

BROOK FARM.

WHEREVER we recognize the principle of progress, our sympathies and affections are engaged. However small may be the innovation, however limited the effort towards the attainment of pure good, that effort is worthy of our best encouragement and succor. The Institution at Brook Farm, West Roxbury, though sufficiently extensive in respect to number of persons, perhaps is not to be considered an experiment of large intent. Its aims are moderate; too humble indeed to satisfy the extreme demands of the age; yet, for that reason probably, the effort is more valuable, as likely to exhibit a larger share of actual success.

Though familiarly designated a "Community," it is only so in the process of eating in commons; a practice at least, as antiquated, as the collegiate halls of old England, where it still continues without producing, as far as we can learn, any of the Spartan virtues. A residence at Brook Farm does not involve either a community of money, of opinions, or of sympathy. The motives which bring individuals there, may be as various as their numbers. In fact, the present residents are divisible into three distinct classes; and if the majority in numbers were considered, it is possible that a vote in favor of self-sacrifice for the common good would not be very strongly carried. The leading portion of the adult inmates, they whose presence imparts the greatest peculiarity and the fraternal tone to the household, believe that an improved state of existence would be developed in association, and are therefore anxious to promote it. Another class consists of those who join with the view of bettering their condition, by being exempted from some portion of worldly strife. The third portion, comprises those who have their own development or education, for their principal object. Practically, too, the institution manifests a threefold improvement over the world at large, corresponding to these three motives. In consequence of the first, the companionship, the personal intercourse, the social bearing are of a marked, and very superior character.

There may possibly, to some minds, long accustomed to other modes, appear a want of homeness, and of the private fireside; but all observers must acknowledge a brotherly and softening condition, highly conducive to the permanent, and pleasant growth of all the better human qualities. If the life is not of a deeply religious cast, it is at least not inferior to that which is exemplified elsewhere; and there is the advantage of an entire absence of assumption and pretence. The moral atmosphere so far is pure; and there is found a strong desire to walk ever on the mountain tops of life; though taste, rather than piety, is the aspect presented to the eye.

In the second class of motives, we have enumerated, there is a strong tendency to an important improvement in meeting the terrestrial necessities of humanity. The banishment of servitude, the renouncement of hireling labor, and the elevation of all unavoidable work to its true station, are problems whose solution seems to be charged upon association; for the dissociate systems have in vain sought remedies for this unfavorable portion of human condition. It is impossible to introduce into separate families even one half of the economies, which the present state of science furnishes to man. In that particular, it is probable that even the feudal system is superior to the civic: for its combinations permit many domestic arrangements of an economic character, which are impracticable in small households. In order to economize labor, and dignify the laborer, it is absolutely necessary that men should cease to work in the present isolate competitive mode, and adopt that of cooperative union or association. It is as false and as ruinous to call any man 'master' in secular business, as it is in theological opinions. Those persons, therefore, who congregate for the purpose, as it is called, of bettering their outward relations, on principles so high and universal as we have endeavored to describe, are not engaged in a petty design, bounded by their own selfish or temporary improvement. Every one who is here found giving up the usual chances of individual aggrandizement, may not be thus influenced; but whether it be so or not, the outward demonstration will probably be equally certain.

In education, Brook Farm appears to present greater mental freedom than most other institutions. The tuition

being more heart-rendered, is in its effects more heart-stirring. The younger pupils as well as the more advanced students are held, mostly if not wholly, by the power of love. In this particular, Brook farm is a much improved model for the oft-praised schools of New England. It is time that the imitative and book-learned systems of the latter should be superseded or liberalized by some plan, better calculated to excite originality of thought, and the native energies of the mind. The deeper, kindly sympathies of the heart, too, should not be forgotten; but the germination of these must be despaired of under a rigid hireling system. Hence, Brook farm, with its spontaneous teachers, presents the unusual and cheering condition of a really "free school."

