DAVID HOLT

INCIDENTS

IN THE LIFE OF

DAVID HOLT,

INCLUDING A SKETCH

OF SOME OF THE

PHILANTHROPIC INSTITUTIONS

OF MANCHESTER,

DURING A PERIOD OF FORTY YEARS.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

MANCHESTER:

JOHN HARRISON, PRINTER, MARKET STREET.

1843.

DEDICATED

BY PERMISSION

TO DANIEL GRANT, ESQ.

To whom the Author is under numberless obligations, for the extension of his friendly and respectful regard, under all the changes of his eventful life, to which he has been exposed; and who has ever manifested, an unwearied kindness, and most delicate attention, which it would be ungrateful to forget, and not thus publicly to acknowledge, on the part of one, who deems it a high gratification, as well as a privilege, to be permitted to subscribe himself,

His obliged and respectful friend,

DAVID HOLT.

INCIDENTS,

ETC.

HAVING, from a variety of unforeseen and unfortunate circumstances, been placed, in my *seventy seventh year*, in a state of comparative dependence, I thought that a concise view of some of the scenes of my past life, and of the public services to which I have been called, and to which I have devoted myself, would not be uninteresting to my near connections, nor altogether so to my friends and fellow townsmen. I have, therefore, as far as my recollection will enable me, brought together as briefly as possible, some of the scenes of my early days when my standing in Society, and my general connection of acquaintance and association, gave to my efforts, a value and importance which they do not now possess.

During the many years that I had an entensive Spinning establishment of my own, in which I employed several hundreds of work-people, it was an object with me, that they should be regarded as a part of my own family, and so watched over and cared for, as to guard their morals; and, while in the discharge of their duty to me, to preserve them from that contamination, which too often the asso-

ciates in a Cotton Mill exposed one another to. To prevent this, the class of people, both male and female, were as select as they could be made from the surrounding neighbourhood; a general knowledge that none other than orderly persons would be admitted, and that some testimony to character would be expected, prevented many of those customary applications from hands that were roving about from place to place, being made; changes with us seldom took place; being once fixed, they saw the value of their situations, and were careful, by an orderly and consistent conduct, to merit a continuance in them.

One evening in every week was devoted to the general instruction of the hands—such of them as chose to attend. I had a room in the mill capable of holding upwards of three hundred persons; this I fitted up with forms and seats, and a reading-desk for myself, where, on the evening set apart for the purpose, I regularly attended, and read to them portions of Scripture, or such selections from works of a moral and religious character, as seemed to me calculated to engage the attention and improve the mind; and I think that the general demeanour of the people furnished ample proof of the benefits resulting from such care and attention. Occasionally these, our evening meetings, were visited by friends and strangers of all sects and denominations of Christians; from these visitors only one general

expression of approbation was heard; indeed, some who came not knowing what to think of such meetings, half disposed to think unfavourably of them, were constrained to express, in the presence of the people, their approval of the plan, with an exhortation to be grateful, and put a suitable value upon privileges such as they were favoured with: and to show how the people themselves estimated the care taken of them, I insert the following Address which was presented to me by the work-people, on the breaking up of my concern in Temple-street.

AN ADDRESS

From the Cotton Spinners and Others, employed in the Chorlton New Mills, to Mr. David Holt.

"Sir,

"At a full Meeting of the workmen in your employ, held this evening, it was unanimously resolved, that an Address should be presented to you, expressive of our gratitude to, and highest veneration for you, as our Master, in the hope that, however humble the tribute of respect, you will be pleased to accept of it, as it conveys the unfeigned and unsophisticated sentiments of our greatest regard and esteem. Sir, as circumstances have transpired that leave us little room to indulge the hope that you will much longer require our services generally, we cannot contemplate the separation, without in some degree expressing how deeply we feel the pain, arising from the idea of parting from you, whilst we

acknowledge the many obligations under which we are laid, for all your kind attentions to us.

That great and gracious Being who holds the destinies of man, and of the Universe, in his hand, has seen fit to bring upon us, unexpectedly, an event which we cannot at present but view as a calamity; but in His hands we must leave it.

Several of us have been in your employ upwards of thirty years, but whether for a limited or a more extended period, the feeling of regret is universal. The kind and paternal affection and regard which you have always manifested, the readiness you have at all times shown, to inquire into, and, when practicable, to ameliorate our difficulties and trials; the fatherly solicitude for the health and comfort of every one; the deep, constant, and unabated anxiety shown for our moral improvement, has been so zealous and uniform, by public and private advice, that not to feel the obligation, and most unreservedly to acknowledge it, would betray the vilest ingratitude on our part; please then to accept our united, cordial, and most hearty thanks.

Sir, it does not become us to advert to your future prospects, our earnest wish and fervent prayer for you however is, that you may long enjoy good health and every comfort, that your last may be best and happiest days; and when you are removed from this scene of mortal care, may it be, to receive a crown of glory, and an inheritance that fadeth not away, in the Heavens.—Signed at the request of the meeting and on their behalf,

P. B. TEMPLETON,
CHAIRMAN."

November 30th, 1835.

Such were the sentiments of the people, over whom I had, for near forty years of my life, had the control. My authority was maintained without, in many cases, any harsh or severe measures being resorted to; though, when punishment was found to be indispensable, it was, so far as the case required, fearlessly inflicted, and not unfrequently acknowledged by the delinquent to have been just, and not resorted to under the influence of passion or resentment, but for the restoration of order, and in support of discipline.

To this affecting and truly affectionate address, I felt in duty bound to return an answer, a copy of which I now insert.

TO THE WORK-PEOPLE IN THE CHORLTON NEW MILLS.

