that the mercantile aristocracy of Manchester would break away from the thrall of the old landed aristocracy and introduce a new civilisation.

Cobden was not sorry to be out of such a pro-Palmerston House of Commons. He stayed at Dunford for most of that year and 1858. In April 1857, when the new Parliament assembled, Pakington sought Cobden's advice in regard to the education question. Pakington thought that he should either move a number of resolutions summing up the essential features of the bill of February 1857 or a Select Committee. Eventually he agreed to Cobden's suggestion of one general resolution but in July he finally decided to press for a Royal Commission of Enquiry. This bolder move may have been encouraged by the well-publicised Education Conference held in London in June 1857 at which Pakington spoke.

Pakington successfully moved in the Commons on 11 February 1858 for a Royal Commission into the State of Popular Education in England. But a few days later, Lord Palmer-

ston resigned and Lord Derby succeeded him as Prime Minister without an election being called. The membership of the Commission was decided by the Conservative governm_ent. Pakington, who may well have hoped to serve on it, had already been appointed First Lord of the Admiralty - a post obviously aimed to keep him away from education.[15]

5. National education in Cobden's politics 1858-65

Cobden's bitterness at the failure of his campaign to combat Palmerstonianism is reflected in many private letters at this time. He wrote to H. Ashworth:

> "As a nation I think we are less "up" morally to our political and economical elevation than we ever were. It is true that we have made greater progress in wealth and prosperity during the present generation than at any former period of our history. The result has been to draw out our less aimiable qualities and develop our more animal propensities instead of leading us to the more active cultivation of our intellectual and moral powers".

To J. Vaughan, Bright's son-in-law, he wrote:

> "The country is prosperous and therefore in a state of political apathy.... We free-traders are responsible for this state of things. We choked liberalism with the big loaf.... There is a danger that our great prosperity will be more than we can bear, and that we shall verify the saying of Niebuhr who declared that "egoism is the cancer of which England is dying".

He might well have retired from active politics and indeed he largely did so until his return from the United States in 1859. Although only 53, he was beginning to feel the strain of stump oratory. He was conscious of belonging to a not long-lived family. He also realised that there were severe limits to what he could achieve in the few years he had left. He confided to Bright:

> "I do not, as I grow older, lose faith in humanity and its future destinies; but I do every year - perhaps it is natural with increasing years - feel less sanguine

in my hope of seeing any material change in my own day and generation".

Retrospectively, it is a pity that he did not permanently retire in order to write a substantial book explaining the relationship of his ideas of foreign policy, economics and education. Instead, he was forced back into Parliament by his friends, particularly Bright. While he was in the United States, he learnt that he had been elected unopposed for Rochdale in the general election following the fall of the Derby-Disraeli ministry. He was extremely worried about this because his financial situation was desperate as the result of the difficulties of the Illinois Central Railroad in which he had invested a lot of money. But this problem was dealt with by the gift in 1860 of £40,000 from over one hundred firms and individuals.

When Cobden arrived back in England in June 1859, he immediately received from Lord Palmerston the offer of a place in the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade. Palmerston knew what a formidable opponent Cobden would be unless he could be muzzled by being brought into the Cabinet. Cobden refused the offer, although many supporters wanted him to accept. But he realised that the foreign policy of the new government needed to be strongly opposed. A wave of alarm was beginning to sweep the country about the strength of the French navy, sparked off, such was the cruel irony, by Pakington in the Commons on 25 February, 1859. Many people, not appreciating the reasons for which Cobden was in politics, could not understand his refusal to take office. At Lady Palmerston's

party at Cambridge House in July, to which he was nevertheless invited, the ladies stared through their glasses at the great oddity.[16]

Cobden's general view of the political situation after 1857 was that very little could be achieved in domestic reforms, especially education, before the electorate - "an oligarchy of 750,000 voters" - had been enlarged by the extension of the franchise to every householder, roughly the lower middle class and upper working class. Equally important, was a re-distribution of seats in accordance with population (ending the over-representation of small county boroughs) and also the division of large towns into single member constituencies so as to give working class districts a chance to elect M.P.s of their own choice. This was a very considerable change, not in Cobden's principles, but in his strategy. He had believed in the justice of a household franchise since the 1830's but hitherto thought there was a much better chance of getting the reforms he wanted by educating the existing electorate, particularly the upper middle class. Now he was convinced that the aristocracy and upper middle class - politically allied in maintenance of the status quo - needed a push from below. The working class seemed politically less volatile - less likely to be led by demagogues of the Feargus O'Connor type and so could be trusted with the vote, although as yet insufficiently educated.

Cobden expected that one early result of a larger electorate would be an education act. He told a large meeting of non-electors in his new Rochdale constituency in 1859 that universal suffrage in the United States had

caused the maxim of "educate or we perish" to prevail, with the consequence that "the influential classes in America devote themselves to the education of the whole people, in a manner and to an extent of which no country in Europe can have any idea". The same result would follow a Reform Act in Britain. This forecast was proved correct after Cobden's death. Education became a leading issue after the Reform Act of 1867. "It will be absolutely necessary that you should prevail upon out future masters to learn their letters", proclaimed Robert Lowe.

Cobden decided not to take an active part in the franchise agitation which he was sure could be ably led by Bright. But he spoke out boldly on the issue to the people of Rochdale. Cobden would happily have extended the vote to women on the same terms as men, but although he occasionally hinted at it in public speeches (but not at Rochdale), he evidently thought it a hopeless issue in his day. In short, from 1857 Cobden hoped for the eventual foundation of a new party based on a wider electorate and better ideas of foreign policy. His remaining years and energy were devoted to sowing yet again the seeds of peace and arms control.[17]

The continuance of Cobden's keen interest in schools was shown during a visit to the United States in 1859 - a highlight in a very gloomy time. The main object was to inspect the Illinois Central Railroad and its huge land holdings in this mid-west state. He had invested heavily in this company which was currently going through a bad period. But he always combined business with pleasure on overseas trips. He enjoyed visiting great

libraries, colleges and museums and conversation with high and low. He again visited Niagara Falls and the passage of 24 years in no way lessened his intense pleasure at their beauty.

His tour was in effect a survey of the progress of society in the Northern States since his visit of 1835. His diary gives a good idea of what he considered important and by implication what was lacking in Britain. Naturally, the common school system which had much improved since 1835 particularly interested him. He visited common schools in Dubuque on the Mississippi river, in Chicago and in New York; also a Normal School in Albany, New York state. He talked to G.S. Boutwell, the Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education. In Philadelphia, he looked over Girard College for Orphans,"perhaps the noblest structure in the world and it is certainly devoted to the noblest purpose". About 33o boys from the age of six to fourteen (and even eighteen) were taught a wide range of subjects. He certainly approved the exclusion, by the founder's Trust, of sectarian religion but, very characteristically, he deplored that it provided only for poor white children in a city with a large coloured population.

The main things which impressed him were the mixing of all social classes in the schools; the mixing of boys and girls up to and including adolescence; the fact that so many stayed on in the schools to fourteen or fifteen years of age; the entrance to High School by examination for all children; the large proportion of women teachers; the high status of the teachers as evidenced by the respect shown to them by the leading citizens who accompanied him.

In a High School in Chicago he

> "found delicate lady-like teachers.... in a class-room with 40 or 50 young persons of both sexes, and among the males were youths whose moustaches were beginning to develop themselves. In England this would be impossible in the present state of feeling - the youths would be ashamed and afraid of ridicule which would attach to their being, "like babies, under the care of women".[18]

Cobden's return to England must have been a douche of cold water. The country slumbered educationally and politically except for a new alarm about a French naval threat and possible invasion. A cartoon in Punch showed Bright and Lord Derby trying vainly to prod the British lion into some interest in Parliamentary reform. The Royal Commission on Popular Education was real evidence, if any more was needed, of the indifference of the ruling classes to education as a means of raising up the mass of the people from poverty and creating the open society of the Northern States of America.

The Royal Commission was appointed because there was a general concern among politicians that the level of Privy Council expenditure was rising very steeply and needed to be checked and supplemented by local rates if the latter could be done without upsetting the control of schools by the churches. It was also recognised that the existing system of grants did not aid many poor districts. But there was not the slightest intention of altering what was regarded as the basic three'R's education suitable for the working class.

The seven chief members of the Commission carefully excluded anyone committed to the establishment of schools controlled by rate-payers - even men like Pakington and Canon Richson who were sympathetic to denominational control wherever possible. Very significantly, W.B. Hodg-

son, the former L.P.S.A. and N.P.S.A. zealot was given a very subordinate role as Assistant Commissioner to report on London schools. Matthew Arnold, another noted educationist was likewise given the task of reporting on schools in France.

Neither the Report of the Commission in 1861 nor the response of Palmerston's government can have surprised Cobden. The Commissioners, with the exception of two voluntaryists, recommended that a new system of central grants be supplemented by aid from rates which did not entrench on the management of schools by the churches. There was no vision of a longer and broader schooling for working class children such as was being experimented with in the Manchester Model Secular School. The Commissioners simply expressed their concern that children, inevitably leaving school at ten or eleven, should have a good grounding in the three 'R's. The American Common School system, which had not been investigated, was specifically rejected as being the product of a country without an established church and where "the different classes of society are much more on a level than is the case in this country".[19]

Palmerston's government accepted the recommendation of linking grants to school "results" and ignored the awkward rating proposals. Robert Lowe, Vice-President of the Committee of Council, put it into operation as the Revised Code in 1862.

Cobden rarely referred to education in his letters after 1859, but one in January 1864 sums up his view of the situation:

" confess that it seems more hopeless now, than it did when, nearly thirty years ago, I first began to take an interest in the subject, to carry out any really comprehensive measure of popular education.... Now I don't believe in the possibility of carrying any general measure of education with the present constituencies and in the present temper of the religious bodies and with the instinctive indifference if not repugnance of the ruling class to the elevation of the mass of the people, we are in what the French call une impasse. The Church gets now nearly all the educational grant and it is maintaining a great number of schools that are better than nothing, and that is about all that can be said of them. Nothing has been done in Manchester as the result of our former agitation.... I fear even if you could get over the religious difficulty, you would find the property owners little disposed to be taxed for an efficient system of education. Observe the enclosed figures. Boston at the last census of 1860 had 177,000 inhabitants and paid £80,000 a year for the free education of all its people. Manchester to do as much in proportion to the population ought to spend £150,000. If it were a question of spending as much as America on ironclad ships of war, or artillery, we should not hesitate. Is not education more necessary for our security than even military or naval preparations?"

Cobden's belief in the urgent need for the better education of the people is further illustrated by a brief exchange of letters with Matthew Arnold in 1864. Arnold had been H.M. Inspector of Schools since 1851. In the early 1860's he became convinced that only a better educated middle class would wrest the reins of power from the aristocracy and subsequently improve the education of the working class. He outlined his ideas in two articles in Macmillan's Magazine which he sent to Cobden "because of his influence with the middle classes, Pakington because of his lead among the educationists".

Cobden's replies seem to have been lost but one of his main points is quite clear from Arnold's letter to Cobden, "I must entirely agree with you that the condition of our lower class is the weak point of our civilisation and should be the first object of our interest, but one

must look.... to an improved middle class".

Arnold pressed the government to investigate middle class education. In August 1864 the Endowed Schools Commission, under Lord Taunton, was appointed. Cobden, probably at Arnold's suggestion, was invited to serve on it but he declined to do so. It is possible that the volume of work involved was an important factor. That he was not indifferent to a better education for the middle class is shown by his support, at this very time, for an international school in England. This private venture is described in Chapter Twenty.[20]

6. Cobden's legacy to W.E. Forster

The American Civil war raged during the last four years of Cobden's life. Loathing the inhumanity of war, he yet recognised the justice of the Northern cause, especially in ending slavery, and rejoiced in the strength of republican institutions. Three months before he died in April 1865, he saw that the victory of the North would profoundly influence British politics. "You are fighting the battle of Liberalism in England as well as the battle of freedom in America", he told Charles Sumner, the American Senator whom he greatly admired.

Palmerston's death soon after Cobden, removed one block to reform. The Reform Act of 1867 enfranchised the lower middle and upper working classes, thus providing a firm foundation for a new Liberal party and government under Gladstone's leadership in 1868. The National Education League, founded in 1869, set out to achieve what the N.P.S.A. had failed to do - establish a national system similar to the common schools of America.

It had the important advantage of the united support of the Protestant dissenters, because the voluntaryists, mainly for financial reasons, had abandoned their opposition to rate-aided education. Also, the League, although led by a new generation of men from Birmingham - Joseph Chamberlain, George Dixon and Jesse Collings - had the membership and advice of old N.P.S.A. men. W.B. Hodgson served on the Executive Committee, and the Manchester branch had Rev. J.R. Beard, Rev. W. McKerrow, H.J. Leppoc and many others.[21]

William E. Forster, a former N.P.S.A. member and Vice-President of the Committee of Privy Council in Gladstone's government formed in 1868, took up the education issue in almost precisely the manner in which Cobden had been handling it in 1857. He concluded that the League's plan for a universal system of schools managed by locally elected School Boards could not be imposed everywhere given the strength of the Church of England and the predominance of its schools in the education of the working class. The Education Bill which he introduced in February 1870 was modelled, as he said a few months later, on Pakington's and Cobden's bill of 1857.

The bill was indeed very similar, for example, in accepting the fact that independent denominational schools would continue to have the lion's share of elementary education. Another important similarity was the power of School Boards to aid secular schools and denominational schools but with the safeguard of a conscience clause in the latter.

After fierce controversy, the League forced changes

in the bill which prevented School Boards from aiding denominational schools or from permitting doctrinal religion in a new Board School. The solution to the problem of religious instruction finally chosen by Forster was very similar to the Massachusetts law which Cobden had urged the N.P.S.A. to adopt in 1850-51. It was Cowper-Temple's amendment that in schools "hereafter established by means of local rates, no catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught".

If Cobden had lived, he would undoubtedly have supported the compromise Education Act of 1870. But it was very far from being the system of free schools from infancy to fifteen and teaching a broad and stimulating curriculum which he longed for.[22]

Summary

After the N.P.S.A. agitation had ended and during the public excitment of the Crimean War, Cobden continued to persevere with efforts to get a united party in Manchester able to press for an education bill. He made firm contacts with Rev. Canon C. Richson and Sir J. Pakington, an important Conservative politician, both of whom had comparatively liberal opinions on education. Cobden and Pakington's Education Bill was promoted by an alliance in Manchester but independent of the N.P.S.A. Unluckily, the bill lapsed after a general election in 1857 and was not revived. Pakington favoured a Royal Commission, but its report in 1861, effectively smothered education reform. Cobden now concluded that it would only come after Parliamentary reform. His keen interest in the

American common school system was shown during a visit to the United States in 1859.

Five years after Cobden's death, W.E. Forster's Education Bill, permitting rate-aided schools, became law. In its compromise with Church of England schools, it followed the realism of Cobden's and Pakington's bill of 1857.

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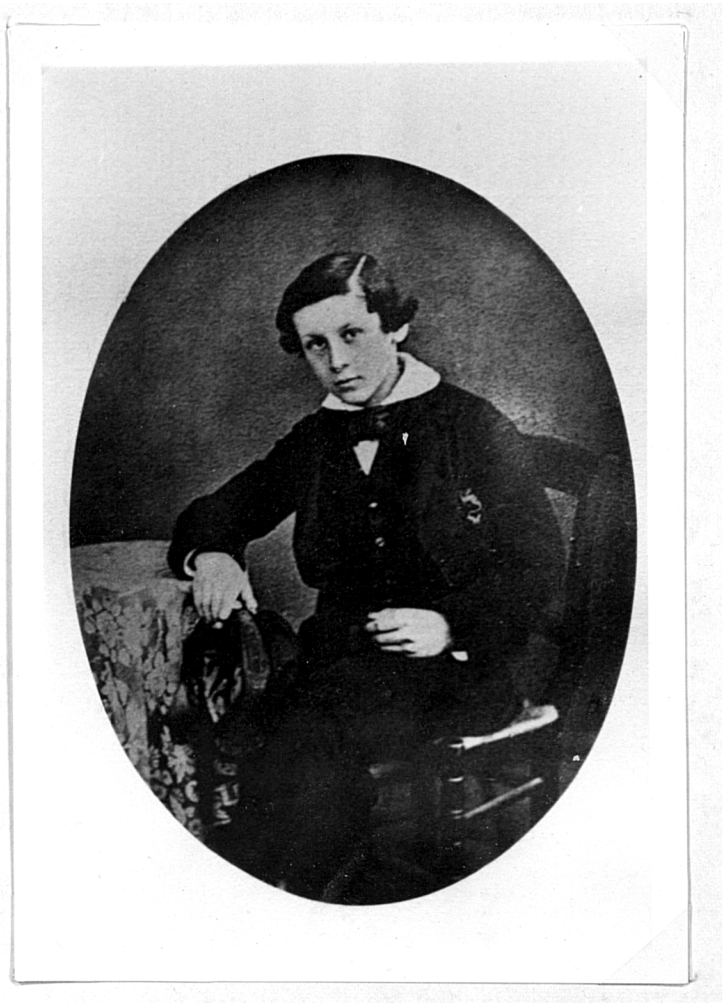

5. Richard Cobden junior. Taken probably in 1855 when he was aged 14 or 15.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The schooling of Richard Cobden junior.

Cobden's choice of education for his son Richard gives good evidence of his ideal of education or at least the best available. At the age of eight, Richard was sent to a leading progressive school and at fourteen to a school in one of the German States in order to add fluent German to his attainments.

Richard and Catherine (Kate - eleven years younger than her husband) had eight children. The eldest, Richard, was born on 12 March 1841; Sarah was born in 1842 but died in 1843; Kate was born in 1844 and Ellen Melicent in 1848; William was born in 1849 but died in 1850; Emma Jane was born in 1851, Julia Anne in 1853 and Lucy Margaret in 1861.

Richard's schooling began when his parents spent a year on the Continent in 1846-47. Aged five, he was sent to Cassino House in Peter Street, Southport, Lancashire. This was a small homely boarding school for girls run by Mrs. Tabitha Eveleigh. The letters which Richard wrote to his parents show that he was happy there. When Cobden was in Russia on his own in 1847, he wrote to Kate:

> "The account you give of the boy is delightful. He has had an impulse given to his moral sentiments which will never lose its influence upon his character. I shall never regret the sacrifice we have made of society which has given him the advantage of being trained for a year in the midst of children of his own age".[1]

In January 1850, Cobden sent his son to Dr. Heldenmaier's Pestalozzian Institution in Worksop, Nottinghamshire. He told his brother Frederick that "it is a

well-conducted establishment, on the Pestalozzi plan, combining the training of a home with good practical and modern tuition". Some years later, G.J. Holyoake the noted rationalist writer described it as "unrivalled among English schools for the industrial, social and classical education it imparted". The school flourished from about 1835 to about 1880 but unfortunately left no records. It was established by Dr. Beatus R.F. Heldenmaier (1795-1873) who was a pupil and teacher at Johann H. Pestalozzi's school at Yverdun in Switzerland before obtaining a post at Plamann's Institutute in Berlin. He also studied at German Universities, becoming a doctor of philosophy. He went to Worksop at a time when Pestalozzi's educational ideas were becoming known in England. Since 1826, there had been a school run on those principles at Cheam, Surrey, by Dr. C. Mayo, who had been Chaplain at the Yverdun school.

Dr. Heldenmaier bought a fine eighteenth century house with extensive grounds in Potter Street, Worksop. He gathered a staff of about six male teachers, including his chief assistant Johann Louis Ellenberger and usually at least two others from Switzerland. As the number of boys (nearly all boarders) was fifty or sixty, it meant that classes were small and that there was much individual attention. The leading principles of Pestalozzi's system were that education must harmonise with a child's nature and must develop equally the intellectual, moral and physical faculties. The curriculum was correspondingly wide, being comprised of Arithmetic, English Literature, Latin and Greek, French and German, Geography, Drawing, Botany, Chemistry and Physics, History and Music.

The school received some well-deserved publicity in the Monthly Repository in 1837. Charles Reece Pemberton (1790-1840), an actor and lecturer, wrote, after spending a fortnight at the school, a most rapturous account of the relaxed and happy relationship between masters and boys, the absence of corporal punishment, the emphasis on reasoning and understanding in lessons, the Anatomical museum, the Chemistry laboratory which had a furnace, forge and ample experimental equipment. He thought it difficult to imagine a school more different in every respect from the majority of schools for the upper and middle classes. The emphasis on science and the practical facilities were most exceptional.

Richard's first half-yearly report in June 1850 was rather worrying. He was "inclined to be idle in lessons, but not in the playground....He never loses an opportunity to play a sly trick upon his neighbours.... He is not the most orderly, punctual, cleanly pupil". A few days after receiving it, Cobden took the opportunity of Combe's visit to London to have him phrenologically examine Richard. Combe summed up his findings in a letter:

> "His cerebellum is large for his age; and his large Combativeness and Destructiveness combined with Amativeness will produce tendencies to criminal pleasures and pursuits and a sort of sympathy with horse and dog, eating and drinking, sensual men, which will require careful training to control. He has an excellent intellectual development and a fair development of the moral organs, minus Veneration, which often grows till 18 or 20 in males; and I should not fear for his becoming a clear-headed, practical, forcible man, with sound principles and self-command, if justice is done to him in his education".

Cobden sent Combe's report to Dr. Heldenmaier. In October 1850, Cobden visited the school, beginning by having breakfast with the boys. He reported to Kate:

"I found Richard looking quite well and with renewed good manners....I was very very much pleased with the manners of the school. Mrs. Heldenmaier takes an active part in the duties of the household and she is quite upon the footing of a mother with all the boys"...."The boy was not at all low spirited at parting. In fact the boys are all so very happy that they cannot much long for the best of homes".[4]

The following year, Dr. Heldenmaier sent Cobden a phrenological analysis of Richard by E.T. Craig, a well-known progressive educationist and phrenologist. His long and detailed analysis, accompanied by a register of cerebral measurements, reinforced Combe's estimate of the difficult problems presented. Richard had a forceful and independent character impatient with conventional forms; his strong emotions would be more easily tempered by sympathy and affection than by arbitrary discipline.

The latter advice was agreeable to Cobden's gentle and sympathetic nature. His relationship with his children was always natural and friendly. He thought nothing of writing letters in the drawing room at Dunford while children romped about - very far from the legendary Victorian papa whose birch was ever ready. This description of life at Dunford is typical:

"My boy and I are spending ten hours a day in the open air flying kites, rolling on the grass, or rambling in the woods. He was up at five o'clock this morning to go round the woods with my man.... and before I was out of bed he walked into my room with two rabbits and a hare hanging across his shoulders. He is in the seventh heaven with his fishing and shooting. I wish he was half as fond of his books - but that may come".[5]

No serious problems arose over Richard's schooling in the first three years. Cobden's letters to him give glimpses of Cobden's mind.

"You have not succeeded well in your history and biography - both of which are very interesting and useful studies".

When Richard asked to learn the flute, Cobden told him that he doubted whether he was gifted with the organ of Tune:

"If so you are more fortunate than your father; for I have not sufficient ear for music to be able to sing a verse of "God Save the Queen"....Let us wait however till you come home next holiday, and if I find that you can sing correctly, I shall be willing to take into consideration the proposal for learning the flute".

In Richard's last two years at Worksop, he was often in trouble. In September 1853, a point of crisis was reached. He fell behind in Latin and as a remedy the number of lessons was increased at the expense of map drawing and chemistry. Richard complained bitterly to his father about this and also singing, which he did not enjoy. Cobden urged him to persevere in his studies:

"If you do not make good progress there, it will be attributed to your fault. Your character for life will be injured.... Dr. Heldenmaier can appeal to thirty years of success in his profession and to the hundreds of men who have been educated by him and who speak of his school".

To which advice Richard replied: "It is no use trying to make me like this school". Within days he led a raid into a neighbouring orchard. Dr. Heldenmaier informed Cobden:

"Your son had not done as well as I expected. He has written to you about his excursion for apples at night. He was the leader, but his followers were weak willed. Of course he was punished by tasks and restraint. "I am sure my father did the same when he was young".... You may rely upon it that he is not ill-treated. We have all too much regard for you and too much self respect".

