

Progress of Social Reform.

BRINDLEY IN THE POTTERIES.—(June 24th, 1840.—) There has been immense excitement last week in the Staffordshire Potteries, arising from the proceedings of Brindley. About three weeks ago, he made his appearance in Stoke, and gave two lectures; after which, he gave two more in Burslem, about four miles distant. These lectures paying pretty well, he repeated the dose in each place. In his harangues, he went on in the same style, which he is well known to be a master of wherever he has been; abuse, misrepresentation, and downright blackguardism; so much, indeed, as to terrify our friends to such an extent from fear the public should believe his statements and persecution follow, that they challenged him, in my name, to a public discussion, upon equal terms. This was accepted on his part; and after some difficulty, arrangements were made between a committee of his friends and ours; the conditions being, that the National School Room, Burslem, should be the place of meeting; that a chairman on each side should be appointed by the respective parties, with a moderator agreed upon jointly; the proceeds to go to the Staffordshire Infirmary, and the disputants to have equal time; the evenings of discussion to be Tuesday and Thursday, the 16th and 18th of June. After these arrangements had been agreed upon, I was written to, when I signified my willingness to meet Brindley upon the terms just stated. I heard no more of the matter until the Sunday afternoon prior to the time agreed upon for the discussion, when I received a letter from the Secretary of the Tunstall branch, informing me, that as the National School Room, Burslem, was engaged for a religious meeting on the Tuesday evening, Wednesday and Thursday were the evenings which had been finally settled upon. Though I had an engagement for the Wednesday evening, and Mr. Owen had agreed to lecture in the Potteries the same night, still, that Brindley might not have the chance of escaping, I put off my engagement; got Mr. Owen advertised for the Wednesday afternoon, instead of the evening, that the two meetings might not clash; and, thinking that no other change would take place, I left Manchester at the proper time, to meet the "Parson's Scavenger!" But I was doomed to disappointment! I left Stoke on Wednesday afternoon for Burslem, in company with my chairman Mr. Mart, and got to the National School Room at a quarter past six o'clock. Six was the hour the doors should have been opened, according to announcement—the discussion to begin at seven. When we got there, about three hundred persons were congregated outside. We waited a short time expecting the doors to be opened, but no appearance of such a thing took place. About half-past six, a report got out that the discussions would be held in the "Covered Market." I at once concluded that Brindley had been at some of his dirty tricks, and I determined not to stir from the National School Room. I briefly addressed the people assembled outside to that effect. About a quarter to seven, Brindley, with his chairman, made their appearance in front of the National School Room, and moved an adjournment to the Covered Market. I came up immediately after, and protested against such proceedings, giving as my reasons, that I had been informed, that during the afternoon Mr. Brindley's friends had got the Market fitted up for the meeting, without consulting my committee. That they had opened it unknown to us at six o'clock, and got their friends into the front seats, while our friends were allowed to congregate outside of the National School Room. That I would not be made a tool of, either by Brindley or his friends; and would not consent to any fresh arrangements, unless my committee was consulted in the matter, and due announcement of the alteration given to the public; and that if Brindley's committee during the day had conceived the National School to be insecure, their business should have been to take the opinion of both committees as to what fresh arrangements could be made. The only reply that I got to these reasons was from the elegant tongue of Brindley, in the shape of "coward," "scoundrel," "villain," and other names equally polite, concluding by calling on the meeting to take me to the covered market by force. Finding that his whole object was to create a riot, and subject me to personal injury, I made, in company with a few of my friends, my way out of the crowd, which, by this time, from the novelty of the scene and the desire to know what was going on,—the whole neighbourhood being alarmed,—might be about from a thousand to fifteen hundred persons. During my progress out, I got some charitable Christian acknowledgements from Brindley's friends, in the shape of shaking of fists and thrusting of elbows into my sides. Nothing further transpired that night, but what followed you will have pretty accurately stated in the North Staffordshire Mercury. The account in that paper, up to where I have marked, is very incorrect and false in many particulars; afterwards its statements are tolerably near the truth, except that the observations of a personal character omitted, were in reference to Brindley's character at March. I may also state that the bearing and conduct of the deputation was anything but gentlemanly. The discussion, consider

how little our principles have been agitated in the Potteries; and that it is one of the strong-holds of Methodism; went off extremely well, the behaviour was very good upon the whole, except the feeling called out by Brindley in giving garbled extracts from our works upon which he put the foulest construction, and the sermonising about heaven and hell, and infidelity, and atheism, and blasphemy, which he made use of the second night. The first night he attempted to reason, and, according to his friends, had decidedly the worst of it. He next tried preaching, and raised a bit of a storm, though nothing to what I expected. Resolutions were put at the conclusion of the discussion by Brindley's friends, when we instructed our friends not to vote at all as they might be marked, and thrown out of employment, and about one half were neutral when the show of hands was taken. Good, I am certain, will come out of the agitation.