"My Good Friends,

"I have received your affectionately kind address, and feel obliged by your attentions, and gratified by those expressions of regard, from the sense you entertain of my sincere endeavours in all my intercourse with you, to keep in view that rule which enjoins, that we should do to others, as we would that they should do to us. Were this Christian maxim more cherished and practised by mankind generally, how many of the afflictions which so sorrowfully affect, and greviously oppress suffering humanity, might be averted. It has been my

lot, through the greater portion of a long life, to have occupied a situation, in which I was called upon to exercise authority over many; and now, in the decline of my days, it affords matter for comfortable reflection, that I have not so exercised that authority, as to have involved those who were exposed to it, in unnecessary suffering, or causeless anxiety; a desire, not only to receive, but to deserve, the respect and regard of those about me, has led me to cherish those feelings which seemed to afford comfort to myself, whilst they were employed to promote the happiness and well-being of those around me.

I have not confined my efforts in this way, to the narrow limits of my own concern; I have many and many a time, from a sense of duty, addressed men in authority, with a view to lead them to those acts of benevolence and charity, or Christian kindness, by which the lot of honest industry would have been greatly ameliorated, and the moral condition of our servants and assistants greatly improved.

The accumulation of wealth never conferred that happiness on the possessor which the consummation promised, even if, in the eyes of the world, it had been fairly acquired; but if exacted by oppression, and wrung out of the hard-earned pittance of honest industry, then, I would ask, where is the hope of comfort, in the hour of sickness or affliction?

Who would not rather forego these seducing and perishing things, and adopt the Scripture recommendation, of seeking first the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof, being assured that every other thing needful shall be added. It is most truly said, that

'Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little, long.' Our wants will always be as our desires are; the necessaries, nay even many of the comforts of life lie within a narrow compass; and I am convinced, that if these were confined within Christian limits, the measure of rational enjoyment would be greatly augmented.

I have lived long and seen many changes, as well as suffered many deprivations, and yet I have been preserved through them all, in a state not only of resignation, but of thankfulness; and looking up to that merciful Being, which has sustained me so far through life, I have been led, with suffering Job, to exclaim 'though he slay me yet will I trust in Him;' and most assuredly there is no trust like this.

Whatever may be my future lot in life (and at present I am unable to look forward to anything of a fixed or a permanent character) yet I shall never call to my recollection my connection with you, and the manner of our separation, but with feelings of unfeigned affection, and sincere regard. You express a fervent wish, that my last may be my best and happiest days, and indeed this is in accordance with your general professions: that it is above all things desirable experience abundantly testifies; for as the end crowns the work, so the close of human labour and exercise winds up the fate of every human being; for we are told, that as the tree falls, so it lies, and as death leaves, judgment must find; how needful then to have, in some sort, the evidence that the great apostle of the Gentiles had, who could say, that he had not only finished his course, but that he had kept the faith, and could look forward to a Crown of

Righteousness, as his reward. That such may be your experience, and final portion, is the sincere and fervent prayer of

Your truly well-wishing friend,

DAVID HOLT."

Temple Street, 12mo. 5th, 1835.

The solicitations for copies were so numerous, that five hundred, handsomely printed, were ordered at their own expense.

In the few prefatory remarks which I have made, and which relate more to my own individual concern than to anything in which the public may feel an interest; yet if these pages should ever go abroad, and meet the public eye, there may be individuals whose minds may be impressed with the importance of regarding even the servants and dependants as fellow-beings, having a claim upon their sympathy and Christian regard, and calling for that moral culture at their hands, which, when judiciously conveyed, seldom fails to produce, in the humble recipient, a rich reward of faithfulness and attachment. The great Author of the Christian religion conferred his greatest benefits upon the poor and destitute. Let us then imitate his amiable example, and like him, seek to save that which is in danger of being lost.

I shall now proceed to state in what way I have

endeavoured, through a great portion of a long life, to make my exertions in some degree subservient to the public good; and thus giving me, in my *altered circumstances, some small claim upon the kind and generous consideration of the affluent portion of my fellow-townspeople.* Many of those with whom I associated in early life, and who were distinguished for their liberality and benevolent feeling have been removed from this mortal stage, and our places know them no more, but the records of their public charities exhibit what will cause their memories to live in the grateful recollection of their survivors.

ORIGIN OF THE ROYAL MANCHESTER LANCASTERIAN SCHOOL.

The fame of the New System of Education, introduced by Joseph Lancaster, in the Borough school of Southwark, having spread far and wide, it fell under the notice of the king, (George III.) who, on visiting the establishment, became so convinced of its practical usefulness, as an efficient medium of education, on a great scale and at a small expense, that he became the Patron of the institution and one of its most unwearied supporters.

This brought a host of nobility and gentry to the aid of Lancaster, and sent him out into every populous part of the kingdom, where, through the

medium of his lectures, he developed his plans, showing how, by the aid of the children themselves, one master might superintendent the education of one thousand children; the practicability of which, however utopian it might appear, he so satisfactorily exhibited, as to remove all doubt on the part of the most sceptical. In one of these missions of benevolence and usefulness, he visited Manchester, when it was my good fortune to engage his attention, and he became my guest. The great object of his heart was to draw together, in every place that he came to, the children of the poor, that so the Monarch's benevolent wish might be answered —that, through this medium, "every poor child in the kingdom might be enabled to read his Bible." Manchester was too important a place, and its numerous population too striking to escape his attention. He immediately proposed that the inhabitants should be convened, when he would deliver a lecture, and so develop his plans, . as would induce them to adopt what would be so manifestly to their advantage. Placards were printed, and the needful information circulated through the town, that on a day that was fixed, such a meeting would be held in the large room at the Bull's Head, in the Market Place, which was, at that day, the head inn of the town. The room I engaged, and on the day fixed for the Meeting, Joseph Lancaster, myself, and a few

friends who were favourable to the measure, attended, and after waiting several hours the arrival of company, and none making their appearance, we appointed a Chairman, and having provided a string of resolutions, we proceeded on the business for which the meeting was called, and passed the resolutions in course, concluding that it was the unanimous opinion that a School should be forthwith opened on Lancaster's plan, and that it should be called "The Manchester Lancasterian School."