Cobden wrote to Kate, who was away from home:

"I have written to Richard to say I shall be at Worksop next week. His letters are most unsatisfactory. It is all owing to his want of perseverance - the most fatal of all defects, where nature has bestowed good capacity".

When Cobden arrived at the school, he found Richard looking so "seedy" and unwell, that he took him to a hotel for four days. Cobden reported to Kate:

"As respects his lessons, I backed up the authority of the masters to him; but privately with Mr. Ellenberger I advised him not to drive him to desperation with his Latin. In French and German he seems to be doing pretty well. And there are no great complaints about anything but the Latin. I hope he'll go on with his singing. I attended a rehearsal of a choral performance by the boys and it was really a charming spectacle. It has a most humanising tendency, and is just what Dick's rugged nature wants. When he was humming a tune as we were dressing this morning, I exclaimed "Why Dick, you have quite a talent for singing!" I hope he drank in the praise, and that it will have its effect".

It was ironical that a year after Cobden had doubted whether Dick had a sense of tune, he should try to convince him that he had talent. Cobden's anxiety to stimulate Richard's interest in singing can only be understood when the importance attached to it by many progressive educationists is considered. Horace Mann, the American educationist, wrote that vocal music

"is a moral means of great efficacy.... it disarms anger, softens rough and turbulent natures, socialises, and brings the whole mind, as it were, into a state of fusion, from which condition the teacher can mould it into what forms he will, as it cools and hardens".[6]

In 1854, Dr. Heldenmaier returned to Switzerland, where he opened a school in Lausanne. J.D. Ellenberger succeeded as headmaster. While there is no reason to suppose that he was ill-disposed towards Richard, he probably felt that his behaviour must be subject to strict discipline. Richard soon felt that he could do no right in the eyes of many masters. A sense of persecution probably increased his rebelliousness. In November 1854, Richard got into trouble for buying sweets in town without permission. He refused to give

the names of other boys involved because he had promised not to do so. He appealed to his father, who advised him to tell Mr. Ellenberger that he could not give names for reasons of conscience, but that he would not be disobedient again:

In April 1855, Richard wrote home:

"I wish you would let me leave this school as I am sure I shall never get on at it. The reason I do not get on in many of my lessons is not because I do not work but because I go to them so seldom. The masters find fault with me in the playground and then I am put in a room by myself to work at a task, not at my lessons. I cannot then keep up with my classes.

I have now got a sermon to do because I threw some stones the other day in the playground and one of them went near one of the masters who of course says I aimed at him although I did not see him until after I had thrown. He told Mr. Ellenberger about it and he also told him all the little things he could remember about me."

Soon afterwards, Richard's parents were reproved for breaking school rules. Kate sent a portmanteau to Richard, containing not only clothes but several cakes, bottles of syrups and jars of potted tongues. Ellenberger, who confiscated the food and sweets, curtly informed Cobden that "these are unwelcome in my establishment and you will oblige me by saying how we are to dispose of them". Richard told his parents that he had planned a feast with his friends and suggested "if you do not tell him to give it to me, tell him to send it home as I should not like him and his wife to have a feast upon it".

It was probably a relief for both Ellenberger and the Cobdens when Richard left the school at the end of term in June 1855. Ellenberger wrote:

"I trust your plan with regard to your boy will be successful. Age will bring on reflection, and a reform in his ideas and disposition will take place which will be rather the result of his own deliberations, than the effect of foreign interference".[7]

The difficulties over Richard were not the reason for his leaving, although they might soon have necessitated it. Cobden planned a career for Richard in Commerce and intended him to spend two or three years at schools in Germany and France in order to learn the languages thoroughly. Ever since his first tour of the German States in 1838, he had been impressed with their manufacturing and educational progress - schools and universities. At that time, he advised a friend that as the literature of Germany would greatly influence the future mind of Europe, "your boys must therefore learn German".

Following the advice of his friend Chevalier Bunsen, recently Prussian Minister to Britain, Cobden sent Richard in September 1855, to a small boarding school at Weinheim near Heidelberg, in the Grand Duchy of Baden. As Bunsen lived not far away, he agreed to keep an eye on Dick's welfare. Bunsen described the school as a "realschule or college for practical knowledge". It was probably similar to the type of school later classified in Prussia as a "first rank" realschule, because Latin was compulsorily, and Greek optionally taught. The curriculum was similar to the school at Worksop. Dick seems to have quickly settled down, although he missed his close friend at Worksop, John Thomasson, son of Cobden's friend Thomas Thomasson, a wealthy cotton-spinner of Bolton. He made good progress in French and German, but soon complained of Latin, which was pronounced differently. Cobden asked the headmaster to excuse Dick from Latin but was told that no exception to the school rules could be permitted. Despite Latin, Richard was happy at the school, as his

letter of 2nd April 1856 testified.[8]

Then the cruel blow fell. Richard went down with scarlet fever - severe forms of which were much commoner in the nineteenth century than today - and died three days later, on 6th April. According to the headmaster, he was given the best medical attention available, the treatment including application of leeches to the throat. The news reached Cobden in a particularly heartrending manner. Opening his letters on 10 April at his rooms in town, Cobden read one from Bunsen confirming Richard's death. Cobden later discovered that the headmaster had informed Bunsen of Richard's death, assuming that he would send a telegram to Cobden. Bunsen assumed that the headmaster had already wired Cobden. Cobden immediately went home to tell Kate in the most gentle way possible. But she suffered a complete emotional collapse and for nearly a year she was an invalid, with Cobden at her side much of the time.

Some of Cobden's letters to his friends on black edged notepaper afford a very rare glimpse of conventional religious ideas which had not been banished by his unorthodox views of God's design in the constitution of man and of nature. To Joseph Sturge, the Quaker philanthropist, he confided:

> "But I confess that I find a chief comfort in reflecting upon my own ignorance and finite nature. I find the words "you know not all" constantly rising to my tongue to answer the doubts, check the rebellious thoughts which will obtrude upon my mind sometimes, when I think of the bright and beautiful being who has been torn from us".

And to Bright:

> "There must be an unseen help. And indeed all that we feel throws us more and more upon the faith in another and better world - for how else can we explain the mystery of this life?"

The grief remained ever afterwards. When visiting the common schools in New York in 1859, he probably saw Richard in his mind's eye sitting in the desks. He lamented to Kate that he could hardly bear to stay in the schools - "the sight of numbers of boys from 12 to 15 was too much for me".[9]

Summary

Cobden's choice of the Pestalozzian school at Worksop for his son's education is a clear indication of what he considered best in education. The school was concerned for the intellectual, moral and physical education of boys in the light of Pestalozzian thinking and practice. The phrenological analysis of his son showed Cobden's continued belief in that science. His plan for Richard to continue his schooling in Germany and France showed the value he set on a good knowledge of modern languages, and anticipated the International College scheme of the 1860's. The account also gives a glimpse into Cobden's family life.

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   WRSO. Add.MS.2764 and 6033. Letters of R. Cobden junior to his mother and vice-versa.
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2. BL.Add.MS.50751. C. to Frederick C., 3 January 1850.
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   Brief biographical details of Dr. B.R.F. Heldenmaier and his wife Adèle née Trachsel (1810-1873) given in an article in Pestalozzianum, 25 November 1949, the German language bulletin of the Pestalozzi Institute in Zurich.
   D.Leinster-Mackay: "Pioneers in Progressive Education. Some Little-Known Proprietary and Private School Exemplars," History of Education, IX (1980), 214-5, has a brief description. He mistakenly gave Dr.Heldenmaier's first name as Benjamin.
   According to the census of April 1851 the assistant masters in residence were Francis Soper, teacher of Music, aged 32, born in London; Francis Griffiths, aged 24, born in Middlesex; Johannes Rigg, teacher of German and Italian, aged 30, born in Switzerland and Frederic Falkner, teacher of Classics, aged 31, born in Switzerland. J.L. Ellenberger, a married man, lived elsewhere in Worksop. The school was on holiday.
   The Public Library at Worksop holds examination papers of the school for 1858 and 1859, indicating the broad curriculum.
3. "Fourteen Days At School", Monthly Repository, XI (1837), 117-123. The article was signed "Pel.Verjuce".
   The school was praised by a pupil of the 1840's,

James Muspratt, in My Life and Work, 11-13. J. Roach: A History of Secondary Education in England 1800-1870 (1986), 113, noted letters from another boy of the 1840's, William Marling.

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Add.MS.6034. Nearly all R.C. junior's letters are undated. There are some letters in BL. Add.MS.50749.
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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Newspapers for the millions.

1. A means of education

From the beginning of his political career, Cobden was convinced that newspapers must be made a powerful instrument of personal education and social progress. Sound representative government could not be established until the citizen could properly judge the actions of the government. Without such information, the voter was easily manipulated at the hustings by governments which tended to be, as he put it,"standing conspiracies to rob and bamboozle people". A newspaper in every home, with a wide coverage of domestic and international news, was essential. His exalted view of the newspaper was expressed in a letter to the Manchester Times in 1834:

> "I regard the influence of public opinion, as exercised through the press, as the distinguished feature in modern civilisation, and which by its pureness or degradation must determine the period of existence of civilisation itself. This engine of good or evil can exist only by the breath of the public; and I hold it to be one of the gravest duties of the body politic to award wisely its suffrages amongst the contending candidates of the periodical press."[1]

Newspapers also had potential as a means of education in a very primary sense. A cheap local newspaper - probably a weekly one - giving news of local events as well as national news could act as a stimulus to reading, the practice of which often lapsed after a poor schooling. This was particularly necessary in rural areas in the south of England where, in Cobden's opinion, the farm labourer's life hardly differed from that of his Anglo-Saxon forbears. As early as 1835, he wrote:

"We regard every scheme that is calculated to make mankind think - everything that, by detaching the mind from the present moment, and leading it to reflect on the past or future rescues it from the dominion of mere sense - as calculated to exalt us in the scale of being; and whether it be a newspaper or a volume that serves this end, the instrument is worthy of honour at the hands of enlightened philanthropists".

Cobden was very impressed by the number and cheapness of newspapers in the United States and by the much higher proportion of readers per head of population. In 1836, he prophesied: "We want a new set of papers that will advocate the solid and material interests of the masses - in a word, we want an American press and we shall have it by and by". But there were big obstacles to achieving this. The first was a widespread prejudice against newspapers and the second consisted of taxes already dubbed "the taxes on knowledge".[2]

The prejudice against newspapers may have derived partly from the fact that many of them in the 1830's were far from Cobden's ideal - they supplied gossip, crime and sensational stories or radical political manifestos, rather than providing a balanced spread of news. There was often objection to the provision of newspapers in Mechanics Institutes by people who felt that newspaper reading was either an idle pursuit or a stimulus to political activity inappropriate for the working class. There was no general acceptance that a knowledge of contemporary events was an essential part of education. Arguing this at a meeting of the Manchester Athenaeum in 1850, Cobden ended a long speech by a striking comparison designed to ram home the importance of the newspaper as an educational instrument for those who rarely if ever read a book or periodical. "It has been said that one copy of The Times contains more

useful information than the whole of the historical books of Thucydides". His intention was not to belittle the classics for scholars but simply to emphasise the importance of knowledge of the modern world.

Cobden praised The Times because in 1850 it was a newspaper outstanding for its wide coverage of news and large circulation of 39,000 copies per day. Unfortunately, it became one of those remarks which politicians carelessly make and which are used by opponents ever afterwards. It was a gift for those who wished to depict Cobden as a narrow-minded, ill-educated "cotton bagman". Even Morley, a sympathetic biographer, did not properly understand Cobden's intention and felt obliged to note that he "knew little" about Thucydides.[3]

The newspaper taxes - first imposed in 1712 - were a stamp duty on each copy of a newspaper, a tax of eighteen pence on each advertisement and a tax of one and a half pence per pound of paper used in printing. The taxes were designed to prevent cheap radical newspapers and even the reduction of the stamp to one penny in 1836 was aimed to discourage the flood of unstamped newspapers. The taxes were also a useful source of revenue. In 1850, the paper duty brought in £745,000 and the stamp duty £396,000. The taxes made daily newspapers too expensive for the bulk of the middle as well as the working class. The minimum price of the ten London dailies in 1850 was five pence, which is equivalent to at least £1 and probably more in 1986. Significantly, there were fifteen dailies in New York city, where there were no taxes on newspapers, and roughly one in ten persons bought a daily newspaper,

compared with one in a hundred in London. It was impossible to establish a daily newspaper in England outside London, nor could a small town publish a weekly newspaper for local circulation only. The advertisement duty worked in favour of newspapers with the largest circulation, such as The Times.

By the early 1850's, Cobden believed that technological developments in printing and in news gathering based on railways, telegraphs and steamships, made it possible to publish daily newspapers at one penny each - roughly the price of some American newspspers. He was not naive about the possibilities which a cheap press would open up. His forecast in 1853 that many cheap papers would oppose his principles of peace and non-intervention was proved right when the stamp was abolished during the Crimean War. The Daily Telegraph which began publication at tuppence on 29 June 1855, cut its price to one penny on 17 September and went over to the war party.

It was Cobden's brave hope that the reduced costs of publishing dailies would enable men sympathetic to his ideas to enter the new field in fair competition with those who were motivated primarily by commercial considerations. Surely newspapers which patiently advocated the fundamental interests of the mass of the people would more than hold their own. The Morning Star was founded in 1856 in that spirit.[4]

2. The campaign against the "taxes on knowledge".

Cobden was not involved in any campaign to abolish the "taxes on knowledge" until 1849. The spate of unstamped and therefore illegal newspapers in the early

1830's, coupled with the pressure of an abolitionist group, obliged the Whig government to reduce the stamp to one penny per copy in 1836. This took the steam out of the abolitionists, many of whom got involved in the new Chartist movement. The Anti-Corn Law League was hampered by the newspaper taxes but did not attempt to combat them. The Anti-Corn Law Circular, the Anti-Bread Tax Circular, and The League were all taxed. The League, published weekly at three pence, was too expensive for popular sale, and 20,000 out of its 25,000 circulation went to members of the League in return for a subscription of £1 or more.[5]

After his post-Repeal tour of the Continent in 1846-7, Cobden began a campaign to reform foreign policy and taxation. He did not plan a specific attack on the "taxes on knowledge", but included the abolition of those on advertisements and paper in the reform programme which he called the National Budget in December 1848. He left out the stamp duty for tactical reasons, because many established newspapers would oppose a measure likely to promote cheaper rivals and also because he wanted a favourable press reception for the programme. But he was soon requested to include it by the People's Charter Union, a Chartist organisation founded in 1848 but now disillusioned with the prospects of getting an early reform of Parliament after the failure of its petition and returning to the pre-Chartist radical view that a cheap press was needed to promote its objects.

Cobden's reply that he would consider including it, encouraged the P.C.U. to form the Newspaper Stamp

Abolition Committee in March 1849, which he promptly joined. His moves in Parliament to get financial reform having been rebuffed, he was convinced that a public opinion more representative of the people must be fostered by a cheap daily press. The urgency was emphasised by the hostility which he encountered over his opposition to Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, in the Don Pacifico affair in 1850 and by what he considered the "apostasy" of the Daily News, the only Liberal daily in London.

Cobden got T. Milner Gibson to take a leading part in the Parliamentary campaign.[6]

In 1849, another committee was formed, with William Ewart M.P. as President, to get the advertisement duty abolished. In 1850 both pressure groups made unsuccessful attempts to gain their ends. The Newspaper Stamp Abolition Committee sent a deputation including Cobden to Lord John Russell, the Prime Minister, on 11 March 1850, and on 16 April, Milner Gibson moved for abolition of the stamp and paper duties. W. Ewart, seconded by Milner Gibson, moved for abolition of the advertisement duty in May. Cobden realised that the failure of 1850 required the agitations to be placed on a stronger and broader basis. So in February 1851, Cobden and C.D. Collet, the Secretary of the N.S.A.C., established the Association for Promoting the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge. The President was Milner Gibson, the Treasurer was Francis Place, the veteran radical, with Collet as Secretary. Cobden was on the Committee with Bright, Hume and others.

Cobden played a key role as strategist and advisor, as his letters to Collet show. If Parliament was to be convinced, he knew that it would be stupid to openly

proclaim that cheap newspapers were meant to undermine the influence of the aristocracy and promote the cause of democracy. The most telling argument was that cheap newspapers would encourage reading and self-education in the working class. This would prick the conscience of governments which seemed unable or unwilling to pass an education act. Cobden pressed this argument on all his friends, going as far as to tell Bright that "a penny newspaper press would do more to educate the millions than all the schoolmasters in the land".[7]

Cobden brought into the Association men who were N,P.S.A. supporters, such as W.E. Hickson (active in the movement in the 1830's), Dr. J. Watts, S. Lucas, S. Wilderspin and publishers such as Douglas Jerrold who produced a weekly newspaper as well as being a contributor to Punch, and John Cassell. Cassell published a range of "improving literature" aimed at the working class, such as the Popular Educator, The Working Man's Friend and Family Instructor, and The Freeholder, organ of the free-hold land movement in which Cobden was involved. Cassell paid as much as £4,000 in paper duty per year. Cobden urged him to lead a movement of newspaper proprietors against the taxes. "The retention of the newspaper stamp was "a flagrant wrong upon the millions and a badge of political degradation to us as a nation".... "Emancipator of a nation's mind - what a glorious epitaph for a man! You may be that man".

The Association held a public meeting in London on 5 March 1851 at which Cobden declared his belief that working class people would buy penny newspapers of high

quality and sound morality if they were available. This was followed by a deputation to Lord J. Russell who agreed to a Select Committee under the Chairmanship of Milner Gibson to "inquire into the present state and operation of the law relating to newspaper stamps and into the law and regulations relative to transmission of newspapers and other publications by post". It was appointed on 7 April 1851. Gibson had a strong group of abolitionists on the Committee - Cobden, Ewart and Sir Joshua Walmsley. Cobden's hand may be detected in the selection of some of the witnesses for abolition: Collet, Cassell, Hickson, Abel Heywood, a bookseller and publisher in Manchester, Horace Greeley, publisher of the New York Tribune, and Rev. Thomas Spencer, an Anglican clergyman who had been a Cobden supporter since the League days. The main opposition witnesses, marshalled by H. Rich, the chief opponent on the Committee, were Alexander Russel, editor of The Scotsman, and Mowbray Morris, manager of The Times. With regard to the working of the law and the Post Office, J. Timm, Solicitor to the Board of Inland Revenue, T. Keogh, Assistant Secretary to the Board, and Rowland Hill, Secretary to the Postmaster General, were examined.

It was impossible for the supporters of the stamp to declare at least part of their real motivation. Both Morris and Russel denied that their newspapers had any selfish interest in the stamp, in that it discouraged competitors. They claimed instead that cheap newspapers would be bad papers and that quality papers must inevitably be expensive. Cobden questioned Morris whether it might

not be left "to the sagacity of the people, to their own self-interest and love of truth, to find out what is sound?". To which he replied, "I have very little opinion of the sagacity of uneducated people". Even W.H. Smith, the newsagent, although personally favouring abolition, believed that penny papers must inevitably "pander to immoral taste". But the witnesses for abolition vigorously pressed educational arguments.

The evidence of Timm and Keogh showed up the difficulties of operating the law and Hill explained that the Post Office could levy postage on Newspapers as they did on letters, in place of the free postage allowed by the red "rubber stamp". The weight of evidence favoured abolition but Rich produced a draft report in opposition to Gibson's. The upshot was a slight compromise with no definite recommendation for abolition. Cobden proposed the key sentence finally agreed: "Apart from fiscal considerations, they do not consider that news is of itself a desirable subject of taxation".[8]

The Report was published in July 1851. But neither the Russell ministry, nor the Derby-Disraeli ministry which followed in 1852, took any action. The Association was obliged to carry on the campaign inside and outside Parliament. The Inland Revenue was constantly harried by cases intended to show the illogicality of the law. Cobden searched for new and influential supporters and found one in Lord Brougham, the veteran advocate of popular education. Cobden wrote for him a summary of educational arguments applicable to agricultural labourers

which he could use in a public declaration. "What a mighty stimulus to their taste for reading would all that is now going on in America and Australia afford, if they could read in penny and half-penny newspapers the accounts of the migrations of labourers and the marvellous stories of the occasional rates of wages. But the incidents of their own neighbourhood would supply this stimulus; for if we had an unstamped press, every considerable market town would have its weekly newspaper with its reports of the proceedings of the petty sessions, County Courts and together with all the local news and these would everywhere furnish the first reading lessons to the least educated and be the stepping stone to a higher range of studies".

Cobden duly read extracts from a letter by Brougham at a public meeting on 1 December 1852. The first success of the Association and of the allied pressure group was the majority vote on Milner Gibson's motion for repeal of the advertisement duty and consequent repeal by the Aberdeen government in 1853. It was the least defensible of the taxes and repeal was helped by Tory votes, probably influenced in part by Disraeli's decision to publish a weekly newspaper to be called Press. The government also excused monthly newspapers, which existed mainly as an advertising medium, from the stamp.[9]

The publication of the West Sussex Advertiser monthly by W. Mitchell of Arundel and publication under a different title at the middle of the month led to a prosecution which Cobden used to good effect to show how the stamp tax cut back the demand for newspapers in the villages.

Stamp abolition came more quickly than Cobden expected. The Crimean War forced it, because the war made a host of newspaper editors demand it. The excitement of the war produced an exceptional demand for news, which printers met by publishing unstamped "War Telegraphs" which it was hoped would not be prosecuted by reason of being "class" newspapers, that is not general newspapers requiring a stamp.

The established newspapers soon felt the competition and demanded the end of the stamp. Palmerston's government gave way and it was abolished in June 1855. But the paper duty remained until 1861.[10]

The Manchester Examiners and Times, the only existing organ of the "Manchester School", cut its price to one penny. The first London daily penny paper was the Daily Telegraph which began at tuppence in June 1855 and dropped to a penny in September 1855. It enthusiastically supported the Crimean War and subsequently Palmerstonian adventures. It was the first London daily to outstrip The Times in circulation.

3. The establishment of the Morning Star and its political advocacy.

Cobden was the prime mover in the establishment of the Morning Star and the complementary Evening Star in 1856. It was not intended as a pioneer of the local newspapers of which Cobden hoped so much, but as a political challenge to existing London dailies, especially The Times. It could not advocate the policies of any existing party, for its promoters were opposed to Whigs and Tories and the so-called Liberal "tail" of the Whigs. There was no

possibility of any person putting up money for such a newspaper as a purely commercial venture. Everything depended on convincing wealthy Quakers - the heart and soul of the peace movement - of the need for such a bold experiment. There already was a peace paper, the Herald of Peace, edited by Cobden's friend Henry Richard.

Cobden's strategy was to play on the despondent mood of peace advocates such as Joseph Sturge, since it was apparent that the Peace Congress movement had failed and direct appeals to monarchs had achieved nothing. Peace advocates must face the hard reality that public opinion was against them and that it could only be changed by gradual and indirect means, by the establishment of daily newspapers all over Britain. He told Sturge in February 1855: "We can do nothing until we have a daily paper in London. What is wanted is one representing the humanities- peace, temperance anti-slavery etc. - in fact a New York Tribune but avoiding its many errors and with sound views on free trade which that paper has not, and it should go for free trade in land."