R. BUCHANAN.

P.S.—I think that about one-third of the meetings each night would be friendly: there might be about three or four thousand persons present the second night. A Tory manufacturer, Enoch Wood, of Burslem, the proposer of a resolution, stated at the conclusion of the discussion, that if he had any Socialist workmen, he would turn them off. This was one reason why we did not wish our friends to vote. So much for the fiendish spirit of sectarian religion.

R. B.

[From the paper alluded to we extract the following account of the proceedings. It will be observed that the good people of the Potteries were so afraid of Mr. Owen's lectures, that they managed to deprive him of several places which had been engaged for lectures by that gentleman. This is anything but a proof of strength.—Ed.]

THURSDAY'S PROCEEDINGS.—Mr. Owen, the celebrated founder of the "Social system," who had arrived the day before to lecture at the Theatre, at Newcastle, (which was ultimately refused his use, as stated elsewhere,) having put out placards, announcing his intention to lecture at the Town Hall, Stoke, Mr. Brindley, and a number of gentlemen met in the Town Hall, Burslem, at three o'clock, and determined to give a challenge to Mr. Owen, to meet Mr. Brindley that night in public discussion. It was also arranged that a numerous deputation should proceed to Stoke for this purpose, accompanied by gentlemen from Hanley, who should be invited to unite with them. In agreement with this decision, George Phillips, Esq., the chief constable, accompanied by Mr. Brindley, and fourteen gentlemen, proceeded to Stoke at half-past four o'clock. The party occupied a phaeton and an omnibus engaged for the occasion. On each of the carriages was placed a large placard, "CHALLENGE TO MR. OWEN." On arriving at Hanley, the party were informed that the Hanley deputation had proceeded to Stoke, where the body eventually met, at the Wheat Sheaf Inn, to the number of forty-five. The Rev. Mr. Marriott was called to the chair, and a resolution passed, inviting Mr. Owen to a public discussion, and also appointing a deputation of the following gentlemen to wait upon him at the residence of Mr. Williams, where it was understood he was staying: Mr. Phillips, Mr. Crockett, Mr. Cox, Mr. Nixon, Mr. Kennedy, and Mr. Palmer. Mr. Brindley accompanied the deputation. On arriving at the house of Mr. Williams, that gentleman informed the deputation that Mr. Owen was then engaged, but that he would be the bearer of any communication they had to make. To this course, Mr. Phillips, on the part of the deputation, objected, and stated that their business being with Mr. Owen, they were desirous of a personal interview with that gentleman. Mr. Williams then pledged himself that Mr. Owen should meet the deputation at the Wheat Sheaf Inn, within the space of fifteen minutes. The gentlemen then departed, and reported the result of their interview with Mr. Williams to the general meeting of deputies at the Inn. In about a quarter of an hour, Mr. Owen, attended by Mr. Williams, Mr. Buchanan, and Mr. Alex. Campbell, arrived, and were received below by the six gentlemen who had waited upon Mr. Owen, and who immediately conducted that gentleman and his friends to the meeting in the large room up-stairs. Mr. Owen with his friends took his place on the right of the chairman, who read to him the resolution of the meeting, inviting him to public discussion that evening at Burslem. He inquired who was to meet him. The chairman informed him that Mr. Brindley would be his opponent. Mr. Owen said, if that were the case, he could not accept the challenge. On the chairman asking for his reason for declining the engagement, Mr. Owen said "that he could not consent to meet any person in discussion who was not a gentleman." This observation produced a burst of disapprobation, which it was difficult to subdue; when Mr. Owen said, that if the deportment of the gentlemen was not respectful towards himself, he should immediately leave the room. Order being again restored, the chairman expressed his hope that Mr. Owen would permit the forty-five gentlemen before him to judge of the character of Mr. Brindley, and would receive their opinion in preference to his pre-conceived prejudices. Mr. Owen replied that he must be permitted to have his own opinion as to the character of those with whom it was sought to bring him into collision. Mr. Brindley triumphantly pointed to the printed announcement of Mr. Owen's intended lectures at Newcastle, at the foot of which he was actually invited to a discussion with Mr. Owen. In explanation, Mr. Owen said that he had not before seen the bill, and that it was published without his concurrence. (It was printed in Manchester.) The meeting expressed its opinion that he was bound by the acts of his recognized missionaries. Mr. Brindley challenged Mr. Owen to produce a single fact in his history which was inconsistent with his character as a respectable man. He treated with contempt the assumption that because he felt compelled to use strong terms in describing the system of Socialism, and occasionally exhibited a little warmth in defence of his principles, that he must relinquish all claims to the character of a gentleman.