The reason of our meeting being so neglected, we soon discovered by finding that Lancaster, whose fame, and, in an especial manner, having the king's patronage, and being a dissenter, had roused the Church to active exertion; when Dr. Bell was brought forward, as the grand rival of Lancaster, and claiming to have been the original inventor of the system, having introduced it in India, at the Madras school. This was sufficient in Manchester at that time, when the influence of the high church party was enough to control the general sentiment of the inhabitants, to prevent any such meeting taking place; however, relying upon the justice and promising benefits of our cause, we went quietly on, leaving the merits of the two claims to be ultimately decided by the public voice. It was evident that this opposition originated in a party-spirit, and not from any good grounds of objection to the plan of education proposed by Lan-

caster; for though the doctor had been long in England and must have seen how much some better system of education, on a great national scale, was wanting, yet, until the Borough system was introduced, and so munificently patronised, no effort was made by the doctor to supply the deficiency. The attempt, however, to drive Lancaster out of the field, was found to be altogether unavailing, and we proceeded to carry into effect the resolutions, which we, calling ourselves a town's meeting, had passed. A room for the purpose was sought out, and very soon after, a more convenient place in Lever Street, which had been used as a dissenting meeting-house, was offered to us; where, upon a more extended scale the experiment could be made. A suitable master was engaged and the work entered upon; the children increased in number, and their rapid progress in learning soon engaged public attention, when a number of respectable and influential men united with us, and it was determined that a grand effort should be made by the high church party, on the the occasion of the king being about to enter upon the fiftieth year of his reign, and that this should be kept as a day of jubilee; we took advantage of it, to bring forward, at a Public Meeting which was called, the proposal of erecting a school room capable of containing one thousand children, upon the plan so successfully pursued by Lancaster, and which had already obtained the decided patron-

age and protection of the king, and that it should be considered as a demonstration of respect for the sovereign who had reigned over a free and loyal people for so long a period as fifty years; it was, therefore, observed as a day of jubilee, and at once decided that a sum sufficient for this great purpose should be raised by public subscription; this, notwithstanding the powerful opposition we had to contend with was carried, and some liberal sums subscribed; land was purchased, and the present magnificent structure, where one thousand children are daily taught, was raised.

The school has been since visited by hundreds of highly respectable and intelligent persons, whose wonder and admiration of the powers of the children who have had the benefit of instruction under its roof, have been often and unequivocally proclaimed. The attainment of the boys in mental calculation, by which very difficult questions have been instantly answered, has been matter of surprise, and even astonishment, to many who were proficients in the science of figures.

In the year 1811, the first Report was published, which embraced the transactions of the two preceding years, 1809 and 10, of that committee. I was Chairman, and actively employed in promotion of the cause. The next Report was published in 1815, and signed by myself, as Chairman; the School was full, and the progress

of the children in learning not only called forth public admiration and approval, but brought hundreds of grateful acknowledgments from the parents of the children, as well as honourable testimonials from the visitors of all classes, which appear in the book kept for the purpose.

It will be seen, by the several Reports, of 1815 to 1819, and 1822 to 1827, that I was actively engaged in support of the Institution; making, from the period of its commencement, a servitude of little short of twenty years, to a cause that I ever considered as of the greatest consequence to the rising generation.

The last Report, which was issued in 1840, there were in the School, 714 boys and 340 girls, making a total of 1,054 children, daily receiving instruction under its roof. The building of the School is stated to have cost £4823. 3s. 0d., which, I believe, has been nearly, if not wholly liquidated by the liberality of the inhabitants.

It appears that in 1827, 12,338 children had been made partakers of education through this medium; and that in 1831, the number amounted to 15,787; in 1835, to 18,242; in 1837, to 19,741; and in 1840, the number was increased to 21,358.

The moral effects produced upon the minds of so large a proportion of the children of a town like Manchester, may be better conceived than described; though its benefits cannot but have been felt by the public at large, in the general

conduct of the children amongst them, as I believe that it has been satisfactorily ascertained that few, if any, of those who have had the benefit of instruction in this School, have ever, on any occasion, been arraigned at the bar of justice for any delinquency.

The great success of the Lancasterian School, as might be expected, roused the dormant spirits of the Bellites, and schools were erected both in Manchester and Salford, in the doctor's name, at a considerable expense. Thus, in the shape of opposition, and originating in no Christian spirit, the benefits of education became extended, without prejudice to the system introduced by Lancaster; to what extent they have answered the public expectation, I have never heard.

In the year 1812, it was thought by the Committee, that the patronage of His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, would be advantageous to the Institution; and as I had corresponded with, and was personally known to the Royal Duke, I was authorized to make the application, which I did, and which was most promptly and graciously answered and complied with, and thus the Institution was placed under royal countenance and protection. And in proof of the extent to which I had devoted my efforts in the cause of education, as well as the estimation in which they were held by the Royal Duke, I subjoin the copy of a letter, received from him.

Kensington Palace, March 24th, 1813.

"Dear Sir,

"Having this day received from our esteemed friend, Joseph Lancaster, a detail of your zealous exertions to promote that highly important object, the subscription for his personal remuneration, and for an establishment for his interesting family, to which he has the strongest possible claim upon the British public, I do myself the pleasure, conjointly with the Duke of Sussex, who was present at the reading of your letter, to express our warmest acknowledgments for the public spirit you have shown upon the occasion, and to assure you, that it enhances the high opinion we already entertained of your merits, from the knowledge we had of all you had before done, to promote the great work of education amongst the poor.

As it will require no stimulus to induce you to persevere in your noble exertions, it would be only a useless waste of your valuable time, to add anything further. I shall, therefore, conclude, by assuring you of the sentiments of warm esteem and regard, with which I remain,

Dear Sir,

Yours respectfully,

(*Signed,*) EDWARD."