But the paper must not be a replica of the Herald of Peace. It must, first of all, provide as good if not better coverage of general news than any other paper. It must report wars and many subjects disagreeable to Quakers and others of similar outlook. The folly of war must be brought out in leading articles which dealt with specific issues as they arose and not by the bland assertion of general principles.[11]

It took six months to win over Sturge to the project. It was probably of great importance that Cobden was able to strengthen his argument about the viability of a penny

paper by talks with Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune, and J.G. Bennett of the New York Herald, who were both in London in July 1855. Greeley's penny equivalent paper was a financial success with 30,000 copies per day. By the end of the year, the necessary £5,000 was raised to start the paper. More than half the shares were bought by Sturge and the rest in smaller lots by a small number of subscribers. Cobden did not buy any shares on the grounds that a financial stake would be an embarrassment to him as a politician but he gave £250 towards the initial expenses. George Wilson and Henry Rawson, both resident in Manchester, were appointed as the proprietors.[12]

In January 1856, the prospectus for the Morning Star and the Evening Star - a title suggested by Cobden - was published. The two newspapers would, it proclaimed, present facts impartially. "They will be Papers for the People - not for Party".... "They will pander to no popular passions. At all times, the Morning and Evening Star will endeavour to enforce the sound teachings of political economy and to apply the right principles to the Science of Government". The prospectus was immediately subjected to cruel sarcasm in Punch as the "Thieves' Advocate", in reference to Sturge's pioneering work to rehabilitate juvenile delinquents and appeasement of the Russians. It also coincided with Cobden's pamphlet calling for an early peace, What Next - and Next?

It was this identification of the paper with an unpopular "peace sect" which Cobden struggled to counteract beginning with the advice not to begin with leading

articles against the war but to wait until public disillusion with the results of the war had set in. As he characteristically put it to Henry Richard: "If they cannot tolerate a little of the wisdom of the serpent as a means of promoting the harmlessness of the dove, I don't believe it is possible at present to establish a daily paper in the interest of peace". In fact, the Morning Star appeared on 17 March 1856, a fortnight before the Treaty of Paris was signed.

As there are no business records of the paper, details of its management can only be partially gleaned from private correspondence. The first editor was W.T. Haly who proved unsatisfactory and was dismissed in May 1856. Hamilton took over but in August 1856, H. Richard became editor in chief. Richard's role was primarily to act as the proprietor's representative in London and oversee the political views expressed in the paper. Hamilton and Richard seem to have worked in harmony but in 1858 Hamilton left and Samuel Lucas, Bright's brother in law and the former L.P.S.A. and N.P.S.A. leader, became editor. According to Richard, Lucas refused to acknowledge his superior position, with the result that Richard withdrew from the paper in 1859. Lucas remained editor until his death in 1865.[13]

In spite of Cobden's refusal to take any formal responsibility for the Morning Star, he played a very prominent rôle as an advisor, especially in the first two difficult years of the paper. He was concerned with its sound business management, the presentation of news and leading articles and the policies being advocated. He

kept up a continuous correspondence with all the editors and often visited the office in the Strand during Parliamentary sessions.

Cobden believed that 30,000 copies must be sold daily if the paper was to be financially viable. But at the end of August 1856, he reported to Sturge that the average circulation for the month had been about 17,000 - 13,000 morning and 4,000 evening. "I consider the circulation to be a dead failure in London". The bitter truth was that the Daily Telegraph had captured the market for a penny paper in London. Then in February 1858, another successful rival appeared, when the Standard, a Conservative fourpenny evening paper, changed to a penny morning paper. Both these papers had eight pages (double sheet). Cobden pressed the proprietors to copy this, which was done on 10 December 1858. But it seems that the circulation was not improved.[14]

The fact was that the political views of the Morning Star were not popular with middle class readers, who were the majority of those who bought daily papers. According to one recent writer, the aim of the newspaper tax repealers was to create a means of indoctrinating the working class into acquiescence in the existing capitalist social order from which they benefited. The Morning Star was not mentioned or discussed, but Cobden, the proprietors and editors were far from holding any such doctrine. A paper epitomising its own current values would not have been so decisively rejected by a middle class readership. The promoters of the Morning Star held that the middle and working classes both needed liberation, and that their

economic interests, rightly understood, were identical.

The middle class was in the political thrall of the aristocracy. Its upper section aped the aristocracy, sought to buy estates, found "coats of arms", voted for sons of peers as M.P.s, and sent its sons to ancient public schools or new ones modelled on the old. The lower section did not have the vote. The urban working class had a mockery of schooling, whether church or private, and lacked the vote. The rural workers were practically serfs in many areas and were far worse off in wages and housing conditions than factory workers.

The political situation presented special difficulties for Cobden. He could no longer appeal to the middle class to get reforms and replace aristocratic leadership. The middle class had to be pushed into it by a working class which recognised the need for an alliance with that class. The working class could not liberate itself even if it was politically conscious. In 1861, Cobden commented to W. Hargreaves:

> "Have they no Spartacus among them to head a revolt of the slave class against their political tormentors? I suppose it is the reaction against the follies of Chartism, which keeps the present generation so quiet. However it is certain that so long as five millions of men are silent under their disabilities, it is quite impossible for a few middle class members of Parliament to give them liberty, and this is the language I shall hold when called on to speak to them".

But in public Cobden was inclined to tone down his private feelings. The task of stimulating a reform movement was a delicate one, because if the upper middle class was frightened by working class demands or reformers' utterances - Bright was cautioned by Cobden about this - it would simply stand with the aristocratic ruling class

against reform.

Cobden's ideas about the rôle of the Morning Star in this strategy can be inferred from scattered remarks in his correspondence. He hoped that it would foster a new public opinion strong enough to support the eventual emergence of a new political party committed to the real interests of all classes and the true prosperity of Britain. The party must spring from the spread of ideas, not from a political machine.[15]

The most important task of leading articles to show the interlocking nature of the many aspects of government and the economy - the connection between foreign policy, war, armaments, "imperialism of free trade", taxation, capital investment, international industrial competition and the standard of living. Many of these ideas were linked round the principle of non-intervention in the affairs of other countries. This was not to be viewed as a sterile principle but as an essential basis of national and international well-being. The linkage of ideas must be brought out. Non-intervention was the surest means of national self-determination for people under foreign rule and for the British people, since interference in foreign issues drew attention away from domestic reform. Standing armed forces, armaments and wars were paid for out of taxes and represented a waste of capital and potential investment in industry. Attempts to force open markets, as was happening in the Far East, did not increase trade in proportion to the military and naval costs and caused anarchy in the weak state of China.[16]

The Commercial Treaty with France, which Cobden

played a leading part in negotiating in 1859-60, was another important theme to be explained in all its connections with his parallel efforts to control the naval arms race with France and the level of defence expenditure in Britain. These issues were also related to Gladstone's declared aim of abolishing the paper duties. Cobden was sure that The Times favoured a high defence expenditure so as to leave no room for a cut in revenue. The Times feared that repeal would help its competitors. The Morning Star campaigned vigorously against the paper duties and the "unconstitutional usurpation" of the House of Lords in rejecting Gladstone's bill in 1860. It was passed in 1861, saving the Morning Star £120 a week in paper duties, and enabling more cheap newspapers to start up.[17]

There were two issues on which the Morning Star was restrained for various reasons - national education and reform of the land laws. Education was an issue on which Cobden was frustrated by the events narrated in Chapter Fifteen. He also found in 1856-58 that the Morning Star could not voice a strong demand for a rate-aided system. Joseph Sturge, the chief shareholder, was not a voluntaryist but he was very lukewarm about any system of schools run by locally-elected authorities. Richard, who was editor in chief until 1859, was a Congregationalist and a keen voluntaryist. In November 1856, when a proprietor was being sought, Cobden wrote to Sturge arguing against Richard being chosen because of his stance on education. It is significant that the paper gave little space to Cobden's and Pakington's bill in 1857, generally

unpopular with dissenters.

The editorship of Samuel Lucas from 1858, coupled with Richard's departure and Sturge's death in 1859, might have heralded a vigorous campaign for national education but it coincided with the issue being wiped off the political agenda by the Royal Commission and the Report. Cobden realised that as an education act would only come after Parliamentary reform, the main priority was to stimulate working-class agitation for the latter.[18]

Reform of the land laws was the second issue which Cobden felt must be advocated with great caution. He never wrote extensively on the subject at least in signed articles but his views were expressed in The League and The Freeholder (1850-53) and can be traced to the Wealth of Nations. A balanced economy and healthy people required an efficient agriculture based on small farms owned or rented with secure tenure. Small farms could be very productive as shown on the Continent. A prosperous farming population would contribute to an expanding national economy, providing a market for industrial goods and supplying much more meat and milk to the towns than hitherto. As it was, the rural population, especially in the south, was a non-consuming sector of poverty, and those who left for the towns contributed to poverty there by flooding the labour market.

The obstacle to beneficial changes were the laws of primogeniture and entail which the aristocracy believed were the basis of their political authority and influence. But Cobden found that to call for the abolition of hindrances to the free sale of land was to be accused of

"socialism" and "revolutionary confiscation". In the 1860's, he believed that change would only come slowly after the existing system had been intensively studied by economists and after the irrational fears of the ruling class had weakened.[19]

Cobden rarely commented on trade unions perhaps because he thought that many of their activities were not helpful to raising the general standard of living. The most effective way to do this was by getting governments to promote a more dynamic and efficient economy leading to a greater demand for skilled labour and consequently higher wages. He agreed with the Morning Star's support of moderate trade unionism which implied an acceptance by employer and workers that negotiation about wages and hours of work was a normal practice but that interference in matters properly concerning menagement was unacceptable. In a leading article of 31 July 1856, the paper argued against strikes and suggested wage contracts involving maximum and minimum wages according to the success of the enterprise. Cobden commented to Richard that many union leaders seemed unaware that wages cannot be permanently raised by coercing the employers in a country where there were few barriers to imported goods. It was important that these issues be explained to workers but they must not be lectured in "the abstruse, technical and unsympathising style of some of these political economists".

This position on trade unionism was exemplified by a dispute between the Morning Star and the London Society of Compositors in May 1856. It was not reported by the

paper nor can any comment by Cobden be found. The records of the Society and the Typographical Circular (a monthly journal of the print trade) give only a few details. The main facts are as follows. The Society had negotiated a London Wage Scale with representatives of the London newspaper proprietors in 1847. The London Scale gave "establishment" printers (the regularly employed as opposed to temporary workers) on daily morning papers the wage of 48 shillings per week, putting them among the best paid workers in the country. The wages were not in dispute but the intricate "Rules and customs" of the Society concerning the amount of work done on a newspaper for the agreed wages were contested by the Morning Star management. The management wanted "unlimited composition". This was quite unacceptable to the news men. The Chapel at the Morning Star and Evening Star was"closed" by the Society and the papers declared an "unfair house".

The Society records show that the precipitate action of the news men was unsuccessfully opposed by the book printers who constituted the bulk of members. Thereafter the Morning Star employed non-Society men. In April 1863, the Society called on all trade unionists not to buy the paper on account of its non-acceptance of the Society's rules and customs. This situation probably stopped union leaders from giving the Morning Star credit when it was due, chiefly for its even-handed reporting of the "Nine Hours" strike and lock-out in the London building trades in 1859 and 1860. A building trades review of newspaper attitudes did not mention the Morning Star but praised the Morning Advertiser for its fair reporting - a fourpenny

Conservative paper which employed Society men.[20]

4. The "teaching method" of the Morning Star.

In the first three years, Cobden tried hard to show to the editors how they could make the paper attractive to readers and teach them effectively. The leading article in the first issue of 17 March 1856 stated that the paper would not carry long leading articles in the belief that the public wanted facts upon which they could form their own opinions. This probably did not accurately reflect Cobden's view which was, as he told Richard a little later, that the New York Tribune had found the most attractive style for busy people, with short lively articles which got straight to the point. But every issue after the first had articles of two or three columns. Evidently, it was the prevailing opinion that the paper had to resemble the old established papers which charged fourpence or be regarded as inferior in quality. There was a snobbish prejudice about price which had to be overcome. Advertisements for the Morning Star were obliged to emphasise that the leading papers of New York and Paris had an equivalently low price. The paper was faced with a hard problem if it tried a novel presentation it might well lose the 15,000 readers it had without gaining a new class of reader lower down the social scale. It played safe. Throughout the 1860's and far beyond, the working class habit of reading a weekly entertaining newspaper persisted. Significantly, the Bee Hive, a tuppenny weekly established in 1861, but with a marked trade union slant, failed to maintain a circulation of 5,000.[21]

Cobden ensured that the Morning Star had a comprehen-

sive coverage of foreign news by the employment of Julius Faucher, a Prussian journalist of free trade views resident in London until 1861, to write a daily summary.

He was also concerned about the manner in which the political message was put over. Moralising and reasoning of an abstract nature must be avoided. The views of the paper should be instilled through the lively discussion of specific issues and incidents. The readers "must be taught without their knowing it". For this reason, he repeatedly urged that the paper avoid the appearance of being an organ of the Quakers or of an intolerant political group. Very characteristically, he asked Samuel Lucas in 1861 "not to let my name appear in your leaders (unless to find fault with me) for two years".[22]

Cobden's letters to the editors ring with moral indignation about Britain's resort to unnecessary violence in suppressing the Indian Mutiny in 1858, in China in 1857 and 1859-60 and at Kagosima in Japan in 1863. But he cautioned the editors against excessive moralising in leaders when public opinion happily condoned a forceful policy in the East and went to church on Sunday. "The best way of producing a distaste for injustice is to show it is very <u>costly</u>". To dwell on taxation was unfortunately necessary in such "a very low and undeveloped state of civilisation" and when "there seems no hope of the international relations of mankind being established on New Testament principles".

By 1861, Cobden seems to have accepted as inevitable that the general presentation of news and articles should be the same as in other leading newspapers. He praised

Lucas for the quality and for the well-sustained, fresh and vigorous writing of the Morning Star. But his hopes that it could avoid unpopularity were frustrated by the necessity to teach lessons of caution and forbearance during the strained relations with the Northern States which lasted for nearly the whole of the American Civil War. There was a frequent complaint that Cobden and Bright and the Morning Star were more concerned for American interests than for British interests and Britain's honour. Cobden joked that he and Bright had been called "the two Members of Parliament for the United States". The circulation of the paper did not grow as did that of its penny rivals.[23]

5. The Morning Star versus The Times.

The repeal of the paper duty in 1861 ended the "taxes on knowledge" but Cobden believed that an unseen and insidious enemy of a free press remained - the manipulation of newspaper policy by government. A financial connection between some politicians and the press was evident by 1853, prompting a remark by Cobden during a Commons debate that "the government should have no connection with the press whatever". In 1853, Disraeli had a stake in a new weekly newspaper called Press. Also in 1853, Robert Lowe, a leader writer on The Times since 1850, was appointed a Joint Secretary of the Board of Control in Lord Aberdeen's government. Lowe also held office in Palmerston's governments.

By 1857, Cobden was convinced that Palmerston, Prime Minister since 1855, was "managing" several London papers especially The Times the daily with the greatest influence.

What was especially reprehensible about The Times was that it pretended to be an independent newspaper, which it claimed was safeguarded by the anonymity of its editor and leader writers. But it was becoming known in political circles that apart from Lowe, the staff often met and corresponded with members of Palmerston's government.

Cobden hoped that the Morning Star and other penny dailies would soon eclipse the influence of The Times but this did not happen. It remained an institution of the realm, as he called it in 1855. Even worse, it became a sun around which the Daily Telegraph and the Standard tended to orbit. Cobden acknowledged that The Times derived much of its strength and influence from being well-managed and taking care not to antagonise established interests and popular prejudices. This was legitimate practice. What was illegitimate, was back door influence from government, manifesting itself by a double-faced attitude towards the public. Cobden believed that the Morning Star had the duty to "expose" this, not only to strengthen the comparative influence of the Morning Star but in the cause of fair trading in the press market. The public could not justly weigh the opinions of a paper unless it knew what connections it had.[24]

Cobden contemplated an exposure of The Times in 1857 but it was delayed until after a new, provocative development. Following Cobden's refusal of Palmerston's invitation to take office in 1859, and his subsequent opposition to the government, The Times began to snipe at Cobden for being simple minded in his negotiations with Napoleon III for a commercial treaty. This line of criticism was

preferred to examining all the arguments for a treaty and for arms control. It culminated in a scurrilous leading article on 1 February 1861 - overlooked by the biographer of J.T. Delane [the editor], and by Morley - which harped on a report that yet another subscription was being raised by Cobden's friends to help his financial difficulties resulting from a bad investment in the Illinois Central Railroad. It agreed that Cobden ought to be placed in the hands of a committee to save him from his own foolish good intentions. "In money matters we believe him to be what Johnson called Goldsmith, an "inspired idiot"...."we hope that he will be treated as a woman or a boy, and put under trust".

Cobden was on holiday in Algiers, recovering from the exertions of the commercial treaty negotiations. The Morning Star hit back in two moderately worded leaders and two letters, one entitled "The Sbirri of The Times" by Amicus Cobden" and another from "Stock Exchange". "Amicus Cobden" condemned "the most envenomed and slanderous libel that was ever penned by a profligate scribe". The writer accused Delane and his staff of being a team of hidden character assassins who had aimed "a blow at the power and influence of Mr. Cobden".

When Cobden read "Amicus Cobden", he wrote to his friend William Hargreaves that he had appreciated "one of the most powerful invectives ever written", which he assumed came from the pen of A.W. Paulton, former editor of The League, Manchester Examiner and Times and now on the staff of the Morning Star. He also gave many examples of government patronage bestowed on members of The Times

staff, which Hargreaves used later in a pamphlet.[25]

William Hargreaves (1815-1874) was a younger son of a family which had a calico printing business at Accrington in Lancashire. He spent three years at St. John's College Cambridge but did not take a degree. During the League agitation, he developed a deep interest in politics. After failing to get elected for Blackburn in 1847, he did not try for Parliament again, but continued to work for the Liberal cause. By 1860, his house at 34 Craven Hill Gardens in London had become a rendez-vous for Cobden's circle.

The quarrel with The Times lapsed for nearly three years probably because Cobden did not see an opportunity to revive it on favourable terms. During this time, he remained politically isolated. Palmerston, whom he aptly described as "the Feargus O'Connor of the middle classes" reigned supreme. Cobden failed to get more than insignificant support for arms control with France, reform of international maritime law concerning blockades, and review of British policy in the Far East. The Times continued to be a heavy weight on public opinion. Then, in December 1863, the quarrel suddenly flared up again when The Times commented on speeches by Cobden and Bright at Rochdale in which they touched on the land question. Cobden took the initiative of writing to the editor of The Times to denounce the "foul libel" of the leading article in which a comparison was made with "Mr. Bright's proposition for a division among them [the poor] of the lands of the rich....". It was his intention to "dispel the illusion by which The Times is enabled to pursue this game of secrecy to the

public and servility to the government - a game (I purposely use the word) which secures for its connexions the corrupt advantages, while denying to the public its own boasted benefits of the anonymous system".

Delane, the editor, did not publish the letter but the subsequent exchange of letters was published. The arguments went over what Cobden and Bright had meant in their speeches. Cobden scored a victory on the question of accuracy but at the expense of neglecting the major issue of government patronage and The Times.

Controversy stirred throughout the press. Opinion seems to have divided on the basis of the readership sought by newspapers, whether middle class and upwards or middle class and downwards. The London dailies sided with The Times with the exception of the Daily News and, of course, the Morning Star, the only ones to publish Cobden's first letter. The Manchester Guardian criticised Cobden while the Manchester Examiner and Times backed him up. But the large circulation Sunday newspapers Lloyds Weekly Newspaper and Reynold's News and the trade union weekly Bee Hive supported Cobden. Punch, "the court jester" of The Times as Cobden called it, was hostile. Before Cobden's letter, it printed a very sarcastic cartoon showing Cobden telling a farm labourer (made to look like a village idiot) that he was illiterate and should therefore have the vote.[26]

Cobden felt sufficient public support to announce in the Morning Star that he would bring up the patronage issue when Parliament reassembled but a little later, he decided not to do so. The campaign switched to a pamphlet attack. T.B. Potter, son of Sir T. Potter, paid for a

pamphlet reprint of the correspondence entitled Mr. Cobden and The Times (1864), for which Cobden wrote an introduction in which he reasserted his charges of surreptitious relations between The Times and the government and of attempted "moral assassination" of Bright and himself. This was followed by Cobden - Delane Controversy. Opinions of the Liberal Press on the Correspondence between Mr. Cobden and Mr. Delane (1864). The Morning Star's special contribution was a three column special article on 18 February 1864 entitled "The traditional policy of The Times, 1791, 1835, 1863". This gave three examples of how The Times had tried to strike down reformers by insults and slanders - Dr. Priestley, Daniel O'Connell and now Cobden. Cobden was very pleased with this article which he described as "a heavy blow at that paper".

Finally, in May 1864, W. Hargreaves published Revelations from Printing House Square. Is the Anonymous System a Security for the Purity and Independence of the Press? A Question for The Times newspaper. Hargreaves gave the names of members of The Times staff who held various public offices, mostly minor, except for R. Lowe, Vice-President of the Committee of Privy Council on Education. This pamphlet, which was apparently overlooked by Morley in his biography and by some later writers, provided ample evidence that The Times and the government worked together on many matters.[27]

But by now the controversy was burnt out. The public had become confused about the issues and historians have not properly cleared the matter up. Morley thought that

Cobden was unreasonable in attacking The Times for being Palmerstonian. But it was the extra authority which The Times gave to Palmerston's policies by claiming to be a paper independent of government which Cobden wished to destroy. Some thought that Cobden had lost his temper with Delane about a small matter. About this, Cobden commented to an American friend:

> "Some people are pleased to say that I was too violent and lost my temper. I knew what I was about and nothing but the tone I took would have broken through Delane's fence and brought him down from the editorial stool. I fancy the Jupiter of the press has lost some prestige since he descended from his Olympian heights to wear the form of a very common place man!"[28]

6. Conclusion

Cobden and the Morning Star gained nothing tangible from the controversy of 1863-4. The authority and influence of The Times remained undiminished. The circulation of the Morning Star did not increase. Cobden even had doubts in August 1864 whether the paper was really capable of fighting Palmerstonism after reading one leading article which suggested that Palmerston's popularity was due entirely to his perfect accord with public opinion, instead of pinpointing the factor of press manipulation.

Samuel Lucas, the editor, died soon after Cobden in April 1865. He was succeeded by Justin McCarthy who proved to be a strong editor. But the paper suffered from the competition of the Daily News, more inclined to trim its sails politically, when that paper went down to one penny in 1868. Samuel Morley, the proprietor, bought the Morning Star in 1869 and closed it.

But although Cobden failed to alter the general jingoistic, Palmerstonian tone of the bulk of the London

he believed that the new provincial penny press daily press, showed a marked disposition for moderation. Then there were the new, usually weekly newspapers in the country districts, helping, in default of a proper school system, to rid the country of the evil of illiteracy. The fulfilment of Cobden's dream of daily newspapers for the millions lay far in the future.[29]

Summary

Cobden believed that public opinion, expressed through a free and honest press, was a vital feature of modern civilisation. But there were major obstacles to developing an enlightened public opinion - the taxes on knowledge and the illiteracy of the mass of the people. In 1849 he joined a movement to abolish the taxes, which was done between 1853 and 1861. He hoped that cheap newspapers would educate at two levels, politically and also by providing a stimulus for reading. The Morning Star was established to spread "Manchester School" opinions in London. Cobden advised the editors on politics and on the presentation of news and opinions. He also opposed secret press connections with government and tried to expose in 1863-64 the practice of The Times. The Morning Star failed to prosper and closed in 1869.

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Investing in a future civilization: the land development of the Illinois Central Railroad.

1. The future of the Mississippi valley.

Cobden was intensely concerned with the progress of the United States because he believed that it was rapidly developing its natural resources in such a way that, at least in the Northern states, the mass of the people had a standard of living higher than in any European country. Eventually the example of the United States would surely influence Europe.

In the 1850's, he invested a large part of his private fortune in the Illinois Central Railroad, a company which he believed could play a determining rôle in the development of Illinois and of the Mississippi valley generally. W.S. Lindsay, who knew him well, recalled that Cobden "viewed his investments in an entirely different light from that in which they would be seen by an ordinary man of business".... he "was no speculator in the ordinary sense of the word." Lindsay did not explain that Cobden also hoped that the investment would eventually bring a substantial income to his wife and family. But there was no contradiction between his concern for social and economic development on a grand scale - the betterment of humanity - and his private financial affairs. The two sides of his interest in Illinois will be introduced in turn.