By watchful and diligent economy, there can be no doubt that a community would attain greater pecuniary success, than is within the hope of honest individuals working separately. But Brook Farm is not a Community, and in the variety of motives with which persons associate there, a double diligence, and a watchfulness perhaps too costly, will be needful to preserve financial prosperity. While, however, this security is an essential element in success, riches would, on the other hand, be as fatal as poverty, to the true progress of such an institution. Even in the case of those foundations which have assumed a religious character, all history proves the fatality of wealth. The just and happy mean between riches and poverty is, indeed, more likely to be attained when, as in this instance, all thought of acquiring great wealth in a brief time, is necessarily abandoned, as a condition of membership. On the other hand, the presence of many persons, who congregate merely for the attainment of some individual end, must weigh heavily and unfairly upon those whose hearts are really expanded to universal results. As a whole, even the initiative powers of Brook Farm have, as is found almost every where, the design of a life much too objective, too much derived from objects in the exterior world. The subjective life, that in which the soul finds the living source and the true communion within itself, is not sufficiently prevalent to impart to the establishment the permanent and sedate character it should enjoy. Undeniably, many devoted individuals are there; several who have as generously

as wisely relinquished what are considered great social and pecuniary advantages; and by throwing their skill and energies into a course of the most ordinary labors, at once prove their disinterestedness, and lay the foundation of industrial nobility.

An assemblage of persons, not brought together by the principles of community, will necessarily be subject to many of the inconveniences of ordinary life, as well as to burdens peculiar to such a condition. Now Brook Farm is at present such an institution. It is not a community: it is not truly an association: it is merely an aggregation of persons, and lacks that oneness of spirit, which is probably needful to make it of deep and lasting value to mankind. It seems, even after three years' continuance, uncertain, whether it is to be resolved more into an educational, or an industrial institution, or into one combined of both. Placed so near a large city, and in a populous neighborhood, the original liability for land, &c., was so large, as still to leave a considerable burden of debt. This state of things seems fairly to entitle the establishment to re-draw from the old world in fees for education, or in the sale of produce, sufficient to pay the annual interest of such liabilities. Hence the necessity for a more intimate intercourse with the trading world, and a deeper involvement in money affairs than would have attended a more retired effort of the like kind. To enter into the corrupting modes of the world, with the view of diminishing or destroying them, is a delusive hope. It will, notwithstanding, be a labor of no little worth, to induce improvements in the two grand departments of industry and education. We say *improvement*, as distinct from *progress*; for with any association short of community, we do not see how it is possible for an institution to stand so high above the present world, as to conduct its affairs on principles entirely different from those which now influence men in general.

There are other considerations also suggested by a glance at Brook Farm, which are worthy the attention of the many minds now attracted by the deeply interesting subject of human association. We are gratified by observing several external improvements during the past year; such as a larger and a more convenient dining room, a labor-saving cooking apparatus, a purer diet, a more orderly

and quiet attendance at the refectations, superior arrangements for industry, and generally an increased seriousness in respect to the value of the example, which those who are there assembled may constitute to their fellow beings.

Of about seventy persons now assembled there, about thirty are children sent thither for education; some adult persons also place themselves there chiefly for mental assistance; and in the society there are only four married couples. With such materials it is almost certain that the sensitive and vital points of communication cannot well be tested. A joint-stock company, working with some of its own members and with others as agents, cannot bring to issue the great question, whether the existence of the marital family is compatible with that of the universal family, which the term "Community" signifies. This is now the grand problem. By mothers it has ever been felt to be so. The maternal instinct, as hitherto educated, has declared itself so strongly in favor of the separate fire-side, that association, which appears so beautiful to the young and unattached soul, has yet accomplished little progress in the affections of that important section of the human race—the mothers. With fathers, the feeling in favor of the separate family is certainly less strong; but there is an undefinable tie, a sort of magnetic *rapport*, an invisible, inseverable, umbilical chord between the mother and child, which in most cases circumscribes her desires and ambition to her own immediate family. All the accepted adages and wise saws of society, all the precepts of morality, all the sanctions of theology, have for ages been employed to confirm this feeling. This is the chief corner stone of present society; and to this maternal instinct have, till very lately, our most heartfelt appeals been made for the progress of the human race, by means of a deeper and more vital education. Pestalozzi and his most enlightened disciples are distinguished by this sentiment. And are we all at once to abandon, to deny, to destroy this supposed stronghold of virtue? Is it questioned whether the family arrangement of mankind is to be preserved? Is it discovered that the sanctuary, till now deemed the holiest on earth, is to be invaded by intermeddling skepticism, and its altars sacrilegiously destroyed by the rude hands of innovating progress? Here "social science" must be brought to issue.