The circumstance of one thousand children being effectively educated under the superintending care and attention of one or two persons, and at a weekly expense not exceeding three halfpence

each, was a thing never heard or thought of, until Joseph Lancaster sent forth his project into the world, and exhibited, upon a great scale, ample proof of its practicability. After such a boon to the world, the value of which is beyond computation, that any circumstances arising out of insuperable difficulties, brought on by disastrous events, should have deprived him of that regard, esteem, and confidence, to which his great public services so deservedly entitled him; and that, at last, he should have been sent as an outcast, poor and spiritless, to a distant land, furnishes matter for mournful reflection, deep sorrow, and lasting regret.

In one of those interesting conversations which I had the privilege of occasionally enjoying, he related an anecdote, which is worthy of being recorded, and preserved. Being at Windsor, and observing a great number of children running about the streets, apparently uncared for, he called upon one of the Deans, and in a feeling and friendly manner, represented this to him, proposing, at the same time, with the Dean's consent, to call a Meeting of the Inhabitants, to whom, he had no doubt, that he could deliver such an address, as would induce them to open a School for the education of these poor neglected children. The Dean, in the place of receiving this friendly overture in the Christian

spirit in which it was made, replied—"Pray, Mr. Lancaster, mind your own business, we are quite as well qualified to educate our own poor as you are." Lancaster replied, "I know you are, but you don't do it." The Dean then, in a very angry tone, said, "Sir, the countenance you have received from the King, and other exalted characters, has given you a confidence, which you do not know how discreetly to use; my friends, the Archbishops and Bishops, assure me, that you will not much longer be favoured with his Majesty's support." Lancaster replied, "If I do lose the King's countenance, I have no doubt, that it will be occasioned by the interference of thy friends, the Archbishops and Bishops. But, as the King is here, I will, before I leave Windsor, ascertain whether he is with me or not." This threw the Dean into a state of alarm, and led him, in severe terms, to deprecate such a proceeding. However, Lancaster went to the castle, and through one of the pages, announced his wish to see the King, (who was in the midst of his family,) which was immediately granted, when he communicated what had passed between him and the Dean. To this, the King replied, "No, Lancaster, you have not lost my countenance; you are a good man, and have done much to benefit my poor subjects, you may, therefore, count upon my support, but you

must not tease these men—let them alone—never mind them—never mind them." The decline of Joseph Lancaster's popularity mainly arose from circumstances which, in his mind, promised a different result; his scheme of Public Education, on a great scale, and at a small expense, having so eminently succeeded, led him to suppose that a Boarding School for Females of a higher class, conducted upon the same principles, must answer, especially, if placed under his own immediate superintendence, leaving no doubt on his mind as to the favourable reception such a project would meet with from the public. Under this impression, he fearlessly launched into the undertaking, and at a great expense, fitted up and furnished large Premises in the neighbourhood of London, when he soon became convinced of his error, and found all his anticipations groundless. Having no capital, for in all his proceedings he never sought to aggrandize himself, claims were soon made upon him, which he had no means of satisfying,—his creditors became impatient,—legal proceedings were taken, and there seemed to be no way in which his personal liberty could be secured to him, but by a Commission of Bankruptcy. This, in course, was resorted to; and under these circumstances, he came to my house, broken down by grief and misfortune. During his sojourn with me, I

received a letter from the Duke of Kent, informing me, that a Meeting of the Creditors and Friends of Joseph Lancaster, would take place on a day that was fixed, when his attendance would be required; and as he was likely to be severely dealt with, he wished me to accompany him, conceiving that I might do him some service. This, however, was not convenient, and I, therefore, gave him my ideas of the course he should take, if he ever expected, or wished to be restored to the confidence and esteem of his friends, which was, to bear patiently, all the reflections that might be cast upon him, and on no account to attempt his own vindication, but when they had said all they had to say, simply to express his sorrow for what had occurred, with a desire that they would place in the opposite scale the good he had endeavoured to do, as some palliation for the errors into which he had so unhappily fallen. This line of conduct, when he left my house, he promised strictly to pursue.

On his arrival in London, he attended the Meeting, where were the Royal Dukes, Lord Somerville, and several other titled characters, with many of his suffering creditors; they were severe in the extreme, in their reflections, which so stung Lancaster, that he retorted, in equally severe, and almost abusive terms; which so exas-

perated the Meeting, that he was ordered out of the room, never to lift up his head again in their society.

In this forlorn and broken down condition, he returned to my house, having made up his mind to leave this country for America, never to return. I issued a circular, stating his case, and soliciting help for him; this was promptly responded to, and a sum raised, which enabled him to get away in some comfortable manner. Thus ended the career of this most extraordinary and unfortunate man, as far as regarded his connection with this country.

The Commercial Travellers' Society, was the next public business in which I was induced to take an interest. A Branch of this Society, which, in London, had the Lord Mayor at its head, was instituted in Manchester, and a committee was formed, of which the late Sir Robt. Peel was the President, and I was the Vice-President, and Chairman of the Committee, during the years that this Branch was allowed to exist. Commercial Travellers were known not to be a very provident set of men, nor very careful of their constitutions, it was, therefore, intended, that a comfortable provision should be made for every needy, broken down member, and in case of

death, that provision should be made for their families; but, unfortunately, it was soon found that the annual contributions, aided by liberal subscriptions, were insufficient to meet the various claims made upon it, to anything like the extent that was proposed; however, it has proved a source of comfort to hundreds of its members and their families, who would otherwise have suffered greatly. The labours of the Manchester Committee were eminently useful in sustaining the Association, during the time it was permitted to exist.