When Cobden visited the United States in 1835, he

travelled as far west as Ohio. He looked down from the crest of the northern Alleghenies over the Ohio valley stretching west to the Mississippi. He commented to his brother Frederick that:

> "Here will one day be the headquarters of agricultural and manufacturing industry; here will one day centre the civilisation, the wealth, the power of the entire world."

It was a vision which he held until his death.

Cobden's interest in the Mississippi valley must be seen in the context of his thinking about economic development. No general discussion of the matter by him has been found, but he would surely have pointed to the chapters in the Wealth of Nations which dealt with "the natural progress of opulence", or in modern language, the theory of economic growth. When growth has not been adversely disturbed by the actions of government or sectional interests, the investment of capital in agriculture preceded industry and commerce. Towns, industry and commerce grew on the surplus produce of a flourishing agriculture. The countryside in turn provided a market for industrial products. But Adam Smith pointed out that in Europe the "natural course of things" had usually been inverted, with urban life stimulated by overseas trade. Agricultural progress had been hindered by laws of primogeniture and entail, which left large areas in the hands of a few proprietors who rarely developed the full potential of the land. Smith - and Cobden - believed that the small proprietor was the most efficient.

Cobden worked for better farming in Britain from League days onward and was one of the chief promoters of the freehold land movemement which got under way after

the repeal of the Corn Laws. He promoted The Freeholder (1850-52) issued monthly, to which he contributed two unsigned articles "Small and Large Farms" and "Our Territorial System. Arguments for small farms were backed up by extracts from Hippolyte Passy's Des Systèmes de Culture et de leur Influence sur l'Économie Sociale (1846). But encouraging freehold farming was not just an economic matter in Cobden's thinking - it was also social and political. He believed that the man whose livelihood depended on the produce of a small or moderate sized farm which he owned was likely to be independent minded in political matters, to favour low taxation and economical government. Men of this stamp would be the backbone of a true political democracy, the like of which had not yet been seen, although perhaps partially glimpsed in the United States. When Joseph Kay was writing a book in 1849 on education and land ownership on the Continent, Cobden urged him to emphasise the importance of the wide-spread ownership of land, commenting that "the fate of empires, and the fortunes of their peoples, depend upon the conditions of the proprietorship of land to an extent which is not at all understood in this country."[1]

The freehold land movement in Britain was successful in founding building societies which became supremely important in promoting house ownership in the twentieth century but it failed to establish more than a few small farmers in the 1850's. Cobden was disillusioned with the National Freehold Land Society by 1855. This failure made him look with great eagerness at the possibility of realising his dream in the United States. In 1850, the

United States Federal Government handed over the extensive lands it owned in the State of Illinois to the State government. In 1851, the State of Illinois granted a charter to the Illinois Central Railroad Company to build railways running through the entire length of the State. Two and a half million acres of land along the seven hundred miles of rail routes was given to the Company for public sale. The State of Illinois was to receive 7% of the gross annual revenue of the Company.

Cobden realised that this Company had the potential to begin the development of the Mississippi valley. The ideal economy which seemed unattainable in Europe was possible in the western State of Illinois. The soil of the lands allocated to the Company was immensely fertile and a huge coalfield underlay the greater part of the State. Illinois was in a geographically important position, bounded by the Great Lakes in the north, the Missouri in the west and the Ohio river in the south. The population was over one million in 1855. Chicago, the boom city on Lake Michigan, was already linked by rail to the eastern seaboard cities. The Company planned to link its system with other railroads to New Orleans at the mouth of the Mississippi.

Education was well provided for in Illinois. Nearly a million acres was allocated for the support of common schools and a law of 1855 permitted supplementary State taxation in aid of local school taxes. Acts of 1857 established High School districts and a Normal School. There was a movement for the Federal government to make large grants of land for Industrial Universities - universities with a bias to commercial and agricultural

education. This idea was embodied in the Morrill Act passed by the Federal Government in 1862.[2]

Cobden did not leave any description of the civilisation which he envisaged in Illinois but it is possible to guess at it from the places he occasionally praised in his correspondence and elsewhere. Switzerland and the New England States were two such areas. They were characterised by small towns with manufacturing, small owner occupied farms and a good system of education. In 1848, Cobden recalled the New England he had travelled through in 1835: "Take the interior of Massachusetts or of New York, I mean such towns as Northampton, Canandaigua, Utica, Auburn etc, can such intelligence, civilisation and moral and material well-doing be elsewhere found?" On his second visit in 1859 he was equally charmed:

> "The country when we passed the frontier into Connecticut was thickly populated, small farms and small factories abound. A general appearance of thrift and comfort and equality of condition characterised the New England states. No very large mansions and no squalid hovels meet the eye."

Comments on large industrial cities such as Manchester have not been found, but it is a reasonable assumption that Cobden neither liked them nor thought that they were an inevitable aspect of industrial society. If challenged about this, he would probably have replied that the excessive growth of Manchester and similar cities in Britain was due to the influx of people from the countryside and from Ireland where there were no prospects for owning land or earning a wage comparable to the factory worker's.

Cobden expected industrial development in Illinois. He saw Pittsburg, Pennsylvania,growing as an industrial

city in 1835 and in 1836 he noted the vast coal reserves of the Mississippi valley. The Illinois Central Railroad had coalmines. In 1858 he suggested to his friend Sir Joshua Walmsley that he invest £2,000 in a coal mine at La Salle, Illinois, to be managed by his son. In Illinois in 1859, Cobden noted in his diary:

> "Life is easy and the opening for the employment of labour more than commensurate with the supply of workers, and the result is that man, instead of being a drag on the market, is at a premium, and this to my taste constitutes the chief charm of this valley of the Mississippi."[3]

2. Cobden's involvement in the Illinois Central Railroad.

The Illinois Central Railroad Company issued $100 shares in 1851 but required only $25 in each share to be paid up. The plan was to raise the main sums of money for constructing the railroad by selling bonds underwritten by a loan and by the sale of land to settlers. The London money market being the prime target, the Company launched a big promotion in London in 1851, directed initially by R.J. Walker who had been Secretary of the Treasury under President Polk. A British banker's loan of one million pounds was secured in 1852, and under it bond holders obtained the right to subscribe to shares of stock.

The sequence of Cobden's investment in the Company cannot be established with any accuracy. He bought bonds in 1853, if not earlier, but it seems that he did not buy shares, or invest heavily, until 1856. There were probably several reasons for this. He had received a public subscription of £80,000 in 1846 to enable him to continue in politics without having to devote part of his time to business. He and Frederick gave up the Crosse Hall Printworks in 1849. He spent a considerable sum on buying the

110 acre Dunford estate and incorporating the old farm-house in which he had been born into a fine new house. This was not completed until 1854. He also made investments in some American and Canadian railways and also in the Safety Assurance Company in London.

Then, in April 1856, his son died. This probably prompted him to think of the future of his wife and four very young daughters without a male "head of the family" after his death. He did not expect that he would himself live to a great age. This situation coincided with a boom in Illinois Central Railroad share and land sales. 373,000 acres were sold in 1855. Over half the land sales were of forty and eighty plots which clearly indicated that men of small means were being attracted. He thought that a substantial investment would not only bring security to his family but also involve him personally in creating the civilisation in the Mississippi valley of which he had long dreamed.[4]

In July 1856, he began to sell shares in other American railways, borrow money on surety of his Illinois Central bonds and buy upwards of two thousand Illinois Central shares with a face value of $100 each but selling approximately at the paid up value of $25. The exact number is not certain but it was probably about 1,700 at either $25 or at the added premium of $5 or £10. At the exchange value of $5 or £1, this made a total cost of a little over £10,000. In a letter to George Moffatt, also an investor, in May 1857 when the shares stood at a premium of $33, he said he wanted to get 3,000 shares which would be worth £60,000 to his children. Presumably

he hoped that the shares would appreciate so that eventually the market price would match the face value without shareholders being called upon to make up the payments to the face value. The Company was not expected to pay dividends for several years.

Cobden spread his enthusiasm among his friends. He was full of ideas:

"It has occurred to me that if the Illinois Central land were advertised in England, with the names of the English trustees and an office were named where very simple and popular information might be given, that some settlers might be got from our rural districts. If it were understood, people would certainly go."

Just what steps, if any, he made to launch this plan in 1856 or 1857 are not known.

In the summer of 1857, the money market tightened in the United States and the Illinois Central, deeply in debt, felt the pinch. A call of $10 per share was decided on for September. As British investors now owned about three-quarters of the share stock, W.H. Osborn (1820-1894), the President of the Company, sailed to England on 19 August. During his stay, which lasted until October, he visited Cobden at Dunford. The two men became firm friends. Many of Osborn's letters to Cobden survive but unfortunately only two of Cobden's letters have been found. It is clear from Osborn's letters that financial and other matters were frankly discussed.

While in England, a banking crisis began in the United States with immediate repercussions in Britain. The Illinois Central suspended payments on bonds and loans on 9 October. Osborn returned home and by boldly raising new loans on his own account saved the Company from liquidation.[5]

The Company's financial ill luck of 1857 was compounded by the failure of the harvest of 1858, upon the usual proceeds of which farmers depended for making their annual interest payments and payments of the principal sum of the purchase. The Company was obliged to ask for two more calls of $10 per share. This increased the sum for which the $100 shares were paid up from $30 in early 1857 to £60 in September 1858. Cobden had to find £10,000 in order to keep the average number of 1,641 shares which he held. He was forced to borrow a lot of money from a Quaker friend, Thomas Thomasson, a manufacturer in Bolton. He would not have clung on to the shares and bonds by such embarrassing means if "making a fortune" had been his sole aim. Nor would friends have helped him but for their knowledge of his genuine concern for the Company as an instrument of social and economic progress in Illinois.

Cobden confided to his wife in 1859 that "it is too late to regret having been tempted so deeply into a concern that only ought to have belonged to rich men". His reasons for holding on to the shares must have been a belief that the Company would prosper in due course and also a wish to influence its affairs, particularly in regard to emigration from Britain. Selling the shares would not only deprive him of influence, but would be taken by many to indicate a lack of confidence in the Company.[6]

The crisis in the Company's affairs led to the establishment by British shareholders in July 1858 of a Committee under the chairmanship of George Moffatt M.P. It included Cobden, C. Paget M.P., Sir Joseph Paxton M.P.,

and W. Gladstone M.P. There was much criticism of Osborn, especially his residence in New York instead of Illinois where he would be able to exercise a tighter control of the Company's affairs. Osborn, however, refused to move, telling Cobden that the Vice-President in Chicago, Captain McClellan, was "in many respects more competent than myself". G.B. McClellan (1826-1885), afterwards General in Chief of the Federal Army in the Civil War, trained as an engineer in the army, served as a military observer in the Crimea in 1855-56 and resigned his commission in order to join the Company, initially as Chief Engineer.

Osborn tendered his resignation on the issue. A motion for accepting it at a meeting of British shareholders on 6 January 1859 was successfully opposed by Cobden. It was Cobden's view that Osborn was a strong and able President and should be supported in the time of troubles.

Early in September 1858, the British Committee sent James Caird (1816-1892) M.P. to investigate and report on the agricultural potential of the Company's land. Osborn said it was "the very best thing ever suggested by the British proprietary", and was almost certainly at Cobden's initiative. Caird was one of the leading authorities on British agriculture and had published in 1852 a survey entitled English Agriculture in 1850-1. His general view was expressed by the title of an earlier publication High Farming under Liberal Covenants the Best Substitute for Protection. On entering Parliament in 1857, he promoted a bill for the collection of agricultural statistics but was unsuccessful for several years.

Cobden hoped that Caird would, on his return home, publicise the Illinois Central as a gigantic land company. Just after Caird had sailed to the United States, he wrote to him about the advantages of "the good old plan" of emigration by which whole communities were moved together. He seems to have had in mind something like the original New England settlements of the seventeenth century, for he mentioned that a Welshman, to whom he had talked, proposed groups going under the leadership of their preacher. It would be necessary to find fairly large blocks of land still unoccupied, and this would be most likely in southern Illinois.

Caird returned to Britain in December 1858 highly impressed with the excellent prospects for settlers in Illinois, and the management of Osborn and McClellan. He was also considering involvement in a land purchase and emigration scheme, following a generous offer by Osborn.[7]

3. Cobden's visit to Illinois

By January 1859, such differences had opened up between British shareholders and the Company that it was inopportune to publicise an emigration scheme. Fundamental issues of the Company's administration had to be settled first. The lines built had cost $30 million, of which $20 million consisted of debt and share capital was only $10 million, depreciated by half. The majority of settlers were in arrears with payments. Fortunately being out of Parliament enabled Cobden to undertake a mission of conciliation and investigation on behalf of the British shareholders. He sailed for the United States

on 12 February and arrived back in England on 29 June 1859.

On arrival in New York, he dined with Osborn and the next day met the Board of Directors. He noted in his diary that he advised them to change certain passages in the Annual Report which would be "obnoxious" to the British shareholders. At a Committee meeting a week later, he found that this had been done. On 16 March 1859, he attended the annual general meeting in Chicago and successfully moved a resolution expressing confidence in the Directors and satisfaction with the economies made. A few weeks later, he assured Robert Benson, the London banker and agent for the Company, that

> "both in the Railroad and Land Office Departments the practical direction of the business is in the hands of gentlemen, chiefly graduates of the West Point Academy who are everywhere in request for their habits of business and their honorable bearing".

Besides McClellan, another leading West Point graduate was the Cashier, A.E. Burnside (1824-1881) who, like McClellan, became a Northern general in the Civil War.

After dealing with official business, Cobden toured all the Company's lines, seeing as much as he could of the land and the settlers. What he saw confirmed the facts of the ruined harvest of 1858, and the harsh consequences for the settlers. One diary entry noted that at El Paso, he drove for seven miles in a prairie wagon to see the cultivation of Indian corn. He talked to a man on a 80 acre farm who had suffered badly but who nevertheless spoke cheerfully of his hopes for the future. He seemed representative of the tough breed of settlers who worked very long hours in the fields. The men usually

had long hair and beards and wore their trousers tucked into their boots, looking "more like Poles or Wallachians than Anglo-Saxons".

Cobden believed that the Company's land was a bargain at the sale price of 40 to 50 shillings an acre, that is $10-$12.50. The price was payable in four, five, six and seven years from the date of purchase. Interest of 6% per annum was payable including the first year in advance. The soil was mostly incredibly rich - "black and greasy like an old English dungheap" - and would let at £2 per acre in England. There was no clearing of trees or stones to be done in the areas of prairie and in other areas there was mixed woodland and prairie. But he realised the need for co-operation and solidarity in such sparsely populated regions far from the "old country". He wrote to Caird that the latter countryside was the best place "to plant a British colony". He visited a colony of one hundred families at Rutford, north of Bloomington. They had come from Vermont under the leadership of W.B. Burns. Some weeks later, at Richview, just south of Centralia, he talked to Ovid Miner, who had organised here a colony of New Englanders.[8] Miner thought that colonies of a dozen families were best because smaller groups co-operated better than larger ones. Cobden was impressed with this fact and noted, at Lynnville near Jacksonville, another successful example of this plan.

Cobden recorded in his diary and in letters to friends his general view of American society in the North experienced again after twenty four years. He was re-assured that the main thrust of progress was creating

a society in which the mass of the people were on a much higher level than in any other country. He wrote to Bright that

> "no man seems to resign himself to dirt, ignorance, or vulgarity, because for the time being he is working for wages. His son is at the public school seated beside the son of the judge of the Supreme Court and he is himself looking forward to the time when he is to be a capitalist employing labourers. It is this universal hope of rising in the social scale which is the key to much of the superiority that is visible in this country.".

Another feature of American society which pleased him was the "substantial privileges" accorded to women, constituting a "high trait of civilisation".

Cobden envisaged that white American society would one day end slavery and accord equal privileges to Negro and Coloured people. He did not travel in the deep South in 1835 or 1859 but diary entries on both visits show that he did not accept any innate inferiority of the Negro nor did he approve of segregation. In Philadelphia in 1859 he noted that it was

> "the sense of superiority on the one side and the consciousness of inferiority on the other which forbids the sentiment of equality which is essential to confidence or friendship between races as well as individuals".

When the North began to train Negro soldiers in 1863, he believed that it would raise them in the social scale.[9]

4. Failure of emigration schemes. The American Civil War.

On returning to Britain, Cobden publicised his complete confidence in the future of the Company and the attractiveness of its land for emigrants. Caird wrote two pamphlets and explored the possibility of the purchase of an extensive block of land by the British emigration promoters. This idea fell through and was replaced by a scheme for giving advice and information to emigrants.

An office was opened in London but it does not seem to have encouraged any noteworthy flow of emigrants to Illinois. Unfortunately, the fragmentary surviving Cobden-Caird correspondence does not provide any comments on this venture.

There were great difficulties in the way of emigration by the class of agricultural labourers whom Cobden wanted to see settled in Illinois. They were too poor and mostly too ignorant to contemplate buying land in Illinois. A farm labourer in southern England was lucky if he earned £20 a year, which left little or no scope for saving. The initial interest payment on buying the smallest plot of forty acres was about £5 and there were the other expenses of travel to Illinois, building a dwelling, and buying horses, plough and seed. The land sales of the Company in 1860 were 71,000 acres. Settlers came from the eastern States, from Scandinavia, Germany and Britain. The biggest group of buyers (611) took forty acres and the next group (318) took eighty acres.

No doubt Cobden regretted these constraints. In 1863, he praised the Federal Homestead Act of 1862 which gave 160 acres of land as a virtual gift to all settlers after five years of occupation. News of the opportunity "will spread among the dull Saxon clods even of Sussex, with time." However, most of this Federal land was not of the high quality of the Company's land.

Caird withdrew from emigration work in 1861. In March 1861, the Company proposed to send its own agent to London to carry on the work which Caird had begun. But within a few weeks the outbreak of the Civil War put an

end to new plans. The Civil War dealt a severe blow to the Company not only with regard to emigration but to the freight traffic. In 1860, the Company's line was connected by other lines to New Orleans and this promised a considerable growth of business. Now the secession of the South cut the line. Federal army traffic only partly made up for the loss of business.

The committee of British shareholders resigned on 5 May 1860 after which there does not appear to have been any further attempt to influence the Company's affairs from Britain. But Cobden continued to correspond with Osborn. There were calls on the $100 shares which made the paid up sums $70 in February 1860 and $80 in September 1860. Cobden paid up to the full $100 under a scheme by which fully paid shares would receive interest of 4% per annum. He was only able to pay up because of a private subscription of £40,000 given by friends. This was raised not just to relieve him of Illinois Central worries but to keep him in public life and to sustain him during his unpaid diplomatic work in France in 1859-60.

Details of Cobden's private finances are not known, but he was obliged within two or three years to begin selling his Illinois Central shares which stood at a large discount during the Civil War. When he died on 2 April 1865, a week before the surrender of General Lee's forces at Appomattox, few shares remained in his name. Fittingly, the Company sent £1,000 to his widow as a token of gratitude for his work.[10]

The reduction of Cobden's investment did not lessen his concern for the Company's future and that of the mid-

West. On the contrary, he spoke forcefully on several occasions against intervention by Britain in the Civil War which would inevitably lead to recognition of the Confederacy and possibly permanent separation.

Cobden's knowledge of the importance of the Mississippi valley gave him special insight into Northern policy and the probable outcome of the war. In a speech to his Rochdale constituents on 19 October 1862, he declared that the States of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota would stand determined against any peace that could allow the mouth of the Mississippi to remain in Confederate hands. It was a region

> "which is rich beyond all the rest of the world besides, peopled by ten or twelve millions of souls, doubling its numbers every few years. It is that region which will be the depository in future of the wealth and numbers of that great Continent".

There was very little that Cobden could do specifically to help the Company during the war. Osborn, keen to profit from the blockade of the Confederate ports by developing cotton growing in the southern part of Illinois, sent a sample grown at Assumption, north of Cairo, to Cobden to pass on to the Manchester Cotton Supply Association which was investigating new sources of supply during the "cotton famine". But it is unlikely that any Illinois cotton went to Lancashire mills.

Cobden was not impressed with the "factitious" prosperity of the Company by 1864, based on Federal government expenditure for the transport and feeding of troops. In 1862, he commented to Osborn that "you are still selling land but what is the use if people neither

pay principal or interest!" But two years later, Osborn reported that "our farmers in Illinois are becoming loaded with "greenbacks" and the prospect for very large collections in the land office seems positive...."The crops in Illinois are large and bring high prices".

Cobden discounted such statements. The only prosperity which mattered was that coming from a strong effective demand for goods and services in domestic and world markets, the result of peace and unrestricted industry and commerce, not of the artificial stimulus of printing money.

Long after Cobden's death, his faith in the natural resources and human capital of the upper Mississippi valley was fully vindicated. That region did exert an influence for good on the rest of the world. The production of goods for mass consumption and the payment of high wages for high productivity - the dream of Bastiat - was boosted by the conveyer belts of Henry Ford's factories at Detroit, Michigan. In the 1940's, the immense production of the factories and farms of the mid-West helped the Allies to defeat Hitler and to feed the millions in Europe during and after the war. The swift recovery of western Europe owed much to the "wealth and civilization" of the United States.

Cobden is commemorated in the name of a small town on the old "I.C." track in the south west of Illinois. Called South Pass at the time of his tour, it was officially re-named Cobden on 5 June 1873.[11]

Summary

Cobden believed that a free, prosperous and enlightened community flourished best in a balanced economy of industry and agriculture. The development of agriculture, under owner-occupied farms, should ideally come first. These conditions could be realised in the upper Mississippi valley and in Illinois especially. He not only invested in the Illinois Central Railroad, which was selling land to emigrants, but also personally involved himself in the Company's affairs when it experienced financial difficulties. He helped to promote emigration from Britain but this was hindered by several factors including the Civil War. In spite of losing large sums of money, he never lost faith in the future of the Company and of Illinois.

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Cobden attended meetings of the British Committee of the I.C.R.R. on 11, 12 November 1859 (to meet Mr. Sturges from the U.S.A.), 19 April 1860 (Committee's decision to resign).
BL.Add.MS.43675. Diary entries.
The Times, 7 May 1860.
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CP 787. Resolution of I.C.R.R. Company in favour of Mrs. Cobden (widow).

11. Speeches, II,102-108, 313-318, 319 (quotation), 361-363.
I.C.R.R. Archives. 1.06.1. Vol.3. W.H. Osborn to C., 16 November 1861 (about sample of cotton).
P.W. Gates, supra, 283-4 (Osborn's efforts to encourage cotton).
WSRO. CP 119. C. to G. Moffatt, 25 February 1864.
Bodleian Library. MSS. English Letters e.128. C. to W.H. Osborn, 27 June 1862 (quotation), 22 January 1864.
CP 7. W.H. Osborn to C., 6 September 1864.
BLPES. Cobden-Thomasson letters. C. to T. Thomasson, 17 March 1864.

6. Bright, Cobden and Chevalier. Taken in Paris in November 1860, when Bright visited Cobden and Chevalier after the signing of the two Supplementary Conventions to the Treaty of Commerce. The newspaper is Siècle.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Cobden and Chevalier: the Anglo-French Commercial Treaty and arms control.

1. Cobden and Chevalier - their shared outlook.

After Bastiat's death in 1850, Cobden was lucky to have Michel Chevalier (1806-1879) as a friend and ally to carry on the fight for free trade in France and Anglo-French naval limitation. They first met in Paris on 14 April 1846 and became firm friends - "a refined and well-informed man", Cobden noted in his diary. For nearly twenty years, they co-operated and exchanged views about free trade, defence and monetary policy. Their ultimate objective was a new European civilisation in which nations with distinct cultures and histories would enjoy the benefits of unhindered exchange of services and ideas.

Chevalier's opinions were very close to those of Cobden with a few differences. Chevalier had been a leading member of the Saint Simonian sect and a missionary in England in 1832. After the suppression of the movement by the French government in 1833, he continued to believe that poverty would be abolished by massive economic growth stimulated by the development of the means of communication, credit and education. But he gave up the evangelical enthusiasm in the "new Christianity" which Saint Simonians believed to be the driving force of change. He devoted himself to the study of communications in France and the United States, publishing works on these subjects in 1838 and 1840-41. After a short period in the Council of State

under King Louis Philippe, he was appointed, in 1840, Professor of Political Economy in the Collège de France.