man. Mr. Owen intimated that he did not found his charges on any expressions uttered in the heat of debate, but on statements which Mr. Brindley had made; which were not only false, but known by Mr. Brindley to be false. Mr. Brindley demanded one such fact to be given to the meeting. Mr. Williams then asked Mr. Brindley if he had not reflected upon Mr. Owen as a husband and a brother. Mr. Brindley promptly admitted that he had animadverted upon Mr. Owen's character as a husband, and that he had impeached his integrity as a brother. Mr. Owen said that no assertions could be more unfounded; for no married persons ever lived in the enjoyment of greater affection, or were blessed with more amiable children than himself and his late wife. And, in relation to his wife's sisters, they were placed under his own care, and he had expended out of his own means for their comfort, in an establishment and carriages, not less than twenty thousand pounds, and no persons would be more willing to corroborate his testimony than the ladies themselves. Mr. Brindley denied this, and intimated that the members of his family made very different statements. Mr. Owen said that he regularly stayed with one of them when he visited Liverpool. [Some observations of an extremely personal character ensued, which we prefer omitting.] Mr. Owen appearing to have made up his mind not to meet Mr. Brindley, Mr. Buchanan was at length asked if he would meet him, and he readily consented. Mr. Owen remarked that he had not the slightest objection to Mr. Buchanan meeting Mr. Brindley, providing that the gentlemen from Burslem would pledge themselves that no personal annoyance or insult should be offered to him, which he had reason to fear from the great excitement which had been created. Mr. Williams said, that in justice to Mr. Buchanan, he ought to state that he was the cause of Mr. Buchanan not accepting the challenge to go from the National School to the Covered Market, on Thursday evening, for he feared, from the great excitement that prevailed, his personal safety was by no means secure. Mr. Phillips and the deputation pledged their honour that Mr. Buchanan should be protected from all insult and annoyance; at the same time they felt that they could not altogether restrain expressions of dissent or disapprobation of certain sentiments, in a popular assembly.—Mr. Buchanan said the mere expression of disapprobation was a thing of little consequence, providing he was not subject to personal insult. It was at length agreed that Mr. Buchanan should meet Mr. Brindley at half-past eight that evening, and that the discussion should terminate at eleven. The Burslem deputation immediately departed, amidst the loud cheers of a large assemblage of persons, who had collected before the inn. When they arrived at Burslem, such was the excitement produced, in the expectation of a discussion, that the streets were filled with persons anxious to hear the result. When Mr. Brindley announced the fact of Mr. Buchanan having accepted the challenge, a tremendous rush was made towards the covered market, the place of meeting, with the view of securing places. From fifteen hundred or two thousand persons were present on the occasion. After the preliminaries had been settled by the committee, Mr. Brindley and Mr. Buchanan made their appearance on the platform, which was densely crowded. Mr. Phillips acted as Mr. Brindley's chairman, and Mr. Mart, of Stoke, as Mr. Buchanan's. The Rev. E. Birchall was elected moderator, to act in the event of the two chairmen not agreeing in opinion. Both speakers were allowed half an hour each, for the first address, and a quarter of an hour each afterwards. Mr. Brindley commenced, and pledged himself to prove that Socialism was absurd, immoral, atheistical, and a direct robbery of the working classes. The discussion embraced the two first points only, including the irresponsibility which the system sought to establish, and the immorality which the abolition of the rites of marriage would produce, if Socialism were to become prevalent. We have not space to give even an outline of the debate. The whole of the proceedings were admirably managed. The assembly cheerfully put itself under the control of the chairmen, and the result was a well conducted discussion, in which great ability was displayed. Mr. Brindley's talents are known; and Mr. Buchanan's are of an order that induce us to wish they were employed in a better cause.

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYNE.—Placards were posted on the walls in the Potteries early in the week, announcing Mr. Owen's intention to deliver lectures explanatory and defensive of his system at the Newcastle theatre, on Wednesday afternoon and Friday evening, and inviting Mr. Brindley, by name, to attend, and discuss with Mr. Owen some of his missionaryaries the points at issue. When Mr. Owen arrived at the Theatre, on Wednesday afternoon, he found the doors locked against him, and admittance refused by Thos. Ward, Esq., solicitor, in the name of the body of proprietors. It seems that Mr. Hind, spirit merchant, has the letting of the Theatre, and during his absence from home, the use of it was promised by his son to some of Mr. Owen's friends; when the circumstance became known to the proprietors, they withheld their acquiescence, and instructed Mr. Ward to take the necessary proceedings to maintain their power over the building. A considerable number of persons who had assembled to hear the lecture, were briefly addressed by Mr. Owen, in explanation of the cause of disappointment.

STOKE-UPON-TRENT.—Mr. Brindley delivered his fourth lecture against Socialism, in the Wesleyan Chapel, on Friday evening, the 12th instant, the Rev. Mr. Marriott in the chair. Mr. Williams replied to some of his statements, and the proceedings became very disorderly. We understand that an agreement was come to for a future discussion between Mr. Brindley and Mr. Williams on some points, but that it has since been abandoned.—In consequence of the refusal of the proprietors of Newcastle Theatre to allow Mr. Owen to lecture there, placards were put out on Thursday morning, announcing that Mr. Owen would lecture that day and Friday, in Stoke Town Hall. A meeting of the inhabitants of Stoke was hastily convened, at which it was decided to request the trustees of the Hall to interpose their authority, and prevent its

* These "personal observations" which the "Reporter" for the Mercury ("preferred omitting") related, as explained in Mr. Buchanan's letter to Mr. Brindley's conduct at March, in Cambridgeshire. No doubt both Mr. Brindley and his friends have reasons for preferring to omit all such observations.—Ed.