During the misunderstanding which existed between this country and America, certain orders in council were issued, and so rigidly acted upon, as to cause considerable alarm to the manufacturers generally, but particularly those immediately connected with the United States. Trade so rapidly declined, as to threaten many extensive concerns with ruin, by driving thousands of people from their employment, and involving their families in distress and difficulty. Under these circumstances, a Meeting of the merchants and manufacturers in Manchester, was called, when it was resolved, that delegates from this Meeting be sent into all the surrounding manufacturing districts, in order to induce the sufferers instantly to make

such representations to government, as would show the ruinous effects of these measures. An eminent Liverpool merchant, and myself, were despatched to Rochdale, where we called together the people, who were interested in this question; and our representations induced them to send delegates to London, where, uniting with others, they effected the removal of these obnoxious and impolitic orders.

Another affair in which I took a prominent part, and which was regarded, as likely, deeply to affect the interests of the Cotton spinners and manufacturers of every class, where numbers of hands were necessarily congregated together; this was a Bill which was before the House of Commons, purporting to be for the better regulation of the hands employed in mills and factories. A deputation of gentlemen waited, and prevailed upon me, under a promise that I should be joined in London, by Samuel Greg, Esq., for the purpose of making such representations to Ministers and others, as would show the impolicy and mischievous tendency of the proposed measure. We spent two weeks in London, every day actively engaged; after which, I was directed to go to Wolverhampton, to Newcastle, to the Potteries, at all which places I caused Meetings to be held, and delegates to be sent to London, which produced the desired effect; and on my

return home, I received the thanks of a Town's Meeting.

During the outbreaks which occasionally occurred, some of which assumed a character which created great alarm, and kept the authorities on the alert for weeks together, frequently obliging us to have the military placed on our premises, and in various stations in the neighbourhood, both day and night; during these periods, the factory owners were kept in a state of fear and apprehension; hundreds, and sometimes thousands of men, women, and children, were seen parading the public streets, and almost daily holding meetings, where the most inflammatory language was used by many of the speakers; yet, acts of violence, though often threatened, were seldom resorted to.

The masters, as well as the operatives, were very differently circumstanced to what they now are. The fine spinners had been getting their several pounds a-week, and the hands generally were amply remunerated; their employers were, in course, largely partaking in the general benefit, so that each of the conflicting parties were well prepared for the contest; so circumstanced, events of the most trifling nature, such as issuing certain rules and orders for the better regulation of their concerns, the discharge of a servant who was in favour with the people, or the retention

of one to whom they had an objection, was, at any time sufficient not only to throw any concern into confusion, but at some times to occasion a general turn-out. Upon all these occasions, it fell to my lot to be actively employed, with no other view than that of adjusting the existing differences, and of putting an end to these senseless contests; which, however, impartially or carefully pursued, failed to give general satisfaction, and not unfrequently exposed me to considerable danger; yet, in the midst of all this, though often threatened, I never suffered the least personal injury.

During one of these contests, which continued for several months, causing an entire suspension of labour, to the great loss and injury of the factory owners, as well as the thousands of operatives, who were strolling about the streets, in a state of idleness and dissipation, a circumstance of a peculiar character occurred. I was waited upon by half-a-dozen respectably dressed men, who said they were spinners, and were deputed by ten thousand of their associates, to request my special interference between them and their masters, with a view to adjust the differences which existed, and which had occasioned such general distress. Not knowing what to make of so singular an application, I proposed their coming the next day, when I would invite some respectable person to be present at the conference, in order that

no advantage might be taken by either party; to this they assented, and retired.

The next day, an increased number of them came, when, after a short pause, I requested them to say in what way they thought I could make myself useful, upon this most distressing occasion. They began by stating, at considerable length, their cause of complaint, the occasion of which they charged upon their masters: on this ground they desired a conference with them, which they wished me to bring about. This I considered to be impracticable; and that were I to make such a proposition, it would be instantly rejected. "In that case," they said, "what are we to do?" I replied, "The opinion I am about to give, may greatly disappoint you, but it is, in my mind, the only rational course you can take—Submit yourselves unconditionally to return to your work, peaceably and quietly, on the terms you left." "If we do," they replied, "we shall place ourselves in a worse condition than ever, and be trampled upon without mercy." To this, I replied, "No, you shall be received with kindness; no reflections shall be cast upon you; and if any of you are distressed, and want a little help, your masters shall give it you." With this assurance they were satisfied, and retired to wait the issue.

I immediately communicated to the magistrates what had passed, and, in the course of the day,

a Meeting of the master Spinners took place in the large room of the then police office, at the bottom of King Street. The meeting was numerously attended, when I stated the purport of what had passed between me and their men; what I had recommended, with the expression of their fears, with my assurance that they should be received and treated with kindness. My conditions did not appear very satisfactory; but, being insisted on, the magistrates observed, that the town had been long kept in a state of alarm and great jeopardy; and if terms such as these would put an end to the contest, it would be the height of folly to refuse. They, therefore, concluded, by observing, "If you gentlemen do not embrace the offer made by Mr. Holt, you must not look for any further protection from us." This brought the matter to a close; in a few days all were at work, and peace was restored.

The prompt and satisfactory conclusion of this distressing affair, confirmed me in the opinion I had long entertained, that the exercise of kindness to our servants and assistants, being a Christian duty, would, if more generally resorted to, prevent that unfriendly feeling on the part of the poor, towards the rich, and tend to unite them in the bonds of amity, and reciprocal good offices, one towards another; a state of things greatly to be desired.

A writer of high moral and intellectual character, who had much intercourse with those in the higher walks of life, makes the following very just and pertinent observations.

"Would it not be turning those political doctrines, which are now so warmly advocated, to a truly moral account, and give the best practical answer to the popular declamation, on the inequality of human conditions, were the rich carefully to instruct their children, to soften that inevitable inequality, by the mildness and tenderness of their behaviour to their inferiors?"