Economic growth and the standard of living were the central subjects of his lectures. He emphasised the much greater importance of the production of wealth than the concerns about distribution which obsessed nearly all British economists. Problems of distribution could not properly be isolated until the productive capacity of modern industry had been developed far more fully than was the case in the 1840's. The measure of this was "la puissance productive" the amount that one man can produce in one day aided by machinery and science. Chevalier placed great importance on the international industrial exhibitions of 1851 (London), 1862 (London) and 1867 (Paris) as displays of scientific and technological progress.

The advocacy of the Anti-Corn Law League and of Bastiat brought him ever closer to Cobden's views for he adopted the free trade faith. The issue in France drew him back into politics. For a year, he was a member of the Chamber of Deputies but was eventually rejected by the voters in 1847 for his free trade stance. In 1852, he wrote a powerful treatise in support of free trade, Examen du Système Commercial Connu sous le Nom de Système Protecteur. But much as he admired Bastiat, he did not choose to develop Bastiat's economics in its penetrating exploration of the theory of value and of the mechanism of mass consumption, perhaps seeing these as part of the theory of distribution with which he was not concerned. He also differed from Bastiat in believing that the state must support education.

Assessment of Cobden's and Chevalier's attitude to Emperor Napoleon III is very important because they worked closely with him during the negotiation of the Anglo-French Commercial Treaty in 1860, a treaty made possible only by decree of the Emperor. Chevalier welcomed the election, by a huge majority of voters, of Napoleon as President of the Second Republic in December 1848 and the coup d'état of December 1851 which began his personal rule. This was confirmed by a plebiscite and the promulgation of a new constitution in January 1852. In December 1852, Napoleon proclaimed himself Emperor. Henceforth he had complete executive power. The Conseil d'Etat, composed of appointed officials, drafted legislation. The elected Corps Législatif was no more than a consultative body, permitted only to pass or reject bills put before it. It was a government which put an end to political disturbances, suppressed the socialist movement and gave France strong and stable rule.

As Napoleon III seemed sympathetic to schemes for improving the lot of the people, his authoritarian rule was an advantage in Chevalier's eyes. In this, Chevalier surely inherited the attraction of Henri de Saint Simon and his followers to the possibilities of "enlightened despotism". Napoleon appointed him to the Conseil d'Etat in January 1852, obliging him to resign his professorship at the College de France, since a member of the former could not hold two state salaried posts. From then on until the collapse of the Empire in 1870, Chevalier became in effect an economic advisor to Napoleon III.[1]

Cobden's attitude to Napoleon III was pragmatic, as

he made it clear in the book 1793 and 1853. If he was a Frenchman, he would be an opponent of the Emperor but it had to be conceded that Napoleon had been originally elected by a large majority of the people. Napoleon evidently appealed to French sentiment. As an Englishman, the matter was no concern of his. What was important, was the co-operation of Britain with Napoleon III in so far as that ruler promoted objectives conducive to the well-being of both peoples. Cobden was also aware of the truth of the remark he noted in his diary in 1847: "an absolute government may represent an idea, but elective legislatures represent interests".

Cobden's reluctance to criticize Napoleon III in public, although he was often angry about his policies - for example, the war against Austria in 1859 and the Mexican war - reflected the belief that international relations must be made more pacific by governments making their own policy the model of international behaviour and by citizens criticising their own governments rather than those of other countries. Politicians' denunciation of foreign governments frequently involved hypocrisy.

Perhaps the difference between Cobden and Chevalier lay in that Chevalier had a deeper and more consistent conviction in the value of paternalistic or mildly authoritarian government. Cobden believed in making use of paternalistic government when it was an existing political fact. But the basis for popular self government should be encouraged and paternalism should not be extended in the form of colonies or dependent states. This difference is illustrated by Cobden's criticism of Napoleon's attempt from 1862 to force on Mexico the client

monarchy of Archduke Maximilian of Austria. Chevalier supported this on the grounds that Mexico would gain an enlightened and modernising government. But in the case of India which became Crown territory in 1858, following the end of East India Company rule, Cobden argued in 1863 that the government, being "a gigantic absentee landlord" had a duty to assist cotton production. To the criticism that this flouted free enterprise, he replied that the principles of Adam Smith were not able to operate in India.

Cobden viewed French society without prejudice and indeed he admired many aspects of it, as he wrote in 1793 and 1853. If the French were slow in establishing parliamentary institutions, they were ahead of Britain in promoting social equality. Cobden liked the absence of laws and privileges upholding social inequality, especially primogeniture. There was much in the design and taste of French manufacturers for the consumer market which indicated that they had "reached the most advanced stage of civilisation". He admired the literary and philosophical culture of France displayed in periodicals such as the Revue des Deux Mondes. There was a need, he pointed out in 1862, for a fortnightly review of this calibre in Britain and which ought especially to discuss French ideas.

All these facts made it easy for Cobden to win the friendship and confidence of Michel Chevalier and many other highly placed Frenchmen.[2]

2. The Commercial Treaty of 1860.

Cobden and Chevalier were convinced that only a high

degree of economic integration gradually developing through free trade between Britain and France could end their traditional enmity which periodically broke out in war scares such as 1847-48, 1851-53 and 1859-62. The major difficulty was the strength of protectionist ideas in France, unchallenged by any organised body after the collapse of Bastiat's association in 1847. Chevalier's choice was the "de haut en bas" imposition of free trade forseen by Bastiat. This solution required the Emperor to exercise his power under the Constitution to lower tariffs by a commercial treaty with Britain. Even assuming that the Emperor had been converted to free trade by Chevalier - by no means certain - this approach was fraught with difficulties and dangers. Napoleon III could not antagonise influential groups in the iron and cotton industries without endangering his political position. There was also the need to find a British government not only willing to make concessions in respect of the import duties on wines but also to make a treaty after commercial diplomacy had been abandoned by Britain after 1846.

Chevalier first had to convince Cobden that French tariffs could only be lowered by treaty. A.L. Dunham, in his study of the Commercial Treaty of 1860, stated that Chevalier converted Cobden to his way of thinking in September 1859. But it is fairly clear from letters from Chevalier to Cobden in February 1856, published by Dunham, that the "conversion" took place before or in 1856. Chevalier thought that the presence of Lord Clarendon, the Foreign Secretary, in Paris in February and March 1856 during the Peace Conference with Russia was an excellent

opportunity to broach the idea of a treaty. At Chevalier's suggestion, Cobden spoke to Lord Clarendon in London about seeing Chevalier in Paris. This démarche came to nothing owing to Lord Palmerston's refusal to reduce wine duties.

Julius Faucher, the German economist and journalist whom Cobden got on the Morning Star staff in 1856, recorded that Cobden had, in that year, come round to the idea of a new form of commercial treaty which did not give exclusive privileges to each side and therefore was not a revival of the old reciprocity treaties. But Faucher emphasised that Cobden thought a treaty with France would break the "log jam" on the free trade movement in Europe. Other Continental countries would be induced to lower their tariffs by the beneficial results of the French reform.

This was not an abandonment of economic "orthodoxy" as Dunham claimed, meaning presumably that governments ought not to regulate overseas trade by tariffs or other means, but an exception to the rule - "an accident", Cobden called it in 1864. There was also a political motivation for such a treaty which made it even more exceptional. The very act of signing a treaty with France would be an act of détente, breaking the pattern of suspicion and hostility. There had been a precedent for such a commercial treaty with political overtones - that between Britain and France in 1786. Cobden had praised it in Russia in 1836.

Following the failure of the treaty proposed in February 1856, a bill to slightly lower the prohibitive tariffs was sent to the Corps Législatif in June 1856.

It was decisively rejected. Such was the strength of the protectionist clamour that Napoleon III promised in October 1856 not to end prohibitory tariffs before 1861. This postponed for at least three years any further action which Chevalier may have contemplated.

In this period, when Cobden was out of Parliament from 1857 to 1859, he translated a book by Chevalier On the Probable Fall in the Value of Gold (1859). He had some difficulty in finding a publisher, such was the presumed lack of public interest, finally persuading his old friend Alexander Ireland in Manchester. Cobden shared Chevalier's concern that the increasing quantity of gold in circulation resulting from gold discoveries in America and Australia would lead to a fall in the value of gold currency, to inflation, business speculation and crisis affecting the prosperity of peoples everywhere. A possible remedy was to make silver the form of payment in long term contracts. Chevalier's fear about gold was not in fact confirmed by events, but nevertheless the book and the translation with a preface by Cobden is striking evidence of the importance they attached to international management which ensured stable monetary values.[3]

The negotiations for the Commercial Treaty of 1860 were the result of a fortunate combination of circumstances which occurred in 1859. They were successfully exploited by Cobden and Chevalier. Firstly, Napoleon III went to war with Austria in alliance with the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia over the question of Italian unity and needed an entente with Britain. Secondly, a new government under

Palmerston came into power in June 1859 with Gladstone as Chancellor of the Exchequer, a strong free trader and ambitious to reduce taxation and government expenditure. The time was especially ripe for a treaty, not only because of these favourable factors, but because a new war scare had taken hold of the public, prompted partly by Napoleon's war and also by a belated recognition of the French naval modernisation programme. Once again, as in the Crimean War, Tennyson caught the national mood, but this time his verse, published in The Times, was aimed at a different enemy. The refrain started a popular movement:

> *Form, form! Riflemen form!*
> *Be ready, be ready to meet the storm!*

There is as yet no detailed study of the treaty in its full political and economic context. The concern here is to examine Cobden's long hesitation about the matter in the summer of 1859 and his part in the making of the treaty. He returned to Britain from the United States at the end of June 1859 but it was not until 1 August that Chevalier wrote to him specifically advocating a treaty. Cobden's attitude to the matter was very complex and determined partly by his own priorities and partly by the probable opposition of the Palmerston government.

In July 1859 Cobden seemed set on a policy of attacking the government's naval re-armament programme and urging a new policy of arms limitation with France. He gave a powerful speech about this in the Commons on 29 July. Earlier on 21 July, Bright suggested in the Commons that a reduction of the wine duties would give

Napoleon III an opportunity to lower tariffs. Unfortunately, after Palmerston, during the course of the debate, had rejected the idea of a commercial treaty, Bright felt obliged to say that he was not proposing one.[4]

On 21 July, Chevalier asked Cobden to take up the free trade issue, and, on 1 and 7 August, to consider a treaty. Cobden was non-committal about a treaty for two months. On 17 August, at Rochdale, he simply repeated Bright's call for a reduction in the wine duties. Chevalier visited England at the end of the month but did not meet Cobden owing to the latter's moving about the country. This may have been convenient for Cobden, who realised that it was essential to get Gladstone, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to commit himself to a reduction of the wine duties before any agreement (with or without a treaty) could be seriously discussed. Cobden apparently got this commitment after visiting Gladstone at his home at Hawarden in North Wales on 12 and 13 September. Gladstone noted briefly in his diary that they were "closely and warmly agreed" about"tariff relations" with France but did not mention the word treaty; nor did he in a letter to Palmerston about Cobden's visit.

In London, on 14 September, Cobden replied to Chevalier's letter of 29 August (written in England), asking him to come to Paris to talk to the Emperor's ministers. This invitation raised a special difficulty in that he had always avoided personal involvement in free trade controversy abroad on the grounds that it served only to strengthen the opposition. His reply (which he probably thought would be read by others,

including the Emperor) combined enthusiasm for closer economic ties with caution about his own rôle. He agreed to talk to Napoleon's ministers if it was clearly understood that his immediate aim was a political entente and that he was not a commis voyageur for British industry. He did not mention a treaty.[5]

Chevalier may have been confident of having some evidence that a treaty was possible. Lord Russell, the Foreign Secretary in the debate on 21 July, had not explicitly ruled out a commercial treaty but only "diplomatic correspondence" about tariffs. Significantly, on 1 August, Persigny, the French ambassador in London, with whom Chevalier was in close touch, reported to the Emperor that he had talked to Lord Russell who said that he acknowledged a certain political value in a treaty of commerce.

On 27 September, Cobden agreed to meet Chevalier in London. They met on 9 October and it would appear (for there is no specific record of the talks) that the two men made a crucial decision within five days. It was that they would approach the British government with the proposition that a treaty of commerce be negotiated in absolute secrecy in Paris by Cobden and Lord Cowley, the British ambassador. When an agreement was reached, the treaty would be signed by both governments. But it would only be a treaty laying down the boundaries for subsequent and public negotiation of tariff details.

The principle of secrecy solved several problems. It would preserve Cobden from public controversy in France. It would save the British government from any "diplomatic

correspondence" except in the final, official stage and it would allow Palmerston to call off the talks if he wanted, without political repercussions. Finally, it would enable Napoleon III and those of his ministers and advisors in the secret to present the protectionists with a fait accompli.

Chevalier presumably told Persigny about the plans for Cobden had a long talk with Persigny at Brighton on 13 October. On 15 October, Chevalier had an interview with Gladstone in London, and Cobden likewise with Palmerston and Russell. The two latter gave a cool, unenthusiastic approval. Quite probably, one consideration influencing Palmerston was that Cobden's stay in France would stop his attacks on the government's defence policy for quite a while.

Luckily, Cobden had a perfectly innocent excuse for staying in Paris, because his wife and children had been living there since his trip to the United States. In order not to arouse the suspicions of the press, Cobden and Chevalier travelled separately to Paris. Cobden went on 18 October, and Chevalier four days later.

On 23 October, Cobden saw Lord Cowley at the Château of Chantilly, his country residence. Lord Cowley had received a letter from Palmerston which requested:

> "Pray be civil to him. He is a good fellow but extremely sensitive to attentions, being like all middle class men who have raised themselves either by money making or by talent very vain under the semblance of not being so"....

Present him to the Emperor although he is

> "a freelance in the cause of commercial freedom and without any mission of any kind from our government so that he cannot speak with any authority as to anything

which we might be disposed to do in return for any reduction which the French might make in their duties or any abolition they might make of their prohibitions". Palmerston added that he was "averse" to the idea of a treaty.

It is doubtful whether CObden, a man of almost excessive modesty, needed to be handled in such a patronising way. No one was more anxious than he, that Lord Cowley should take the negotiations at the earliest possible moment. But Cowley was fully aware of his own lack of competence in commercial matters. The correspondence between the two men during the next year shows that they worked in remarkable harmony. More than once, Cobden expressed his admiration for the magnanimity with which Cowley had accepted his trespass into his diplomatic domain.[6]

Cobden was interviewed by Napoleon III on 27 October but he was disappointed to find that the Emperor was far from having made up his mind about a commercial treaty. For some while, Napoleon thought that there was a chance that he could make an agreement with Britain about Austria and Italy, much preferable to stirring up the hornet's nest of protectionists. For although there were influential voices in favour of a substantial degree of free trade among industrialists and bankers - Arles-Dufour, the silk manufacturer of Lyons, Adolphe d'Eichtal, Emile Pereire, the Paris bankers, for example - the great majority were of the opposite persuasion.

It was not until after Cobden's second interview with the Emperor on 21 December 1859, that Napoleon formally approached the British ambassador with a definite

proposal. Another month elapsed before the treaty was signed on 23 January 1860. The three months from October were, as Cobden noted in his diary, "a period of almost incessant nervous irritation and excitement owing to the delays and uncertainties which have constantly arisen". He worked in an extraordinarily uncomfortable political atmosphere both in Paris and in Anglo-French relations. In Paris, he was for several weeks permitted to talk in secret only to Achille Fould, Minister of State and Eugène Rouher, Minister of Commerce, such was the Emperor's distrust of his ministers.

From 9-17 November, Cobden was obliged to return to London to see Gladstone and Palmerston and also to attend the Illinois Central Committee. He found Palmerston full of talk about a French invasion threat, echoed in most newspapers and clubs. The Rifle Volunteer movement was growing rapidly. The London fog brought on a bad attack of asthma and he had difficulties in breathing during the next three weeks. Returning to Paris, he stayed in bed for several days, Chevalier coming daily to his bedroom at 6 Rue de Berri, and also Rouher and Fould. Secret diplomacy continued.

By 19 December 1859, two days before his second interview with the Emperor, he nearly despaired of his mission, writing to Lord Cowley that "I am nearly at the end of my tether". But the interview went well, Cobden using every argument in his armoury and every ounce of persuasion. The treaty was the only way to stop the talk of war and raise the standard of living of the French people by stimulating employment and consumption. To

the Emperor's references to the unorganised nature of the mass of consumers as compared with the protected industries, he replied shrewdly: "Your Majesty is the organisation of the masses!"[7]

Cobden, as well as Lord Cowley, received, only a week in advance, full power as a Plenipotentiary to sign the treaty. Baroche, acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and Rouher, Minister of Commerce, signed for France. Chevalier had been very influential behind the scenes but he was not a minister. Nevertheless, historians have rightly joined his name with that of Cobden as the two main architects of the Commercial Treaty of 1860. Gladstone was a close second on the British side, for on him rested the struggle to get the Cabinet to agree to the loss of revenue involved and to fight for it in Parliament with the help of Bright and others.

The treaty delivered a powerful blow against French protectionism but it did not demolish it. It abolished prohibitions on imports and stipulated that, within two years, duties on British goods should not exceed 30% and within five years, 25%. Britain abolished the duties on an extensive range of quality manufactures (such as silk, lace, china and metal goods) and lowered duties on wines by a scale based on alcoholic content. Article Nineteen contained the most important "most favoured nation" principle, which distinguished the treaty from the old reciprocity treaties. Under this article, all reductions or favours granted to a third country were extended to the other partner. The treaty had therefore, a mechanism for promoting lower tariffs throughout Europe

and the world.[8]

3. The tariff negotiations and conventions of 1860.

The treaty was no more than part of the battle won. There were nearly seven months of gruelling work ahead for Cobden. First there was the task of deciding the average prices of French and British goods during the preceeding six months, in order to fix the equivalent in francs of the maximum ad valorem rate of 30% and also of agreeing the degree of protection necessary for various French industries. Secondly, there were the negotiations of the specific rates for commodities by an Anglo-French Tariff Commission.

Before this new round of work began, Cobden had a seven week holiday with his family in Cannes, where he hoped his health would be restored. At Lyons, on the way down, he met his friend Arles-Dufour and together they visited the Martiniere industrial school, a private school for 800 boys and youths, teaching mathematics, mechanical drawing, chemistry, and mechanics. It was a type of school which Chevalier wanted established by the state in every city in France and no doubt Cobden thought of how hopeless it would be to propose anything like that in Britain.

Whilst in Cannes, Cobden read the four volumes of Napoleon III's Oeuvres, a useful preparation for his next talk with him at the end of March. He noted the Emperor's "perfection of style" and his magnanimous attitude to Britain.

In London in early April 1860, Cobden was made Chief Commissioner for the tariff negotiations in Paris. He was given two assistant commissioners, Louis Mallet of

the Board of Trade and Ogilvie of the Customs Service. Mallet became one of Cobden's most zealous supporters. The hearings of the Conseil Superieure du Commerce, presided over by Rouher, began in Paris on 7 May and lasted until August. Numerous deputations of manufacturers submitted their evidence, those from Britain being marshalled by Cobden and his two assistants. Then from 20 August to 16 November 1860, the French and British Commissioners held 51 sessions to determine the tariff levels, the British arguing, of course, for the lowest rates. Two conventions were signed, on 12 October and 16 November, which Cobden regarded as very satisfactory, except for iron.

A great deal of vexation was experienced by Foreign Office interference with what was unprecedented Board of Trade diplomacy. Cobden thought that Cowley and he would be more accurately described as nullpotentiaries! Another matter throwing a dark cloud over the negotiations were Palmerston's Commons speeches on 23 July and 9 August, attempting to justify the construction of fortifications around Portsmouth and other naval bases. The first speech was made despite a personal plea by Cobden to Palmerston to delay the fortifications plan until the Commercial Treaty had been given time to bring friendlier relations with France.[9]

Before leaving for a well-earned and desperately needed holiday in Algiers, Cobden talked to the Emperor, together with Bright, on 27 November 1860. He persuaded the Emperor to abolish the passport requirement which acted as a deterrent to larger numbers of visitors to

France and therefore curtailed the opportunities for the two peoples to get to know each other. This was certainly the case with working class people. There were not only the formalities of application but a fee of seven shillings and sixpence, nearly two days' wages. The passport abolition helped to promote cheap rail and ferry excursions to Paris, a development which Cobden heartily approved. Britain did not require a passport for foreigners.

The British press generally praised the Tariff Conventions which marked a revolution in French commercial policy. In Algiers, Cobden received many invitations to banquets in Britain. But he read with disgust the Queen's Speech of 5 February 1861 which relegated the Conventions to a bare sentence at almost the end. This showed, he wrote to Mallet, "the animus of our Court and aristocracy towards France.... The writer of the speech evidently knew he could count on the humility with which Gladstone would allow his great work to be snubbed".

Cobden received payment from the government for his expenses in France and nothing more, in accordance with his wishes. He regarded the large private donation to him in 1860 as quite sufficient. In March 1861, he refused Palmerston's offer (on behalf of the Queen) of either a Baronetcy or membership of the Privy Council. To have done either would have compromised his moral disapproval of Palmerston and his complete freedom to attack his policies. But on 17 july 1861, he gladly received the Freedom of the City of London, accompanied on the occasion by several friends from France, including Chevalier and Arles-Dufour.

From Napoleon III, he had received (in London) the gift in April 1860 of a very large and fine Sèvres vase, which may be seen today at Dunford House, Sussex.[10]

4. Arms control.

Cobden regarded the Commercial Treaty as both a political and economic treaty. It would surely help stop the naval arms race and talk of war with France by the plain evidence of Napoleon III's wish to co-operate with Britain. It was economic in that Cobden hoped that the expansion of trade between the two countries would gradually interlock the two economies, making the possibility of war less likely. He did not imagine that the latter process would take place quickly or that some increase in trade in the short term would "automatically" bring better relations. On the contrary, he had always believed that in the present ill-informed and prejudiced state of public opinion in Britain, industrial prosperity simply encouraged John Bull's pugnacity. This was what he meant by writing to Gladstone on 11 November 1859 that "we have about as much prosperity as we can bear".

The heritage of centuries of enmity with France, memories of Waterloo - which many believed the French were itching to avenge - needed time to weaken. Nor were such notions likely to weaken quickly if the public continued to let foreign affairs and defence matters be managed by the government with little or no informed criticism to check it. The ruling class had a vested interest in large armed services but Cobden also realised that universal suffrage would not solve the problem unless

the electorate was well educated.

The Peace Congress movement was long dead in 1859 and Cobden had no intention of reviving it. Although members of the Peace Society like Henry Richard could be helpful, he decided that a movement to stop the naval arms race must be based on the most realistic basis possible if it was to have any chance of success. There must be no denunciation of war and armaments or moralising from Christian principles. This approach had proved quite useless in the early 1850's. Instead, it was best to stand on the principle that Britain should have reasonable defences against a French navy accurately assessed. Cobden repeatedly declared that he would gladly see one hundred million pounds spent if Britain was really threatened by France. But unjustified panic-mongering and expenditure must be condemned by factual evidence.

There were two aspects of Cobden's campaign about national defences. Firstly, there was the need to explain that progressive technology required international agreements to control excessive armaments. Secondly, the public had to be enlightened as to how the Palmerston government manipulated facts about the comparative strength of the French and British navies in order to create alarm and justify high expenditure.

Cobden recognised in July 1859 that a new kind of arms race had begun, caused by the advent of rifled artillery which rendered the wooden battleship obsolete. He believed that the new technology presented an opportunity for limiting naval armaments. Science would be progressively applied to weapons of war, soon out-dating

each new phase of weapons. It was therefore common-sense for great powers to agree to limit the construction of new ships, keeping a reasonable balance between them.