The question of association and of marriage are one. If, as we have been popularly led to believe, the individual or separate family is in the true order of Providence, then the associative life is a false effort. If the associative life is true, then is the separate family a false arrangement. By the maternal feeling, it appears to be decided that the co-existence of both is incompatible, is impossible. So also say some religious sects. Social science ventures to assert their harmony. This is the grand problem now remaining to be solved, for at least, the enlightening, if not for the vital elevation of humanity. That the affections can be divided or bent with equal ardor on two objects, so opposed as universal and individual love, may at least be rationally doubted. History has not yet exhibited such phenomena in an associate body, and scarcely perhaps in any individual. The monasteries and convents, which have existed in all ages, have been maintained solely by the annihilation of that peculiar affection on which the separate family is based. The Shaker families, in which the two sexes are not entirely dissociated, can yet only maintain their union by forbidding and preventing the growth of personal affection other than that of a spiritual character. And this in fact is not personal in the sense of individual, but ever a manifestation of universal affection. Spite of the speculations of hopeful bachelors and æsthetic spinsters, there is somewhat in the marriage bond which is found to counteract the universal nature of the affections, to a degree tending at least to make the considerate pause, before they assert that, by any social arrangements whatever, the two can be blended into one harmony. The general condition of married persons at this time is some evidence of the existence of such a doubt in their minds. Were they as convinced as the unmarried of the beauty and truth of associate life, the demonstration would be now presented. But might it not be enforced that the two family ideas really neutralize each other? Is it not quite certain that the human heart cannot be set in two places; that man cannot worship at two altars? It is only the determination to do what parents consider the best for themselves and their families, which renders the o'er populous world such a wilderness of selfhood as it is. Destroy this feeling, they say, and you prohibit every motive to exertion. Much

truth is there in this affirmation. For to them, no other motive remains, nor indeed to any one else, save that of the universal good, which does not permit the building up of supposed self-good; and therefore, forecloses all possibility of an individual family.

These observations, of course, equally apply to all the associative attempts, now attracting so much public attention; and perhaps most especially to such as have more of Fourier's designs than are observable at Brook Farm. The slight allusion in all the writers of the "Phalansterian" class, to the subject of marriage, is rather remarkable. They are acute and eloquent in deploring Woman's oppressed and degraded position in past and present times, but are almost silent as to the future. In the mean while, it is gratifying to observe the successes which in some departments attend every effort, and that Brook Farm is likely to become comparatively eminent in the highly important and praiseworthy attempts, to render labor of the hands more dignified and noble, and mental education more free and lovable.

C. L.

TANTALUS.

THE astronomers said, Give us matter and a little motion, and we will construct the universe. It is not enough that we should have matter, we must also have a single impulse, one shove to launch the mass, and generate the harmony of the centrifugal and centripetal forces. Once heave the ball from the hand, and we can show how all this mighty order grew. — A very unreasonable postulate, thought some of their students, and a plain begging of the question. Could you not prevail to know the genesis of projection as well as the continuation of it? — Nature, meantime, had not waited for the discussion, but, right or wrong, bestowed the impulse, and the balls rolled. It was no great affair, a mere push, but the astronomers were right in