"This dispensation, thus properly improved, would, at once, call into exercise the generosity, kindness, and forbearance of the superior; and the patience, resignation, and gratitude of the inferior; and thus, while we were vindicating the ways of Providence, we should be accomplishing his plan, by bringing into action, those virtues of both classes, which would have had little exercise if there had been no inequality in station and fortune."

The truth, as well as justice of these remarks is so self-evident, that it is most wonderful, they should not have been more generally acted upon, as a means by which the enjoyment of abundance would be sweetened, by its being made in a small degree subservient to the wants and humble requirings of the industrious peasant.

The luxury of doing good, would often be purchased at a small expense; and the devoted attachment of these lowly members of the universal family secured, by the performance of a duty, which would involve little sacrifice of money, or personal effort; a condescending look, a kind word, and a little trifling aid in a time of need, would embrace all the measure of service required. The waste made, and the extravagance indulged in, by the servants in some of the houses of the rich and the noble, would, if under any rational control, and judicious management, amply supply the needs of thousands of the suffering poor. How any man, having large estates, with thousands a-year coming in, can look upon the surrounding labourers, some of whom may have large families to support, and know that their means do not exceed nine or ten shillings a-week, and persuade himself, that he is a faithful steward of the bounties of Providence, I know not. It is delightful to see, with what kindness the poor often help one another; like Alfred of old, they divide their loaf or scanty pittance with a suffering family, or a fellow man. It furnishes an example, worthy the notice and adoption of those in the higher walks of life. It is often said, that the poor are ungrateful, and think little of the help that may be given them. I believe the charge to be unjust. I have, in numberless instances, been convinced to the contrary; they know well how to estimate

the kindness shown to them, by the manner, as well as the measure, in which it is conveyed. The great misfortune is, that the classes stand too much aloof one from another, as if a man's contact would bring with it contamination; remove this destructive prejudice; come nearer to one another, and see how much, by such a change, the comforts of the one, and the safety and protection of the other would be secured; the outgoings to effect this, would never be felt by those from whom such concessions might be reasonably expected.

The following correspondence will show, that my conjectures when addressing the Duke of Kent, in the year 1819, and what I then predicted as likely to happen, unless some prompt and prudential measures by the government were adopted to arrest the progress of events, which partial legislation as far as regarded the Corn Laws, and the monopolies generally, had, for a series of years, been silently but certainly working the ruin of the labouring population of the country, as will be seen by the following letters :—

Commissioner's Office, Somerset House,
London, March 2nd, 1835.

"To Mr. David Holt.

"The Poor Law Commisioners for England and Wales, have received information, that there are frequent demands for the labour of whole families,

comprehending children of the legal age and strength, for employment in the district in which you reside. The Commissioners are also informed, that in several of the southern counties, the demand for the labour of such families is, at the present time, comparatively inadequate, and that many families of industrious habits, and of good character and dispositions, are there *in danger* of becoming permanently burdensome to their parishes; and they are, therefore, willing to remove to any place, where regular employment may be obtained, for adequate wages. In the belief, that such removal will be highly beneficial to the community, the Poor Law Commisioners are desirous of facilitating it, by every means in their power: and they, therefore, wish to acquaint you that, in case of your wanting the labour of even a single family, the Commissioners proffer the use of the means at their disposal, for facilitating the supply of your wants in this respect. For this purpose, in pursuance of the course already adopted by the Commissioners, it is requisite that they should be furnished with a description of the persons whom you may be willing to employ, a proximate statement of the wages you are prepared to give, and the probable duration of the employment, whether permanent or temporary, or whether you would prefer making an engagement by contract for any, and what period.

The Commissioners would, thereupon, cause the circumstance to be made known in the rural parishes containing families, willing to migrate, from whom such a selection might be made, as would probably

meet your wishes; and they would, as you might prefer, either supply you with such information as might serve to direct your enquiries, or the enquiries of your agent, or they would direct enquiries from the minister, or respectable inhabitants of the parish, as to such points of the present and past conduct of the persons willing to migrate, as may serve to satisfy you as to their general character, and of their trustworthiness, as work-people."

By direction of the Board,

(*Signed,*) E. CHADWICK,
SECRETARY.

To this communication I made the following reply.

"Manchester, 3rd Month, 10th, 1835.

"To the Poor Law Commissioners,
Somerset House, London.

"I have duly received your Circular, and although any reply from me may not be expected, yet, I trust, you will not be offended with the few observations that I shall make, in reference to the subject of your application. As far as regards myself, I can distinctly state, that hands of any description, *accustomed* to the sort of work for which they may be wanted, are to be had at any moment; which shows, that there is no want of efficient labourers, when called for; and

also proves, that the stock in the market is so abundant, as to leave little or no room for new adventurers. There was a time, in the infancy of the Cotton manufacture, when such an offer as yours would have been readily embraced. The times are now changed, and, with the regular march of improvement in our machinery and manufactures, among the population in all these districts, the supply of manual labour has become so abundant, as amply to supply all our wants.

There is another consideration which operates powerfully upon the economy of our proceedings; viz., the immense competition both at home and abroad, which has driven our artizans to contrivances, by which the call for manual labour has been reduced fifty per cent. This has, in course, thrown thousands out of employment, amongst those of our most industrious workmen, and driven them to occupations, of which they could know little, and, in course, deprived them of many comforts to which they had before been accustomed.

I did hope, that the plan, that I strongly recommended twenty years ago, of giving allotments of land, in all the agricultural districts, to the labourers and their families, would have been adopted so generally, as to have superseded the necessity of removing the poor from the places of their nativity, and from those relations and associates which must endear them, mean and divested of many comforts as they may be, yet, according to the old proverb, 'home must be home, be it ever so homely.'