He raised these issues in a speech in the Commons on 29 July 1859, pointing out that Britain was justified in having a three to two ratio with regard to the French navy. He repeated the arguments in a speech to constituents at Rochdale on 17 August. But before he could develop the campaign, he became involved in the treaty and convention negotiations, followed by the holiday in Algiers. Until returning home in 1861, Cobden's tongue and pen were effectively tied in public by the need to avoid giving Palmerston any excuse to recall him from the negotiations. The price of the treaty was, in a sense, making it easier for Palmerston to push through the fortifications scheme.[11]

But privately, Cobden never ceased to gather information for a resumption of the campaign. He also relied on a handful of supporters in the Commons, including W.S. Lindsay, M.P. for Sunderland. His diary mentions visiting in February 1860 the dockyard at Toulon, where he went aboard the yet unnamed La Gloire, the first ironclad to be built. At Nantes, in November, he inspected the flat-bottomed boats which Palmerston had told him were intended for the invasion of England. He discussed French naval expenditure with Chevalier who supplied the fullest details. He used every opportunity to urge on the Emperor and his nephew Prince Jerome Napoleon, on ministers, the British naval attaché in Paris, the necessity for arms limitation. Cobden put W.S. Lindsay

in touch with Chevalier, who arranged an interview with the Minister of Marine in February 1861. The latter provided precise information about the French navy and offered to show Lord Clarence Paget, Secretary to the Admiralty, the French dockyards. The offer was declined.

Another approach which Cobden tried, equally unsuccessfully, was to write (from Algiers) to Emile Pereire in Paris and Samuel Morley in London, both prominent manufacturers and sympathetic to the cause of peace. He urged them to get a body of their associates in industry to press their respective governments to seek an arms limitation agreement. Neither of them responded.[12]

In April, 1861, the success of Lindsay's Commons resolution calling for an end to building wooden battleships and the confirmation that the French government was pressing on with its programme of building iron-plated frigates prompted Cobden, in October 1861, to send privately to Palmerston a memorandum suggesting an arms limitation agreement. Probably he thought that Palmerston would be more likely to adopt the idea if he could appear to have initiated it himself rather than "lose face" by seeming to follow Cobden. If this was Cobden's hope, he was sadly disappointed. Palmerston did not acknowledge its receipt until January 1862, when he replied briefly and without even discussing the plan. Palmerston's comments show how strong was his intellectual conservatism.

> "It would be very delightful if your Utopia could be realised and if the nations of the earth would think of nothing but peace and commerce and would give up quarreling and fighting altogether. But unfortunately man is a fighting and quarreling animal; and that this is human nature is proved by the fact that republics, where the masses govern, are far more quarrelsome and

more addicted to fighting, than monarchies, which are governed by comparatively few persons. But so long as other nations are animated by these human passions, a country like England, wealthy and exposed to attack, must by necessity be provided with the means of defence, and however expensive these means may be, they are infinitely cheaper than the war which they tend to keep off".

The reference to republics was a sly dig at the belligerent stance of the Federal government to British protests about the abduction of the Confederate envoys Mason and Slidell from the British steamer Trent.[13]

By early 1862, Cobden had prepared a powerful bomb to drop on the government in the form of a 160 page book entitled The Three Panics: An Historical Episode. He postponed publication until April 1862, because public attention had been fixed on the crisis of British relations with the Federal government. Always acutely sensitive to political timing, he knew it was best to wait for the crisis to pass. He also saw in the spring of 1862, that the stoppage of work in the cotton mills and related indutries in Lancashire and elsewhere, caused by the inability of the Confederate states to export their cotton, would help to bring a sober tone to British politics.

Cobden analysed the French invasion panics of 1847-48, 1851-53 and 1859-61, describing British and French naval policies and expenditure in great detail, and giving precise references. The most general point was that in no year had France expended as much money on their navy as had Britain, nor had France maintained as many seamen. Britain usually had twice the number of line of battle ships (sail and steam) and steamships (of all sizes)

than France had. He acknowledged that France was the first to begin construction of an ironclad in June 1858 but this was a modernisation of the navy announced in 1857 and prompted by the development of rifled guns. Britain was justified in starting her programme but not in accusing France of planning to attack Britain, especially after France had signed the Commercial Treaty. Cobden perceived one aspect of the matter when he noted the French lady's remark: "Ah, pauvre John Bull, quand on veut lui enlever son argent, on lui fait peur de nous"- a ruse to which governments in the twentieth century have often resorted.

The central message of the book was that in the new era of arms technology, peoples would be periodically frightened by the alleged menaces of other powers and subjected to ever increasing taxation unless they took an informed interest in foreign and defence policies. Free trade would not bring peace and goodwill without an accompanying revolution in foreign policy, beginning with an agreement to limit the size of the new ironclad navies.

The book was ignored by most of the press for, as Cobden wrote to H. Richard, "the facts can't be refuted and to acknowledge them is in general an act of self-condemnation with our writers and politicians". But with characteristic caution he warned: "We peace men must moderate our triumph; it will only endure through a period of commercial depression".

The effectiveness of the book may be judged by the fact that Disraeli, leader of the Conservatives

in the Commons, was emboldened to attack the government on 8 May 1862 for foisting "bloated armaments" on the country. Cobden followed up with speeches in the Commons and at Rochdale, hoping that Palmerston might be driven from office. The book was published in France, translated by Xavier Raymond, who wrote three scathing articles about the deficiencies of British naval policy in the Revue des Deux Mondes.[14]

But if the book helped to finally quell the fear of a French attack, it did not lead to arms limitation. Possibly it helped to confirm the government's decision to suspend the plan for the Spithead forts. Apart from Palmerston's continuance in office until his death three months after Cobden, the French attempt to conquer Mexico destroyed Napoleon's original claim that "L'Empire, c'est la paix". Cobden was disgusted with the Mexican adventure-supported by Chevalier - which cut away the basis for any further unofficial approaches to the French government. When Napoleon III, in November 1863, proposed a conference on international affairs, including disarmament, Cobden said publicly that it would achieve nothing constructive On the contrary, it would encourage the Emperor to intervene in the affairs of eastern Europe - where the Poles had rebelled against Russian rule - and in the American Civil War. Napoleon knew that Maximilian's rule in Mexico would not be secure unless the Confederate states retained their independence. The British government did not accept the invitation and the conference was not held.[15]

Continued bad relations with the Federal government was another factor making it unlikely that Britain would

consider limiting arms expenditure. Indeed, the disruption of international commerce brought about by the blockade of Confederate ports and the sinking of neutral ships in the Atlantic by both North and South presented Cobden with another issue, that of limiting the damage of modern war to the international economy. The cotton famine had harsh consequences for the people of Lancashire. So in 1862 he tried unsuccessfully to raise the British commercial community to press for three great reforms in international law:

(1) The exemption of private property from capture at sea during war by armed vessels of every kind;

(2) blockades to be restricted to naval arsenals and to towns besieged at the same time on land, with the exception of articles contraband of war;

(3) the merchant ships of neutrals on the high seas to be inviolable to the visitation of alien government vessels in time of war as in time of peace.

This distraction did not stop Cobden's efforts to get efficiency and economy in the navy and some limitation of the dockyards fortifications scheme. From 1863 to 1865, he found a good ally in Captain Cowper Coles R.N., a zealous advocate of the low profile armoured turret ship. Both men believed that this type of ship, much cheaper to build than Britain's first ironclad the Warrior, was perfectly adequate for coastal defence. It is a tribute to Cobden's astonishing broadmindedness and realism that, in the cause of disarmament, he would work amicably with pacifists and professional men of war.[16]

5. The International Man

The Commercial Treaty of 1860 did not establish a political "entente cordiale" between Britain and France but it contributed in indefinable ways to a belief among working class leaders in both countries that modern industry and commerce implied common interests. Napoleon III encouraged links by sending works delegations to the International Exhibition in London in 1862. In 1864 some small industrial exhibitions were organised in London by working men. One held in North London in October 1864 prompted a plan for an Anglo-French Working Man's Exhibition in London in 1865. The main object was for skilled working men to display their products but it was also conceived as a celebration of fifty years of peace with France. A British committee was established in March 1865 and in April a delegation to France, advised by Michel Chevalier, led to the establishment of a French committee. The exhibition was held in the western galleries of the Crystal Palace from 7 August to November 1865. Edmond Potonié, Secretary of the French committee and a peace advocate for many years, was one of the speakers at the opening ceremony. He may well have been responsible for the banner reading "Désormais à l'Avenir Paix". As Cobden had died in April, the bronze and silver commemorative medals for exhibitions very appropriately bore Cobden's head in relief and were finely made.[17]

The response to the news of Cobden's death in France indicated the immense impact he had made. His memory was honoured at meetings of the Corps Legislatif, the Société d'Economie Politique and by newspapers. La Presse,

edited by Emile de Girardin, had black borders. Chevalier wrote long biographical articles in the Journal des Debats, in which he described Cobden as the principal agent of "une revolution essentiellement pacifique". The Emperor wrote to Charles Cobden, a surviving brother, and Prince Jerome wrote to Cobden's widow. Drouyn de I'Huys, the Foreign Minister, sent a despatch to London in which he described Cobden as "un personnage international". These and other eulogies were gathered together by Victor Frond, director of the Panthéon des Illustrations Françaises au XIXe Siecle, and published as a single volume entitled A Richard Cobden.[18]

Summary

The aim is to show how the similarity of Cobden's and Chevalier's political and economic beliefs enabled them to co-operate in bringing about the Commercial Treaty of 1860, despite general opposition to free trade in France and hostility to Napoleon III in Britain. Cobden's view of the Commercial Treaty as an instrument of peace and the reasons for his long hesitation about it in the summer of 1859 are examined. His further work for the Tariff Conventions is described. Then his related advocacy of naval arms limitation and the reasons for its failure are explained. Finally, the stirring of working class contacts between Britain and France are noted and also the remarkable tributes to Cobden in France after his death.

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CHAPTER TWENTY

International Education

1. The plan for international colleges

The revolution in French commercial policy brought about by the Treaty of Commerce was attributed by many Frenchmen to Cobden's exceptional rôle in the negotiations and especially to his influence over the Emperor. As in 1846, after the repeal of the Corn Laws, Cobden was the man with the magic touch. It looked as if the barriers to international intercourse were coming down. The old Saint Simonian circle of Enfantin, Duveyrier and Arlès-Dufour were stirred by the prospect. In May 1860, Cobden met "Père" Enfantin for the first time in Paris. Later, Enfantin tried to involve Cobden in an ambitious plan the details of which are unknown. Duveyrier asked him to contribute to a new Encyclopaedia which would embody a new vision of society like that of the eighteenth century French philosophers.[1]

One ambitious scheme did win Cobden's close involvement - a proposal for an international college composed of four establishments in Britain, France, Germany and Italy respectively. It was destined, like all his educational ventures, to run into insuperable difficulties. The account given here differs in some important respects from that given by W.A.C. Stewart and W.P. McCann twenty years ago. The proposal which inspired Cobden was published in France on 9 December 1861 by Aristide Barbier (1800-1863), a doctor of law who became a manufacturer of

india rubber at Clermont Ferrand in 1832 in partnership with his cousin Edouard Daubrée. They founded what was eventually to become the world famous Michelin tyre company. Barbier had no son but his youngest daughter Adèle married Jules Michelin in 1852. Barbier was a man of bold ideas. In 1838, he wrote a short treatise about a new system of phrenological education which involved inserting certain chemicals in the brain to improve intelligence - applicable also to animals. In 1860, he believed that a new international order would emerge after the Treaty of Commerce. He visited England and Scotland in 1861 in order to study various organisations and institutions. He read J. Lorimer's articles on international education in the new quarterly journal The Museum, the second of which was sub-titled "The International School, the complement of the International Exhibition". It was an idea which required a wealthy sponsor and soon got one. Barbier offered the French Commissioners for the International Exhibition to be held in London in 1862 the sum of 5,000 francs (about £200 in current exchange) for prizes for the best means of implementing a plan of international education in Europe. A special committee of adjudicators was appointed on 17 June 1862 by Prince Jerome Napoleon, president of the French Commission. It included Cobden, Chevalier, Sir J. Kay Shuttleworth and Professor E.C. Johnson.

Barbier presented the main principles of his plan in a paper read to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science on 6 June 1862. The most fundamental principle was that pupils from the age of eight or nine

should spend an equal amount of time in four colleges to be established in Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Pupils would move to a different school in each of the eight years, the curriculum being uniform in the four schools. In the first year, considerable emphasis would be given to learning to speak the national languages.

The curriculum was to be a broad one, including contemporary history, political economy - including the understanding of society - and the history of major religions. Latin and Greek would be taught but in a subordinate place. Teachers must be highly paid in order to attract the best. They must treat the pupils as individuals. Discipline was to be based on rewards and reprimands, and not on corporal punishment. It was a plan for a unique group of schools with a bold and innovative curriculum. Barbier realised that it required careful financial and administrative arrangements. The prize essays were seen as important sources of ideas. The first prize of 4,000 francs was awarded in September 1862 to Edmond Barbier, a professor of French language and literature with an address in Brighton. He was not a relative of Aristide Barbier.[2]

The first tasks of the promoters were to establish a provisional committee with some prominent names and then seek the large sums of money necessary for the formation of a European company and the opening of a school in London. The committee was established in early 1863, with Edmond Barbier as Secretary. It included Aristide Barbier, Cobden and his friends A.W. Paulton (Chairman), W. Hargreaves, H. Richard and T. Bazley M.P.

Other members were Dr. W.B. Hodgson, Sir J. Bowring, J. Robson (College of Preceptors), T. Winkworth (Council of the Society of Arts), T. Twining (advocate of technical education), Professor D.T. Anstead (a geologist of Cambridge University), A. Panizzi (Chief Librarian, British Museum) and Dr. Schaible (Train Artillery School, Woolwich).

The committee published a small pamphlet outlining the aims and curriculum of the colleges. The notion that the rotation of the boys in the four colleges would produce "denationised" individuals, without loyalty to the country of their upbringing, was strongly rebutted. The aim was to eradicate selfish national feelings. The influence of the child's family in early years, two years of schooling in his own country and holidays at home were quite sufficient to ensure that national ideas would predominate. The colleges would try to foster "that feeling of nationality which causes a man to love his country better than any other; which makes him, although he values the manners and habits of other nations, prefer those of his countrymen; which makes him wish to see his country great and prosperous, not by the humbling of others, but by a great development at home of activity and morals."

The colleges would break down the language barriers by getting a quick proficiency in speaking the four languages French, German, Italian and English. The boys, in groups of four - one from each country - would speak sentences daily from a conversation text book in the four languages. Grammar would be introduced only after some fluency had been achieved. Then the various subjects would be taught in different languages.

The curriculum would contain the elements of the widest range of knowledge in the arts and sciences, mathematics, technology (so named), mechanics, politics, commerce, political economy, singing and drawing. Religious instruction was to be given by ministers approved by the parents. Great attention would be paid to physical exercise, including gymnastics, swimming, fencing and riding.

International education was nothing new to Cobden. He had sent his son to school in Germany in preparation for a commercial career and intended him to go on to France. He must have seen a host of good aims in the scheme, in producing a new breed of diplomats and business men and in setting an example for an improved type of education for the middle and upper classes. But it was not the most urgent British priority, which remained a good free schooling for the whole people.[3]

2. The French association and the first attempt at amalgamation.

The pamphlet of 1863 did not mention the very embarrassing fact that an Association Européene pour l'Enseignement International had already been established in France and also an École Internationale at Saint Germain-en-Laye, just outside Paris. There appears to be no available evidence about when and how the association was established. The moving spirit was Eugène Rendu (1824-1903), Inspector-General of Public Instruction in France since June 1861. Rendu began a career in public education in 1849, serving as a district school inspector and a ministry official, reporting on schools in Germany and Britain. He was also a writer with political ambitions. An interest in Italian

unity led him to write a book on it at the Emperor's request in 1859. In 1855, he proposed to the government the establishment of a "Collège International Louis Napoleon" at Paris, Rome, Munich and Oxford, but it came to nothing. But when he heard of Barbier's plan in December 1861, he revived his plan of 1855. He published it as a brochure with a preface in which he mentioned the similarity of Barbier's plan - a definite hint of precedence. Rendu obviously hoped to win the Imperial patronage he failed to get in 1855 but was again unsuccessful, although Gustave Rouland, the Minister of Public Instruction asked for a copy of the brochure.

There was an obvious difficulty for Napoleon III, in that the Prince Imperial was a leading promoter of Barbier's prize essay competition. Perhaps hoping for an eventual change of attitude, Rendu, without waiting for the result of the competition, opened the school at Saint Germain-en-Laye in 1862. The establishment of an association with Rendu as Secretary, the appointment of a French sub-committee (and other national committees in due course) was a move to pre-empt any association which might be organised by Barbier and his British friends. It is possible that he was already aware of the principle which the British committee asserted in 1863, that the international scheme must be free of official connections with governments.

It is also significant that Rendu's committee did not include any of Cobden's friends such as Michel Chevalier. The President of the French committee was Jean-Baptiste Dumas (1800-1884), a Senator, chemist and educationist, who was not on friendly terms with Chevalier.[4]

Cobden's letters to A.W. Paulton, chairman of the British committee, give some indication of his efforts to support and modify the scheme briefly outlined in the pamphlet of 1863. In June 1863, he advised Paulton that a single joint-stock company for the schools was impractical and that, while the curriculum and other matters would have to be regulated in common, the property and management of each school would have to be kept separate. He may have hoped that the French committee would eventually agree to join a new and more firmly based society, especially when Aristide Barbier was ready to give financial backing to a school in France. But unfortunately, Barbier died on 30 November 1863. He may have been ill for some time, as F. Barbier, a relative, read a paper on international education at the meeting of the N.A.P.S.S. at Edinburgh in October 1863.

The British committee established a joint stock company, the International Education Society, on 3 August 1864, with a subscribed capital of £20,000, taken up in £5 shares. The British committee now felt in a strong position to approach the French for a united organisation. Edmond Barbier wrote to Cobden in October 1864 that the French committee "are very anxious that such an amalgamation should take place".

Eleven printed resolutions were submitted to the French as the basis for amalgamation. They included the principle that management of the schools must be vested in the shareholders. Resolution 8 required "that in order to expedite the proposed amalgamation, a detailed and official statement be immediately obtained of the amount

for which payment is to be accepted in shares on account of the College now in operation at Saint Germain-en-Laye, and of the assets and liabilities, receipts and expenditure of the said College". The general affairs of the new association were to be managed by a General Council selected annually by the shareholders. The General Council was to be divided into Local Councils for each country, which would conduct the detailed administration. Resolution II stated "That this Committee consider it of primary importance that the Association should be independent of Government control and interference in every country in which an International College may be established".

Rendu came to London about 7 October 1864 but he did not impress the British committee, particularly Paulton, the Chairman who reported to Cobden about the "somewhat strange negotiations" which Rendu had begun:

> "He managed to make us half believe that the school at St. Germain-en-Laye was in a most flourishing condition and backed by an amount of French influence that rendered it at any rate a tentative success. I can't say that I was at all prepossessed with the Frenchman; he is a terrible simplifier and thinks everything is to be done by blue lights and theatrical display. The fact being that he and Mr. Brandt have managed to get into considerable difficulties by a hot headed, over sanguine faith in their powers of making other people believe in a mere paper demonstration of success. However we heard all they had to say but came to the conclusion that no action of any kind would be taken until we had ascertained what was the bona fide character of the committee in whose name they professed to act."

The upshot was that Edmond Barbier was sent to Paris on 11 October to get the required financial and personal information but there is no record of the mission. Judging by Cobden's letter to Paulton on 30 October, the attempt at amalgamation had failed:

"My feelings are strongly for the cause and so far as the English branch goes, I have not the slightest doubt of success, if such a man as Schmitz were at the head. But I have not been able to see the basis on which we rest in France; I thought at first that the Paris branch was in advance *of us*, but it does not seem so on closer contact".

He urged Paulton to go to Paris to talk to Chevalier and Demarest about the problem but evidently neither of these men wished to be involved.

In March 1865, he wrote to Paulton:

"I don't know how matters stand with regard to the International School project, but if it should fail it seems to me to be attributable wholly to the want of co-operation in France and this arises I believe wholly from the unfortunate death of M. Barbier. Had he lived, I have no doubt he would have carried out his scheme there, and if so I doubt not we could have succeeded here. But we can do nothing unless we are accompanied pari passu by colleagues in France. It cannot be called an international project if it be confined to England. We cannot do the work of Frenchmen, and I see nobody in France to sustain the undertaking."

Paulton's response was to tell him that Edmond Barbier was in the North of England collecting the "first call" on the shares subscribed very largely by Cobden's wide circle of friends and acquaintances. He was sure that the French would also raise sufficient money for a simultaneous start to colleges in London and Paris.[5]

3. The International College at Spring Grove, Isleworth

Cobden died in April 1865 without seeing his dream of linked international colleges realised. Nor was it later achieved except in a brief and shadowy form. Paulton had letters published in the Evening Star and the Manchester Examiner and Times urging the establishment of the colleges as a monument to Cobden. William Ellis, the veteran educationist, donated a large part of the sum needed to purchase a site at Isleworth, Middlesex, on

the western outskirts of London and for the erection of a splendid college. It was perhaps a generous atonement for his refusal to pay for the Secular School in Manchester in 1853.

The Board of Directors of the Society included A.W. Paulton, W.B. Hodgson, T.H. Huxley and J. Tyndall (two eminent scientists). W. Ewart M.P., William Hargreaves and William Smith, a notable classical scholar. Leonard Schmitz, previously Rector of Edinburgh High School, was appointed as headmaster. The school was opened in temporary quarters on 1 May 1866. The imposing Gothic building in Spring Grove, Isleworth was opened with great ceremony on 10 July 1867, by the Prince of Wales, who had been a pupil of Dr. Schmitz's at Edinburgh. The accommodation was unusually comfortable for the boarding pupils, for whom the school was primarily intended. There were two centrally heated dormitories, each partitioned into about forty cubicles to take a bed and a small table. In the first term, 58 boarders were admitted and 12 day scholars. Besides Dr. Schmitz, there were seven well qualified teachers including W. Fletcher Barrett, late Principal Assistant in the Physical Laboratory of the Royal Institution.

The curriculum was as wide as originally planned but without political and social economy. English language and literature, French, German (and Italian if desired), Latin and Greek, mathematics, natural science, history and geography, moral science, vocal music, drawing and gymnastic exercises. The vexed question of religious instruction was dealt with by having Cobden's old solution

of the Bible read and explained (with a conscience clause) and opportunities for such special instruction as parents required. The prospectus did not mention the progressive approach to discipline but the absence of corporal punishment, and the chosen practice of confinement during play hours, extra lessons and deprivation of pleasures were noted by the Schools Inquiry Assistant Commissioner in 1867-68.[6]

4. The effort to establish linked colleges

At the same time as establishing the College at Isleworth, the British committee made another attempt to get agreement with the French. Surviving evidence about it is fragmentary. According to an article in the Paris newspaper Le Temps, Edmond Barbier, the Secretary of the Society, went to Paris in May or June 1866 to explore the possibilities of a link with the school at Saint Germain-en-Laye. Barbier found a perplexing situation, as the Comité de Paris - the committee supposedly supervising the school - had never met as a body, according to one of its members, Jules Simon, an educationist and Republican politician.

It is most probable that the decisive man was Dr. Jules Brandt, the headmaster. His independent stance seems indicated by the two short publications about the school which he issued in August 1866 and February 1867. Neither of them mentioned Britain or the Isleworth college. Brandt gave the impression of a self-sufficient school, providing courses for foreigners seeking to obtain the qualifications of their own countries.[7]

The final end of negotiations - if there had truly been any - was marked on the British side by the appointment in July 1866 of Pierre Barrère as headmaster of a school to be established at Chatou, only a mile or two away from Dr. Brandt's school. Pierre Barrère was a French professor resident in London and a friend of J.S. Mill, who recommended him for the appointment. The prospectus and the first annual report (August 1867) of the Isleworth college stated that arrangements had been made for pupils who wished to carry on their education in France or Germany on the same system as that followed in the London college, to go to P. Barrère's school at Chatou and Dr. A. Baskerville's school at Godesberg near Bonn, on the Rhine. The voluntary nature of attendance at these schools was a considerable weakening of the international eight year course envisaged by Aristide Barbier and Cobden.

Hard facts dictated this compromise but it is also evident from a letter by T.H. Huxley to J.S. Mill in August 1865 that the orignial ideal was not held strongly by at least one very active director of the Society:

> "My object in joining the International Educational Society was to secure for my two sons (very small people at present) an education in which Physical Science and the Modern Languages should occupy as prominent a place and Theology,as insignificant a one, as may be consistent with their not putting themselves altogether out of relations with the world in which they will have to live and make their way. The "Internationalists" of the Society - its end in the eyes of Barbier and Cobden - is to my mind simply a very convenient means towards what appears to me to be the more important objects I have just mentioned".

The school at Chatou may have existed for a year or two because a General Council (consisting of Local Councils of France and Britain) met at least once on 8 December 1868,

Unfortunately there are no surviving official records of the schools in Isleworth, Chatou and Godesberg, and no other evidence which might show whether there was any exchange of pupils. The diary of Arthur Diosy (1856-1923), a boarder at Isleworth from April 1868 to April 1871, does not mention foreign schools. When he left in April 1871, his parents sent him to Realschule in Lippstadt and Dusseldorf.

It is probable that the Chatou school had closed by 1871, as an advertisement in The Times in June 1871 is headed "The London International College" and not "The London College of the International Education Society" as previously. The London College closed in 1890, for reasons which are not known. The building was bought by the British and Foreign School Society and its teachers' training college in Borough Road, central London, was moved there. It now accommodates the West London Institute of Higher Education and the archives of the B.F.S.S. It remains an interesting relic of a great and noble plan which never came to full fruition.

Summary

Cobden was an enthusiastic supporter of a scheme launched by Aristide Barbier, a French manufacturer, in 1861 for a group of linked international schools in Britain, France, Germany and Italy. They would provide an eight year course for pupils, spending two years in each. The objects were to acquire fluency in the four languages and a broad education freeing the pupils from narrow national prejudices. Barbier and Cobden wanted a strong financial

base for the International College, independent of governments. But before Barbier died in 1863, *an inde-*pendent school had been unilaterally established in Saint Germain-en-Laye, near Paris. Cobden worked for a united association but attempts to achieve it failed, before and after his death. The London College was established at Isleworth in 1866-7 but the links with schools at Chatou (Paris) and Godesberg (Germany) do not seem to have lasted for long.

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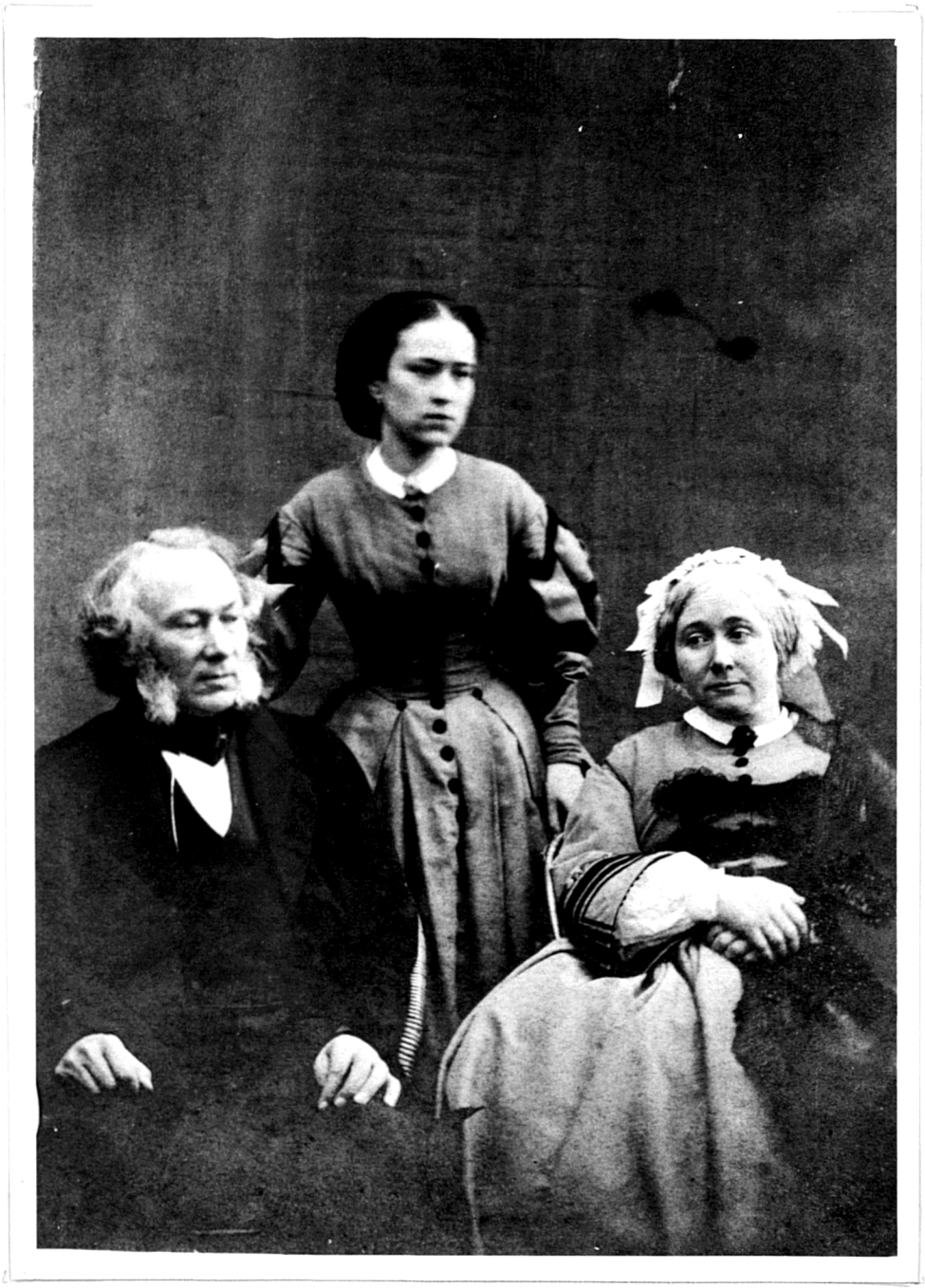

7. Richard Cobden, his wife Catherine and their eldest daughter Kate. If taken in 1864, they were aged 60, 49 and 20 respectively. Catherine wore a crinoline dress which had a large frame. She was the mother of eight children, the youngest aged 2 or 3 at this time.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

New explorations of the relations of government and economic affairs:

(1) Louis Mallet and educating nations in free trade;

(2) James E. Thorold Rogers and the reform of economic science.

Cobden had many concerns in the last five years of his life after securing the Commercial Treaty of 1860 - stopping the arms race with France, preventing British intervention in the American Civil War, reforming international maritime law, halting the extension of free trade by force in the Far East and helping the International College project. His Parliamentary duties were demanding and he was usually exhausted at the end of sessions, urgently needing rest and recuperation at Dunford.

Two further concerns are of special interest in illustrating his belief that government had positive rôles of specific kinds to play in economic affairs. The first concern was that Britain should encourage the spread of free trade among other nations by subtle diplomacy more akin to education than bargaining. This concern was shared by his friend Louis Mallet (1823-1890) of the Board of Trade. The second area of concern was to encourage his relative James Edwin Thorold Rogers (1823-1890) in opening up a new field of political economy.

1. Louis Mallet and educating nations in free trade.

Cobden always believed that governments had a useful rôle to play in spreading free trade. At the very least, the tariff barriers which governments erected could be taken down by them. He praised the Zollverein in 1840

because it led to the German states agreeing to abolish mutual tariffs and to have low external tariffs. A leading article in The League in 1846 stated that "to establish perfect free trade is nothing more than to include the civilised world in one Zollverein". The Commercial Treaty with France promised to extend the area of low tariffs to yet more countries because the treaty was intended by Napoleon III to be followed by others. As Cobden wrote to Joseph Parkes, "French example will do more in two years than ours would have done in twenty".

Cobden did not regard free trade by international treaties as ideal, because it opened up possibilities of mixing political issues with trade, perhaps to the detriment of trade, but it was apparently a means of getting some countries to discover the benefits of freer trade. But before discussing Cobden's work with Louis Mallet, it is necessary to survey the situation after 1860.

The British commercial community was very excited at the prospects of new markets in Europe. But it soon became evident that special difficulties prevented British merchants from enjoying the fullest benefits possible from the commercial treaties which France signed with Belgium in 1861, the Zollverein in 1862, Italy in 1863 and Switzerland in 1864. In the Treaty of 1860, Britain, in the true spirit of free trade, accorded her concessions to all countries, thus depriving herself of the ability to bargain away British tariffs. France was free to bargain but with the proviso of the "most favoured nation" clause in the Treaty of 1860 that benefits accorded by new treaties would be available to other countries following

up with a separate treaty. This meant that British merchants would have to accept in any such treaty the tariffs already negotiated by France and another country but which might not be well adapted to British needs.

The alternative was for British advisors or negotiators to be present as third parties at foreign treaty negotiations in order to influence the details of the tariffs decided upon. These would apply to Britain when she asked for a "most favoured nation" treaty. This alternative raised the problem of the conduct of such intermediary diplomacy. The authority of the Foreign Office was supreme but it lacked the knowledge and expertise to handle commercial matters. It had to call on the Board of Trade for help. This caused many difficulties and delays which were compounded by the jealousy of the Foreign Office with regard to the Board of Trade appearing to take precedence in diplomacy. Cobden and his chief assistant in Paris in 1860, Louis Mallet, had suffered from the conflicts of the two departments.[1]

Louis Mallet, a man of outstanding ability, awarded a knighthood in 1868, began his career as a clerk in 1839, first in the Audit Office and then, from 1847, in the Board of Trade. From 1854-7, he was Private Secretary to Lord Stanley of Alderley, President of the Board of Trade. Henceforth, he was one of the leading officials of the Commercial Department which he headed from 1867 to 1872. His work with Cobden in Paris and the resulting close friendship was a crucial factor in his career. He became passionately devoted to Cobden's ideals and especially to the belief that Britain should give up ideas of Empire and

concentrate on binding the world together by the gradual economic integration of free trade.[2]

After 1860, Cobden was kept informed by Mallet about his experiences as a Board of Trade observer at the Franco-Prussian Commercial Treaty negotiations at Berlin in 1862 and the Franco-Italian negotiations at Turin in 1863, both of which he was unable to influence because he was sent too late by the Foreign Office. None of this surprised Cobden who told him that the Foreign Office was "a Temple of Discord and Hammond its high priest" - a reference to Edward Hammond, Permanent Under-Secretary. Cobden saw little prospect of getting things fundamentally changed until the predominantly aristocratic and gentry representation in government was challenged by the commercial middle class. When he heard that the Leeds Chamber of Commerce wanted a Minister of Commerce to be appointed, he told a friend that such a post would be useless as it would be filled by yet another ignorant member of the ruling class.

Chambers of Commerce in the North of England began to voice complaints about Britain's failure to get the best out of the treaties France had signed since 1860. W.E. Forster, M.P. for Bradford, became their main spokesman. In a debate in the Commons on 17 February 1863, he stated the need for a department of trade in the Foreign Office to speed up the dispatch of business. There was further exasperation when Lord Cowley, British Ambassador in Paris, failed to get a lower French tariff on woollen goods after receiving a memorial from the Huddersfield Chamber of Commerce. This action by Huddersfield so

worried Cobden that he wrote to the Board of Trade in July 1863 arguing that public appeals by merchants to British consuls and diplomats abroad would, if granted, provoke foreign protectionist opposition.

This episode exemplified an important difference between Cobden's and Mallet's approach to free trade diplomacy and that of merchants and industrialists of northern Chambers of Commerce. Cobden believed that the only way that Britain could help to change the policies of foreign countries was by diplomats exerting a quiet influence. This required, he told the Commons in the debate on 15 April 1864 on W.E. Forster's motion for a Select Committee on Foreign Trade, that diplomats fully understood the principles of the Wealth of Nations and Britain's commercial policy for the last twenty years. To this end, the Board of Trade should prepare a manual on free trade which should be translated into foreign languages. Foreign countries needed to discover by study of the recent trends in international trade that free trade was in the mutual interest of all countries. Chambers of Commerce publicly demanding lower tariffs simply gave the impression that free trade was solely a British interest.

Cobden realised how precarious was the free trade progress on the Continent. He warned Chevalier that the Anglo-French Treaty of 1860 might not be renewed unless the French public were better informed about its benefits.[3]

Mallet's views (and also Cobden's) about negotiations were summed up by Robert Morier, a young diplomat who had worked alongside Mallet in Vienna in May 1865:

"Mallet's theory is that Britain should approach a country thinking of reforming its tariff and advise them to do it systematically and without concern for concessions. Compose the best tariff you can, having regard solely to the circumstances of your own production and to foreign trade generally. Britain is the greatest international trader and is worth co-operating with. Use her stored up experience of free trade. All we ask is that you give us at once the tariff you have autonomously reformed and which you mean to ultimately extend to the whole world. You can use the reformed tariff to get concessions from others if necessary."

However, improved diplomacy depended on improved diplomatic machinery. Forster obtained the Select Committee on Trade with Foreign Nations which he chaired. Cobden served on it. Witnesses included men from the Chambers of Commerce, from the government, Louis Mallet and E. Hammond, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. The general weight of evidence was in favour of reforms in administration and liaison between the Board of Trade and the Foreign Office. But Hammond, rigorously questioned by Cobden, denied the need for any changes, especially the setting up of a commercial department in the Foreign Office. When Cobden questioned Mallet, the two sang a veritable duet about the advantages of giving the Board of Trade the facilities and authority to deal directly with British representatives abroad, and to propagate free trade principles.

The Select Committee, which reported in July 1864, recommended that the Board of Trade be placed more nearly upon an equality with the Foreign Office and with a seat in the Cabinet; that the Board of Trade be allowed to communicate directly (via the Foreign Office) with diplomatic and consular services; that an official in the Foreign Office be designated to correspond with the

Board of Trade. But the Palmerston government did not announce how it intended to implement these recommendations until 17 March 1865. In the meantime, the Foreign Office was, as Mallett told Cobden.

> "galvanised by Forster's committee into a state of morbid activity which is better perhaps than their former condition of absolute indifference but is still painful enough to witness, so little is there of real life and intelligence in their system." [4]

Hammond had certainly been stung by the criticism which he had received from Cobden, Mallet and others in the committee proceedings and was determined to by-pass the Board of Trade whenever he could. The government gave free rein to the plans of the northern Chambers of Commerce to open up tariff negotiations with Austria, not part of the French treaties system. In August 1864, the Foreign Office permitted three Chambers to send representatives to their Austrian counterparts. In October 1864, Newcastle Chamber of Commerce was allowed to communicate directly with J. Ward, Chargé and Consul-General for the Hanse Towns, about the coming renewal of the Zollverein agreements. The Times joked about the new era of diplomacy in which British ambassadors took their instructions from Chambers of Commerce instead of the Foreign Secretary.

This was just the kind of crude, amateur diplomacy which Cobden and Mallet feared and deplored. Cobden's warning in his letter of July 1863 was proved correct when the "mission" to Austria provoked much hostility and achieved nothing. In November 1864, Mallet reported to Cobden that the Foreign Office had resolved after all to establish a commercial department. On 12 March 1865, Mallet wrote to Cobden:

> "The Board of Trade has been knocked on the head and a feeble and most inefficient department of the Foreign Office substituted for it which is the simple agent of Forster and Co., all those foreign negotiations being now conducted by the Chambers of Commerce.... My mouth is completely closed...."

Cobden replied the same day, commiserating with Mallet's bitterness and disappointment. It was the last exchange of letters before Cobden's death on 2 April 1865. There could not be any real change in affairs, Cobden wrote, while the manufacturing and commercial class allowed "my lords to rule at the Board of Trade, Admiralty, and everywhere". Even at Leeds, "the capital of the clothiers," the middle class electorate asked "a youthful lord" to represent them in Parliament. Protesting about it was useless. "You cannot make people stand up if they have no backbone".

Cobden was too unwell to travel up from Dunford to attend the debate on 17 March on Forster's motion asking for the government's response to the Select Committee's report. A.H. Layard, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, announced the changes which Cobden already knew or guessed. The Board of Trade was not to be given new powers to communicate directly (via the Foreign Office) with diplomatic or consular services abroad. But a commercial division in the Foreign Office had been established.[5]

After Cobden's death, Mallet was prominent in the Cobden Club and an ardent advocate of Cobden's ideas, as will be discussed in the final chapter. He continued to be employed in commercial treaty negotiations at times during the remainder of his career - Austria in 1865-7,

for example - because the Foreign Office still needed his expertise. But he was unable to influence general policy and witnessed the gradual collapse of the Continental low tariff treaties begun in 1860. His frustration was such, that when Gladstone's Liberal government of 1868-74 took a decidedly cool view of commercial treaties in principle, he recommended that the functions of the commercial department in the Board of Trade be transferred to the Foreign Office, hoping that a stronger department in the latter might reverse government policy. Perhaps he also hoped that he might be transferred to head that new department. The government did close the department in the Board of Trade in 1872 but promoted and sidetracked Mallet to the India Office.[6]

2. James E. Thorold Rogers and the reform of economic science.

In the last five years of his life, Cobden was involved, in at least an informal and occasional way, with a massive project by his relative J.E. Thorold Rogers (1823-1890) to strengthen the economic teaching of Adam Smith, Bastiat and Cobden by a new basis of statistics and inductions made from investigations of the English economy over a period of six hundred years. It was an exploration of fundamental ideas about the economy common to both men: the vital linkage of economics, government and politics, history and morality. It should be judged as part of the intellectual achievement of Cobden and his circle. Unfortunately, Rogers' voluminous work has been grossly misunderstood by nearly all economists and historians, a fate similar to that of Bastiat. This is mainly because his work does not fit into any generally recognised frame-

work of either economics or economic history. It is convenient to discuss the question of misunderstanding in the last chapter, since Rogers' published work was almost entirely after Cobden's death.[7]

James Edwin Thorold Rogers was born at Westmeon in Hampshire in 1823, the son of a doctor. In 1827, his eldest brother John married Cobden's eldest sister Emma. Thus Rogers found, as he grew up, that Cobden, nearly twenty years older, took an almost avuncular and certainly "affectionate interest" - as Rogers once described it - in his academic career. After leaving school, he spent eighteen months (1841-3) at King's College London and then went up to Magdalen Hall (now Hertford College) Oxford where he graduated with First Class Honours in Classics in 1846. He did not leave any account of his early life or of the influences upon him, but two influences stand out sharply. One was the Oxford or Tractarian movement, the other was political economy. Both were complimentary for Rogers' interest in the Tractarian movement was not theology or ritual but a wish that the Church of England would grapple with the spiritual and material welfare of the poor. He came increasingly to believe that a better standard of living must come before spiritual regeneration could succeed. This was perfectly in accord with Cobden's teaching in the League campaign which must have exhilarated Rogers in his undergraduate days. Rogers put it succintly to Cobden in 1857:

> "It is no use to educate man who lives on 12 shillings a week in a pigsty. Still less use is it to preach to him. Our only chance is in almsgiving to reach his soul by relieving his hunger. It is no use to give him a vote, if his necessities temp him to sell it."

For many years, the the preoccupations of religion and economics ran side by side. In September 1849 he was ordained deacon and began to help the clergy in Oxford. In December 1856 he took Priest's orders and was made stipendiary curate of the church at Headington, just outside Oxford, where the vicar was not resident. Eventually, about 1868, he decided to relinquish Holy Orders, which he did under the Clerical Disabilities Relief Act of 1870.

Rogers initial steps in political economy are less clear. His appointment to one of the first Honorary Fellowships at King's College London in May 1849 was significant and may have been connected with an intention to study economics. In 1859, supported by a testimonial from Cobden, he was appointed to the newly established Tooke Professorship of Economic Science and Statistics at King's College. But already he had stood unsuccessfully in May 1857 for election to the Drummond Professorship of Political Economy at Oxford - a chair with a five year term of office. He was probably the main founder of the Oxford Political Economy Club in 1860 and his active work certainly helped his successful election in 1862.[8]

Rogers' study of economics was influenced by his association with King's College London. Leone Levi (1821-1888), a man of Cobdenite views, a statistician and lawyer lectured on commerce there from 1852. Through him, Rogers probably met Thomas Tooke (1774-1858), an economist, and William Newmarch (1820-1882), a statistician and City banker. In the 1850's Newmarch was helping Tooke to complete his <u>History of Prices and of the State of</u>

Circulation from 1792 to 1856. From these, Rogers would get a strong thrust towards a statistical and factual approach to economics. Newmarch probably had a hand in founding the Tooke Chair occupied by Rogers. In December 1859, Rogers was elected a Fellow of the Statistical Society of London.

The decisive thrust to Rogers' work was given by a unique programme of research outlined by Newmarch at the International Statistical Congress held in King's College in July 1860. Newmarch declared that economics was of primary importance to statesmen concerned with the well-being of the people. Statistics were an essential means of making economics more scientific and helpful for improving society. He proposed that research be undertaken in three periods, 1400 to 1570, 1570 to 1790 and from 1790, to establish the average prices of grain and the average wages of labourers and, in the second period, to estimate the effects of the influx of tresure from the New World. The economic conditions effecting prices and wages must be distinguished from historical and political factors. The main aim was to discover the time in which the labourer had enjoyed the highest and most increasing real wages, the best food and housing, the best education and the readiest means of bettering his condition. Newmarch also gave one important piece of advice about method. The researcher must have hypotheses or theories to guide him.[9]

Rogers was fascinated by Newmarch's programme. He agreed completely with his arguments for a new orientation in political economy. He immediately plunged into research, finding masses of estate records in Oxford colleges and

and in the Public Record Office. He read a paper on his preliminary findings for the period 1530 to 1632 to the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Manchester in September 1861. He then planned a huge programme of research covering six centuries from 1259. He did not discuss the hypotheses underlying his work in the paper of 1861 and only slightly and rather allusively in the first volumes of A History of Agriculture and Prices in England from the year after the Oxford Parliament (1259) to the Commencement of the Continental War (1793), published in 1866. Nevertheless, he had strongly held views about the purpose and principles of political economy. The reason for his reticence was a desire to make the reader formulate his own body of principles from the data and cautious inductions supplied by Rogers. This was to prove one of the most fatal mistakes which he made as an economist.

This approach was the result of Rogers' observation that current textbooks of political economy were of little use for practical guidance in affairs of state. The theories in them about the distribution of wealth - the standard of living - were mainly a priori generalisation with few if any facts from the performance of the British or any other economy to back them up. J.S. Mill's Principles, although better than most textbooks, was unsound in many matters. Principles must be identified by induction after an accurate record of the economy has been made by statistical methods and careful investigation.[10]

In fact, Rogers believed that his research would support the economic teachings of Adam Smith, Bastiat and

Cobden and also show that some of the themes of the Ricardian School were wrong. His edition of Smith's Wealth of Nations in 1869 was a testimony to the continued validity of that work over most of its successors. In 1857, Cobden urged him to read the complete works of Bastiat, just published, before settling his "politico-economical faith". Unfortunately, he never published any discussion of Bastiat's Harmonies Économiques but he commented in 1869 that

> "The scientific aspect of political economy has been continued by many a French thinker, till it was perfected by Bastiat; the experimental aspect is, and long will be, imperfect. The former has had little practical effect on the conduct of public affairs, exact and suggestive as the theory is, for it has constantly been disfigured by errors and paradoxes, and is distasteful from its very dogmatism".

Rogers' main premises were:

(i) that the just economic interests of individuals and communities are harmonious when they engage in business, industry or trade without the use of force, privileges or monopolies. Competition must be fair and opportunities available for land ownership or long leases;

(ii) population growth keeps pace with increased food production and rarely exceeds it, contrary to Malthus' law of population. The productivity of land is continually improved and has been since the thirteenth century;

(iii) wage rates, given the first premise, and excepting prices after poor harvests, are usually very good in relation to the price of bread and allow the purchase of "secondary necessities" - i.e. a comfortable standard of living. There is no rigid "wages fund" tending to restrict wages to subsistence levels, as taught by Ricardo and J.S. Mill. Wages were high when the best conditions were

allowed to prevail - plenty of capital invested in productive enterprises and a strong demand for labour in a market not swamped with landless labourers;

(iv) if the standard of living of labourers was deliberately held down for a long period so that they became degraded, it would lower their social expectations and make it difficult to improve their conditions even after repressive laws had been abolished.