The great land owners must be convinced that there is no more eligible way of getting rid of men-

dicity, and of improving the moral character of the labouring population, than by placing them in circumstances, where, by their own industrious exertions, they may procure a comfortable maintenance for themselves and their families, without the degradation of parochial assistance. Placed upon these allotments, at a low rent, and assisted by the humane and opulent, until their little plans were matured, they would be at hand, to give occasional assistance, whenever wanted; their moral character would be improved, and the kindness of the rich and great, in their vicinity, would be amply repaid, by their humble services and grateful attentions. We should hear no more of incendiarism, or those acts of disorder and outrage, which so disgrace the English character.

I remain, with due respect,

Your assured friend,

DAVID HOLT."

In the interval of this confusion in Manchester and the neighbourhood, seeing the daily improvements which were making in machinery, and the gradually decreasing value in the various productions, I became convinced, that manual labour would be contracted, to an extent that would bring great distress, for a time, upon the laboring population. I addressed a long letter to His Royal Higness, the Duke of Kent, stating the suffering situation in which the labouring poor

were placed, for want of employment, and the probability of its yet becoming more general, and suggesting to him, how necessary it was, that those in authority should, by timely care, and suitable precaution, prevent the increase, as well as the continuance of this calamity. To effect this, I suggested to him, that the crown and waste lands, of which I supposed there were millions of acres, should, under suitable direction, be parcelled out amongst the unemployed poor of the country, in quantities proportionate to their several families; that they should be assisted in the cultivation of these small allotments, until they were found to yield a subsistence, and that for a time, they should be held rent free. The reception this project met with, from the Royal Duke, will be seen from the following letter, with which he honoured me, a few days after.

"Kensington Palace, July 19th, 1819.

"The Duke of Kent hastens to acknowledge his friend Holt's most interesting letter, of the 17th, and begs to assure him, that he so fully concurs in the plan therein suggested, as a salutary and efficient means of giving relief to the severe distresses under which a large portion of the community are suffering at this period, that he would consider it an imperious duty to submit it to the members of His Majesty's government, were he not persuaded, that their present

feeling towards *him*, is such, that his *name* in connection with it, would rather tend to retard than to promote Friend Holt's benevolent wishes, in favour of his distressed countrymen. But the Duke earnestly recommends Mr. Holt, to endeavour to find some individual, of sufficient weight with men in power, who will become the instrument of at least bringing under review, a scheme for employing the surplus labour at home, rather than adopt a system of expatriation which bids fair, not only to entail misery upon the individuals, but injury and disappointment to the country which adopts it."

In consequence of receiving this letter, I addressed, in respectful terms, the Earl of Derby, who was at that time Lord Lieutenant of the County, handing him a copy of the letter, which I addressed to the Duke of Kent. After waiting a month, and receiving no reply from the noble earl, and the general complexion of affairs in no degree improving, I wrote again to His Royal Highness, enquiring of him, as no reply had come from Lord Derby, if there would be any impropriety in publishing the letter through one of the London daily papers. This met his approval, and the letter appeared in the Evening Star, of that day, (1819,) and was introduced by the editor, with a very handsome prefatory address, which was as follows:—

"We feel unspeakable pleasure in noticing any efforts which hold out prospects, though even more remote than we could wish, of measures being sought for, that may ultimately tend to alleviate the miseries now endured by the workmen in the manufacturing districts.

We have pressed, and we shall continue to do so, the necessity imposed upon the community generally, to look after the interests of all the children of the same great family, and to enforce a just procedure, on the part of the employers to the employed. This is not an abstract question of mere theory only, that may be assented to, and its execution postponed to any indefinite time. It can no more be deferred, without absolute and incalculable injury, than the cravings of hunger. It is impossible then that we should feel otherwise than joyful, when we see individuals, who, from their rank and character in society, can command attention, exerting themselves to bring about some amelioration of the sufferings endured by the working classes.

"In the Star of the 27th ult. we inserted a letter, addressed to us by Mr. Holt, the respectable manufacturer of Manchester, and a copy of a letter which he had sent to the Earl of Derby, urging, in most respectful but temperate language, the necessity of measures being speedily adopted, to afford some relief, and procure future justice

to the labouring classes. The evil he pointed out, not as arising from foreign competition alone, but "from the mistaken policy of our Manufacturers, who ought to be the natural Guardians of the labour of the country, but who are ever bent upon reducing the price of that labour, when the demand becomes languid, and thus producing a two-fold evil, by destroying the comforts of the operatives; and in proportion as the prices are reduced, compelling them, by long hours, and excessive exertion, to the production of an increased quantity of the very articles which are already too abundant.

"It now appears that the letter to the Earl of Derby, had, by some accident, not fallen under his lordship's notice, at the time Mr. Holt first wrote us, and that as soon as it did, his lordship paid every attention to it.

"The letter addressed to us, by Mr. Holt explained the circumstances, and will, we hope, rouse men of rank and fortune to do their duty, in the present awful crisis, for awful it is, however lightly some men may view it; and we are confident that nothing would tend more effectually to put an end to the wild speculations about Universal Sufferage, and Annual Parliaments, which have taken possession of so many minds, as the hearty co-operation of men of influence, and of parishes generally, to secure to the workmen a just remuneration for their

labour." On receiving the Star papers, containing my letter, I sent one of them to Lord Derby, who, on receipt of it, wrote me, stating that no such letter had reached him, or as he was pleased to say, the character of the writer, as well as the importance of the subject, would have had instant attention. The following day brought me another letter, stating, that he had been laid up with the gout, and amongst an accumulation of papers, he found my letter unopened, for which he took shame to himself, professing his willingness, in any way that he could, to promote the object I had in view: but here, as far as regarded his lordship, the matter ended. However, from many parts of the kingdom I received letters of approval of what I had proposed; and since, I find the plan has been adopted in several counties, where, by the measure, the moral condition of the labouring population had been greatly improved, and pauperism banished, where it once abounded.