Rogers set himself a task of enormous complexity in the first period he chose to investigate from 1259 to 1400. He determined to base his averages of grain prices and wages on the largest possible number of documents - 8,000, it proved - and to describe the main sector of the economy and the various factors operating in them. These factors were those outside human control e.g. bad harvests, the plague of 1349, market forces, and political interference with free market forces such as attempts to restrain wage rates by law.

Rogers printed his source material for the first period in a separate volume, an exercise of scientific rigour unique in economics both then and since. He wrote: "the facts of the second volume are far more important than the comments of the first". Even so, nearly half the chapters of the first volume contain averages of prices and wages. His "inductions" fully confirmed his premises about the standard of living depending on the relative degree of freedom accorded to market forces. For example, he discovered that the average real wages of agricultural labourers were higher at the end of the fourteenth century than they had been from 1825 to 1865. The situation in

1865 was very serious. There would soon be an exodus of "disinherited peasantry" from the countryside into the towns where they would compete for scarce housing and help to keep down wage rates for unskilled workers.

Rogers hoped that statesmen would study this historical record - and, of course, subsequent volumes - and understand the kind of economic knowledge and analyses necessary to tackle current social problems. He also hoped that writers of textbooks would be obliged to revise their economic theories. He tried to show the way in A Manual of Political Economy for Schools and Colleges (1868).[11]

Rogers realised that his work, when completed, "had the materials which may aid in constructing a philosophy of history" Like Aristotle, whom he greatly admired, he regarded society as an organism growing, if its members permitted it, towards a perfect form. Much depended upon the understanding of the process by governments and all citizens. It was the duty of the historian and the economist to investigate the growth of the economy, point out remedies when needed, and not to shirk moral judgement of men and institutions.

If Rogers needed encouragement and shrewd advice in conceiving and carrying out such a grand design, he no doubt got it from Cobden. It was not really a new idea to Cobden. There had been a remarkable series of articles in The League in 1844 which investigated the effects of legislation upon agricultural wages, profits and rent from the fourteenth century to 1844. Surely Cobden had drawn Rogers' attention to them. Cobden wrote in 1853 of his hope that one day "some future Niebuhr" would write the

history of England with the close scrutiny of evidence for which that historian was noted. The correspondence between Cobden and Rogers only occasionally touched upon Rogers' research, but then they met periodically. Unluckily, Cobden did not live to comment on the first two volumes published in May 1866. "Had he lived", Rogers wrote, "I should have been able to associate his name with by book, and I should have assuredly consulted his experience for my inferences".[12]

The volumes appear to have made no impact on economists and statesmen in Britain except Newmarch, who wrote a glowing review, and Marx. The title was not helpful for, although there was a good deal of agricultural history they were not intended to be a history of agriculture, but something far more original. If British economists (as opposed to leading statesmen to whom Rogers sent copies) were to be engaged in a serious debate, it would have required an explicitly methodological work. Orthodox economists - J.E. Cairnes, for example - did not think that economic theorising would benefit from statistical data; they also rejected the notion that their science should suggest policy prescriptions. It was not until after 1870 that J.E. Cliffe Leslie and others managed to initiate some debate about the relationship of economics and history.

Marx, living in London and completing the first volume of Capital, made use of Rogers' work. He had attended the statistical section of the British Association in 1861 and no doubt heard Rogers read his paper. In Capital, published in German in 1867, he praised

Rogers' volumes as "the fruits of much diligence", and quoted him on the subject of the rural proletariat, but did not adopt his statistical methods when discussing wages in the nineteenth century. Chapter 24 of Capital, on the primary accumulation of capital, draws on many of the facts of fifteenth and sixteenth century England described by Rogers.[13]

The remainder of Rogers' career will be discussed in the final chapter.

Summary

In the last five years of Cobden's life, he continued to be involved in many projects. In two areas, he encouraged men who were exploring the relationship of government to economic affairs. With Louis Mallet, a Board of Trade official, he tried to steer British diplomacy towards a positive but subtle approach to persuading other countries to adopt free trade. But the attempt to give the Board of Trade the authority to initiate policy failed.

Secondly, he was associated in an informal way with Thorold Rogers, a relative and an academic economist, who sought to give abstract or theoretical economics a new basis in statistical data drawn from six centuries of English history. The aim was to make theory more accurate by basing it on inductive methods and also to make economics a practical guide for statesmen in solving social problems. Unfortunately Rogers' first major publication in 1866 had very little impact.

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PART THREE

LOST HORIZONS

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Cobden's philosophy unfulfilled

1. The failure to develop Cobden's ideas.

Cobden's death from asthma on 2 April 1865 at his lodgings in Suffolk Street, London, brought tributes from people of all political opinions and from several foreign countries, especially France. Lord Palmerston, the Liberal Prime Minister, and Disraeli, the Conservative leader, spoke well of him in the House of Commons. Even The Times, one of Cobden's severest opponents, praised his personal qualities and his great achievements in converting Sir Robert Peel to the necessity of repealing the Corn Laws and the Anglo-French Commercial Treaty of 1860. There was general agreement on all sides that Cobden had been a man of great political courage, humanity, modesty and unselfishness. His love of peace had been noble and sincere. The Cobden Club was soon established, joined by a large number of mainly liberal politicians and scholars in Britain and from abroad. There was no doubt about his being an "international man".

But the supreme paradox of the many tributes and indeed eulogies - some from the pulpit - was that the statesman commemorated had achieved very few of the things which he had set out to achieve in the 1830's. Even free trade was not, in Cobden's view, properly understood in its relation to traditional ideas of foreign policy and the Empire. Although he left enormous quantities of correspondence and some diaries, he did not leave any papers which gave some insight into his general political and social philosophy. After the pamphlets of 1835 and

1836, he had decided to work for social reform by constitutional methods. This required a piecemeal approach, dictated by political and economic circumstances and also by the wisdom of not appearing to be a man of "impractical" and abstract ideas.

Few of his friends had an overall view, for such was the wide range of his activities that his friends participated in some of them but not in all. Cobden was at the centre of a very wide circle of people all of whom might be proud to call themselves followers of Cobden but who had only partial insight into how their particular reform interest fitted into a larger view of politics and society. This was perhaps why Cobden did not care for the term "the Manchester School" in the sense that it denoted a group of politicians with consistent views on most issues. In 1864, he wrote: "that name was given to the League party by Disraeli and it never had any other than a free trade significance".[1]

The forty years following Cobden's death had three important features bearing on the legacy of his ideas. The first was the worsening of social problems identified by Cobden and his friends; the second was the failure of his followers to adequately restate and develop his ideas and also to challenge the current agenda of politics; the third was a marked shift in the intellectual zeitgeist from about 1880. The work of particular followers of Cobden will be discussed last.

Judged by Cobden's criteria of policy, several aspects of social development were deplorable in the decades after 1865. Wealth was unevenly produced and badly distributed

in wages, the result of many factors including the state of agriculture and low educational levels. The education of all classes was defective. The Education Act of 1870, despite the enthusiasm of many School Boards, did not provide a sufficiently long period of compulsory schooling. Working class adults continued to get their information about the world from Sunday newspapers filled with crime and sensational stories. The lack of small farms restricted employment and general prosperity in the countryside. Instead of the rural population constituting a good market for manufacturers, it sent poor labourers to the towns to overcrowd cheap housing and to depress the wage rates of the unskilled. There was no basis for the development of the mass consumer market dreamed of by Bastiat.

Overseas policy was marked by the glaring inconsistency of British free trade policy and a growing Empire. The cost of the army and navy continued to increase.

These defects in British society and government policy required systematic analysis and criticism by Cobden's followers. They needed to make it clear that Cobdenism meant abolishing poverty, not just alleviating it by "poor relief" or emigration. The failure to do so systematically by 1880 made Cobden's badly managed legacy of ideas very vulnerable to the growth of socialist ideas which captured the imagination of young intellectuals and made Cobden's "Manchester School" seem a permanently inadequate and outdated philosophy.

A leading characteristic of the new zeitgeist of the late 1870's and 1880's was that society evolved according to its own laws which were not referable to any external

religious or ideal standard, such as George Combe had taught. This encouraged a "historicist" belief among intellectuals that there were no general laws of social behaviour which apply in different societies or historical periods. Thus capitalism was only a phase or social evolution and would be superseded or at any rate greatly changed by a new order characterised not by selfish "individualism" and competition but by "collectivism" and co-operative action by the state or communities. This current of thought was shown by such books as A. Toynbee's Lectures on the Industrial Revolution in England (1884), H.M. Hyndman's The Historical Basis of Socialism in England (1885), the translation into English of Marx's Capital in 1887, and Fabian Essays in Socialism (1890).

A "historical school" of economists, such as had long existed in Germany also confirmed the notion that society, while remaining industrial, might return to pre-capitalist values which were less individualistic and competitive than those of the nineteenth century. W.J. Ashley was a noted historian of this school. The mainstream of economists, led by W.S. Jevons and A. Marshall, tended to concentrate on the abstract analysis of price determination - the so-called "marginal utility" school. The discussion of economic growth which had concerned earlier economists, disappeared from view, especially that interpretation, never much favoured by English economists, which held that growth was an important prerequisite for raising the standard of living.

These ideas influenced politicians to some extent. Coming under pressure to find legislative solutions for

social problems, they found it convenient in the political market place to distance themselves from the "individualism" and "laissez faire" of the "Manchester School". The labels then stuck on Cobden and his associates proved to be very long lasting.[2]

2. Some followers of Cobden

There were many people whose work might class them as followers of Cobden but the activities of the Cobden Club, Louis Mallet, J.E. Thorold Rogers, F.W. Hirst, and J.A. Hobson sufficiently illustrate the failure to develop Cobden's ideas systematically.

The Cobden Club was founded as the direct result of a suggestion made to T.B. Potter, a wealthy liberal M.P. on 9 March 1866 by Rogers, after the latter had discussed the idea with John Bright. The Club was formally established on 15 May 1866, with T.B. Potter as the chairman and a committee including Rogers, Bright, W.E. Forster, J.S. Mill, T. Bazley and J. Caird. The decision to form a club rather than a political association is significant in that it precluded the necessity for any precise definition of the principles for which Cobden had stood and also the formulation of specific objectives. Its aims were the promotion of meetings to be addressed by statesmen and others, publications on chosen topics and the encouragement of political and economic study.

Goldwin Smith, the historian and journalist, contributed the motto "Free Trade, Peace and Goodwill Among Nations", which was sufficiently innocuous to please all ordinary members, of whom there were 468 by 1872, including 189 M.P.s. There were also over 150 foreign Honorary

members who had no say in policy making. Such a large membership was bound to include men who were more interested in current party politics than in promoting specifically Cobdenite ideas. Robert Morier, the diplomat, commented to Mallet in 1870 that "only half a dozen of even the English members have anything Cobdenic about them. Membership implies nothing and involves nothing".

The Cobden Club spent much money and energy in a constant flow of publications. Cobden's pamphlets were reprinted in a collected edition. Bright and Rogers edited Cobden's speeches. Three large volumes of essays were published, the first on systems of land tenure, the second on several topics including the causes of war and the colonies, and the third on local government and taxation. Bastiat's Essays on Political Economy and Popular Fallacies regarding Trade and Foreign Duties were reprinted. One project, to which great importance was attached, was the publication of a large selection of Cobden's letters. But the project met with protracted difficulties raised by Cobden's widow and, after her death in 1877, it was decided that John Morley should write a biography which included extensive extracts from the letters.

In general, the Club, throughout its existence until the death of its last secretary, F.W. Hirst in 1953, kept fairly strictly to publications concerning free trade, including, in the pre-1914 period, free trade in the land. Some important subjects were neglected or deliberately avoided - education, the standard of living, foreign policy and the Empire.[3]

Louis Mallet was a keen member of the CLub. He wrote an article on "The Political Opinions of Richard Cobden" for the North British Review of March 1867 which was reprinted by the Club in 1869 with a very hard hitting preface in which Mallet made the too often forgotten point that most of Cobden's policies had never been implemented. The essay was very perceptive and has not been bettered since. It was an impressive example of Mallet's potential as an interpreter of Cobden. But his promotion to the India Office and his position as Permanent Under-Secretary for India (1874-1883) probably made it impossible for him to take a controversial stance in public. His volume of essays published in 1891, after his death, under the title Free Exchange shows the ideas he might have developed had he lived an academic life.

J.E. Thorold Rogers, because of his academic life, was in a good position to develop Cobden's ideas in a form which would impress the world of learning. But he was only partially successful in this. He made two major mistakes. The first was to carry on, until his death in 1890, the time consuming research for A History of Agriculture and Prices without attempting to explain his method and the relation of his findings to abstract economic theory or to the new "historical school" of economists. The second mistake was to enter Parliament in 1880, which put a further drain upon his energies.

Rogers' entry into Radical politics was stimulated by the Reform Bill crisis of 1867 and by his ejection from the Drummond Chair at Oxford in February 1868 after a controversial election in which political motives swayed

the voters. He stood unsuccessfully for Parliament in the general election of 1874, for which he wrote a book Cobden and Modern Political Opinion (1873). This was really a statement of Rogers' views on contemporary issues and presented a very fragmentary view of Cobden's ideas.

The increasing discussion of poverty in Britain in the early 1880's accompanied by a surge of interest in socialist ideas by young intellectuals, emphasised the need for a substantial restatement of Cobden's philosophy. Rogers, with an eye mainly to the general reader and probably Liberal politicians rather than intellectuals, wrote Six Centuries of Work and Wages (1884), a summary of his great History of Agriculture and Prices but also carried forward to "the present situation". His last chapter discussed "the remedies" for poverty and low wages. Rogers' main argument, directed to Liberals who opposed interference with the labour market on grounds of abstract theory, was that past legislation and practices had so distorted the proper working of the labour market that some state action and trade union action were necessary to redress the balance in favour of the working man.

Although he alluded to a "further purpose of contributing one portion to the historical method of political economy", he did not take the opportunity to explain in detail how his theories differed from J.S. Mill or J.E. Cairnes, nor why he rejected (as is implicit in the whole book) the view of the "historical school" of economists that historians should not apply contemporary views of wealth and individual competition in investigating earlier centuries. The opportunity to explain his position was

again missed in his course of lectures at Worcester College, Oxford, in 1887-8, published as The Economic Interpretation of History (1888), a title which repeated an identical phrase he had used in the first volume of A History of Agriculture and Prices.

He laid himself wide open to attack from the new "historical school". One of its leading members in Britain, W.J. Ashley, reviewed all of Rogers' books on economics and history in a long and devastating article in 1889. It consistently misjudged Rogers' views, quoted him out of context, and finally concluded that the six published volumes of A History of Agriculture and Prices were no more than a valuable "collection of materials". Unfortunately, Ashley's article has apparently become the main starting point for nearly all subsequent commentators. It was not only Rogers' reputation for originality which suffered but also Cobden's, in that Rogers was held to be a Cobdenite. Nearly a century of historicist interpretation of the rise of capitalism elapsed before historians could accept the view that from the thirteenth century there existed in England a market economy with much geographical and social mobility.[4]

Francis W. Hirst (1873-1953) graduated at Oxford in 1896. He took up the study of economics (winning a Cobden Club essay prize) and also of local government, spending a period at the London School of Economics. His interest in Cobden was strengthened by helping John Morley with his Life of William Gladstone. In 1903, he married Cobden's great-niece, Helena Cobden. Throughout the remainder of his life, spent mainly as a journalist and writer, he was an exponent of Cobden's ideas. He edited The Economist

from 1907 to 1915. In the 1930's he took up residence in Cobden's old home Dunford, which Cobden's eldest daughter Jane and her husband T. Fisher Unwin had placed in the hands of an association entrusted to maintain it as a centre for the promotion of Cobden's ideals. In 1935, he became Secretary of the Cobden Club. Yet for all the devotion of a lifetime and many books about famous men, finance, war and economics and politics, he did not give Cobden's ideas the systematic restatement and reinterpretation which was so urgently needed.

The tariff reform controversy of 1903, sparked off by Joseph Chamberlain's conversion to protectionism, forced Liberals to reassert the old arguments for free trade. Hirst had also become concerned about the growth of imperialism and the increasing costs of armaments. He decided that the political situation required a book covering all issues - Free Trade and Other Fundamental Doctrines of the Manchester School set forth in Selections from the Speeches and Writings of its Founders and Followers (1903). In the Preface he wrote:

> "During the last decade, it has been the fashion to talk of the Manchester School with pity or contempt as of an almost extinct sect, well adapted, no doubt, for the commercial drudgery of a little Victorian England, but utterly unfitted to meet the exigencies or satisfy the demands of a moving Imperialism".

But, sadly, the reliance on extracts from old speeches and writings, with very brief introductions to the sections on the Corn Laws and free trade, war and armaments, colonial and fiscal policy, and none to that on social reform, could not powerfully counteract the bleak situation he had admitted. The real need was for an explanation of the cohesiveness of Cobden's thinking, the interlocking nature

of all aspects of politics. Education was an issue quite inadequately dealt with by an extract from one speech of Cobden's in 1851.

Perhaps Hirst did not appreciate the importance of Cobden's thinking about the aims and scope of education. Like his patron John Morley, he probably never paid any serious attention to George Combe's writings, which had long been relegated to a limbo for phrenological cranks. In the above book, he was content to sum up the Manchester Schools's philosophy thus: "the Manchester men were the disciples of Adam Smith and Bentham, while the Philosophical Radicals followed Bentham and Adam Smith", a total mis-understanding of Cobden's ideas about psychology, if Bentham's utilitarianism is what Hirst meant. Forty years later, he repeated the definition, saying how much Morley had liked it.[5]

John A. Hobson (1858-1940) graduated at Oxford in 1880 and became a schoolmaster and then a lecturer and writer on economics and politics. He was a much deeper and more original thinker than Hirst. In fact he believed that "heretical" opinions on economics kept him from getting a University post. He was an admirer of Cobden's stand against war, armaments and imperial expansion. It was these issues which made him join the Cobden Club in 1906. In 1914-18, he got to know Lord Morley, another opponent of the war with Germany, very well.

But Hobson had, despite a strong belief in free trade, substantial reservations about Cobden's attitude to domestic problems such as poverty, trade unions and state intervention. This ambivalence is well shown in Richard

Cobden The International Man (1919), which combined long extracts from Cobden's letters to Henry Richard of the Herald of Peace and the Morning Star and to Charles Sumner, the United States Senator, about war and foreign policy with three chapters of commentary. Hobson wanted the post-war international order of 1919 to be imbued with Cobden's noble aspirations but not with what he believed to be the negative attitude of the Manchester School to state intervention on behalf of the poor:

> "Government was conceived as a bad thing in itself, always oppressive to individuals, frequently unjust, nearly always expensive and inefficient. A country had to bear government for its sins, as a provision against enemies outside and enemies within. Armaments and police were the essence of government."

Hobson admitted that Cobden did not go quite so far as this, mentioning support for factory legislation for children and for education but the general effect of the book was to confirm the new standard view of Cobden as an unsuitable guide for domestic government. In an earlier book, The Social Problem (1901) he had condemned "Manchester economics" for its narrow and materialistic view of life, for emphasising production and profit making and neglecting the consumption of goods and services by the whole population. This may have reflected the outlook of many businessmen but it was not Cobden's. If he had studied all Bastiat's writings thoroughly, he would have discovered a similar concern to bring about a new "science of human efforts and satisfactions" and also the recognition that economic "facts" cannot be shorn of their moral significance for the sake of abstract economic analysis.

Hobson made the interesting point in his autobiography

that he realised that a sociology embracing ethics, politics and economics was needed but that he never had the quiet academic post to do it. But he also thought a formalised system might be too artificial, not reflecting the fragmentary nature of original thought. Perhaps these are also excuses which Cobden might have made?[6]

3. The relevance of Cobden's ideas today.

Cobden had a realistic view of British society and the "Chinese slowness" with which real reforms were made for improving the welfare of the people. A recurrent thought in his letters was that Britain would gradually learn by her mistakes, by disasters in war and by the facts of competition from new industrial powers. It was fifty years after his death before such harsh facts began to educate Britain slowly. By then, Cobden the statesman who anticipated the lessons was already a half-understood and half forgotten figure in public memory.

Cobden, if given knowledge of future history, would have understood without surprise that narrow nationalism and the new arms race led to the First World War and its sequel of 1935-45; that both World Wars stimulated the British government to improve the state educational system; that the tariff wars of the 1930's led to agreements after 1945 to keep down tariffs; that it took two bitterly fought wars to bring France and Germany to co-operation; that Britain gave up India partly from financial weakness; that the military and ideological competition of the Soviet and Western blocs obliged governments (in the West at least) to give some consideration to the standard of living of their own and "third world" countries; that the pressure

of West German and Japanese industrial competition after 1965 forced the eventual reform of some old fashioned institutions and practices.

Cobden would also have observed some important matters where no progress has been made: the continued existence of power blocs unable to balance and reduce the levels of their armaments. He would also note the apparent reluctance of governments to seek ways and means of removing the fears and misunderstandings which contribute to the declared necessity for great armaments.

Another disappointment would have been the failure of supporters of capitalism and free markets to have worked out a comprehensive political, social and economic philosophy which incorporated the main insights of Adam Smith, Bastiat, Combe and other relevant thinkers and also an interpretation of modern history. The latter would show how the material, political and moral welfare of the people had developed and been affected for better or worse by all the factors which bear upon it.

Cobden strongly believed that history must be developed as a laboratory for examining the validity and effectiveness, for improving the condition of mankind, of ideas about government, the economy, foreign policy and education. His interpretation of history, of which there are glimpses in his pamphlets and much more in Thorold Rogers' writings, has several advantages over the Marxist interpretations which have had such extraordinarily pervasive influence over historians and sociologists in the last hundred years. It explains many of the observable features of political, economic and social developments

in Western industrial states much better than the assumptions of Marx. For example it does not assume inevitable progress in social evolution nor that changes in the ownership or organisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange necessarily bring a fuller development of the human personality. Given Cobden's belief that man had innate moral, intellectual and instinctive faculties, there could be no agreement with Marx's assertion in the preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy that

> "The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness."

Marx repeated this point in Capital:

> "By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature. He develops the potentialities that slumber within him, and subjects these inner forces to his own control".

While Marx's meaning is capable of some variation of interpretation, it is surely clear that he did not give formal education an important place in his philosophy. The absence of any attention to theories of psychology or education in his writings appears to confirm this conclusion. Both Marx and Cobden agreed that the development of the economic base of society is a vital part of human progress, although they differed about the organisation of that base. But Cobden held that the right material conditions of life provide only the arena for the education to perform its essential task.

It is fashionable in the West, now that Marx's predictions about the course of social development have not been fulfilled, to say that Marxism is primarily a method

of social analysis. Surely the ideas of Cobden and his circle of thinkers also merit a long overdue exploration and development. In the meantime, his record as a statesman who combined social ideas and action in a unique manner should be given its proper place in British history.[7]

Summary

Cobden died with most of his objectives unachieved and without leaving any papers giving a general view of his political, social and economic philosophy. Nor did his friends appear to have knowledge of it which was sufficiently comprehensive. Cobden's practical and piecemeal approach to politics was partly to blame. Social conditions in Britain and world developments required a resourceful development of his ideas but neither the Cobden Club nor some important followers - L. Mallet, J.E. Thorold Rogers, F.W. Hirst and J.A. Hobson - succeeded in doing so satisfactorily. After 1880, trends of thought either critical of capitalism and "individualism" or emphasising state intervention became predominant.

In the twentieth century, Britain was forced by events to adopt some parts of Cobden's policies, but other important objectives, for example international arms control, remain to be implemented. There is a need for exploration and development of Cobden's ideas, perhaps as a method of social analysis, which is the approach now adopted by many Marxists in the West.

Cobden deserves a larger place in British history as a statesman and social thinker.

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