For several years I was one of a number of gentlemen who filled the situation of Surveyors of the Highways of Manchester, a situation of no ordinary trust and confidence; and where I had an opportunity of witnessing the unwearied attention, and anxious care manifested by many individuals on

that Board, for the prudent and economical application of the large funds committed to their disposal; yet, it seldom happened that these gratuitous and important services were considered deserving of public thanks.

I was also one of the sixty Commissioners named in the Act for widening and improving Market Street; this occupied some years, and had my gratuitous attention.

About the year 1817 several of the inhabitants of the town, seeing the deplorable state of wretchedness to which the Female Prostitutes were reduced, for want of an asylum and medical aid, determined to make some effort for their relief.

A Town's Meeting was called, and the subject was fully gone into, which ended in the appointment of a Committee, with full powers to make the needful arrangements for opening a house for the reception of a limited number of these unhappy outcasts of society; to be called, "The Manchester and Salford Lock Hospital." A suitable building was found—a matron appointed, and all the requisite medical aid also obtained. The Charity opened under favourable auspices; and I, being one of its early promoters, became and continued the Chairman of the Board, for many years; labouring hard during the whole of that time, to raise from public bounty, the means by which to support the establishment, for the

maintenance of an average of fifteen to twenty persons in the house; and the needful attendance on, and provision for, an infinitely greater number of out-patients, all of whom were males, as women only were admitted into the house. The service rendered to the town, by this Institution, has been generally admitted; and the great good which has, in many cases resulted to the poor sufferers themselves, has been matter of comfortable reflection to some of us who have witnessed, on their discharge from the hospital, the contrition and expressions of acknowledgment for the tender care which had been taken of them, not only to restore health to the body, but to impress the mind with a due sense of religious and moral excellence. Some were restored to their homes again; others placed in safe situations as house servants; and we have reason to believe, that the moral condition of many has been greatly improved. The Charity still exists, under the superintending care of a few benevolent gentlemen, and well deserves the support of the inhabitants of this opulent town.

In the brief notice that I have taken in the preceding remarks on the several charitable institutions, in the support of which, my feeble efforts have been employed, I see so great a value and

importance attaching to them, that I feel that I shall not be doing my duty, if I do not make this last effort to bring back to each of them, that confidence and support, to which they have so just a claim. I would, therefore, in an especial manner, call the attention of the public, to the "Royal Lancasterian School," where upwards of one thousand children are receiving education of even greater consequence than learning to read and write. They are taught habits of order, of respectful behaviour, of due deference to their teachers and superiors; to be clean and decent in their personal appearance and demeanour, and to avoid giving cause of offence to any one. Thus their moral character is gradually forming, and in early life, those impressions are made, which, like bread cast upon the waters, may return after many days. Thus cared for and instructed, I know of no institution, that promises so many and great benefits to society at large, as the Lancasterian School. Every unprejudiced individual, visiting that institution, and seeing one thousand innocent creatures, under the shelter of such a charity, busily employed in receiving what is to make them peaceful as well as useful subjects, while thousands are yet at large in our public streets, wasting away their precious time, corrupting their morals, and qualifying for those destructive courses, which fill our prisons with

offenders; who, while they are at large, are a source of fear and apprehension to the peaceable and well disposed. If out of the twenty-two thousand who have had the benefit of instruction in this school, none have assumed this character, does it not call loudly on the rich and benevolent, for their own safety and comfort, not only amply to support this magnificent establishment, but by a new and increased effort, to extend the means, and as it were, go forth into the highways and hedges, and compel these outcasts who are young in years, but growing every day older in iniquity, to come within your enclosure and be saved. No man of principle and feeling can enter that school, and witness what is going on there, without being convinced that such institutions only, can change and exalt the character of the people, by laying the foundation of Christian principles in early life; these will grow with their growth, and may produce a rich harvest of public usefulness.

Can it be thought needful, that a Committee of the House of Commons should sit for weeks and months devising the means of a suitable education for the people, with the New Testament in their hands, and such an institution as ours to guide them? All sectarian views are discarded here; so that Christian parents may here find a Christian education for their children, without clerical interference.

If the government of the country will interest itself in the education of the rising generation, let them watch over and contribute largely towards the support and increase of establishments such as this. Here the Bible and New Testament are the books out of which the children are taught and instructed. Jesus Christ said "suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." The simplicity aud innocence of children is best preserved where plain Scripture rules are followed, and where all party feelings are discarded; for these cannot be indulged in without producing an effect like the leaven spoken of in Scripture, which affected the whole lump. If private benevolence feels a high gratification in contributing five or ten thousand pounds towards the erection of a church, when so many of the existing establishments are but indifferently attended, what would not the gratification be, in raising such another establishment as this, where, at a comparatively small expense, thousands of uncared-for children might receive instruction, and be plucked as brands from the burning.

I would now most earnestly, but respectfully, again call public attention, to the "Manchester and Salford Lock Hospital," because I know the

great difficulty the Board have, in providing the means by which it may be sustained; and I know of no charity that has so great a claim upon the rich and affluent, as this has.

When the perilous state of the times is considered, and the thousands of both sexes who are willing to labour for an honest living, if they could find employment; when these are reduced to destitution, is it to be wondered at, that the weaker sex should be seduced by the gay, the thoughtless and dissipated, into habits, by which reputation is sacrificed, health destroyed, and, if not cared for, by a charity like this, get consigned to an untimely grave. Are considerations like these to have no place in the benevolent feelings of the rich and the full? Forbid it, all that is respectable and praiseworthy. If the beggar who lay at the rich man's gate, and whose sores the dogs licked, was conveyed by angels to a state of unalloyed happiness, let us look with compassion and kindness upon these children of shame and misfortune, and at least, try to rescue them from present suffering, and the danger of future woe and misery.

John Harrison, Printer, Market-street, Manchester.