

which they struck, it would have taken six years to recoup them for their loss. The colliers in the Forest of Dean went back to work at the old terms after eleven weeks' play, at the loss of fifty thousand pounds. The iron-workers of Northumberland and Durham, after spending a third of the year in idleness, and losing two hundred thousand pounds in wages, went back to work at a reduction of ten per cent. The colliers and iron workers of South Wales, during the recent strike or lock-out were idle for four months, and, according to Lord Aberdare, lost, in wages alone, not less than three millions sterling!

Here, then, is abundance of money within the power of working-men—money which they might utilize, but do not. Think only of a solitary million, out of the three millions sterling which they threw away during the coal strike, being devoted to the starting of collieries, or iron-mills, or manufactories, to be worked by co-operative production for the benefit of the operatives themselves. With frugal habits, says Mr. Greg, the well-conditioned workman might in ten years easily have five hundred pounds in the bank; and, combining his savings with twenty other men similarly disposed, they might have ten thousand pounds for the purpose of starting any manufacture in which they are adepts.

That this is not an impracticable scheme is capable of being easily proved. The practice of co-operation has long been adopted by work-people throughout England. A large proportion of the fishery industry has been conducted on that principle for hundreds of years. Fishermen join in building, rigging, and manning a boat; the proceeds of the fish they catch at sea is divided among them—so much to the boat, so much to the fishermen. The company of oyster-dredgers of

Whitstable "has existed time out of mind," though it was only in 1793 that they were incorporated by act of Parliament. The tin-miners of Cornwall have also acted on the same principle. They have mined, washed, and sold the tin, dividing the proceeds among themselves in certain proportions—most probably from the time that the Phœnicians carried away the produce to their ports in the Mediterranean.

In our own time, co-operation has been practiced to a considerable extent. In 1795, the Hull Anti-Mill Industrial Society was founded. The reasons for its association are explained in the petition addressed to the mayor and aldermen of Hull by the first members of the society. The petition begins thus: "We, the poor inhabitants of the said town, have lately experienced much trouble and sorrow in ourselves and families, on the occasion of the exorbitant price of flour; and though the price is much reduced at present, yet we judge it needful to take every precaution to preserve ourselves from the invasions of covetous and merciless men in future." They accordingly entered into a subscription to build a mill, in order to supply themselves with flour. The corporation granted their petition, and supported them by liberal donations. The mill was built, and exists to this day. It now consists of more than four thousand members, each holding a share of twenty-five shillings. The members belong principally to the laboring-classes. The millers endeavored by action at law to put down the society, but the attempt was successfully resisted. The society manufactures flour, and sells it to the members at market price, dividing the profits annually among the share-holders, according to the quantity consumed in each member's family. The society has proved eminently remunerative.

Many years passed before the example of the "poor inhabitants" of Hull was followed. It was only in 1847 that the co-operators of Leeds purchased a flour-mill, and in 1850 that those of Rochdale did the same; since which time they have manufactured flour for the benefit of their members. The corn-millers of Leeds attempted to undersell the Leeds Industrial Society. They soon failed, and the price of flour was permanently reduced. The Leeds mill does business amounting to more than a hundred thousand pounds yearly; its capital amounts to twenty-two thousand pounds; and it paid more than eight thousand pounds of profits and bonuses to its three thousand six hundred members in 1866, besides supplying them with flour of the best quality. The Rochdale District Co-operative Corn-mill Society has also been eminently successful. It supplies flour to consumers residing within a radius of about fifteen miles round Rochdale. It also supplies flour to sixty-two co-operative societies, numbering over twelve thousand members. Its business in 1866 amounted to two hundred and twenty-four thousand pounds, and its profits to over eighteen thousand pounds.

The Rochdale Corn-mill grew out of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers' Society, which formed an epoch in the history of industrial co-operative institutions. The Equitable Pioneers' Society was established in the year 1844, at a time when trade was in a very bad condition, and working-people generally were heartless and hopeless as to their future state. Some twenty-eight or thirty men, mostly flannel-weavers, met and formed themselves into a society for the purpose of economizing their hard-won earnings. It is pretty well known that working-men generally pay at least ten per cent. more for the articles they consume than they need to

do under a sounder system. Professor Fawcett estimates their loss at nearer twenty per cent. than ten per cent. At all events, these working-men wished to save this amount of profit, which before went into the pockets of the distributors of the necessities—in other words, into the pockets of the shop-keepers.

The weekly subscription was twopence each; and when about fifty-two calls of twopence each had been made, they found that they were able to buy a sack of oatmeal, which they distributed at cost-price among the members of the society. The number of members grew, and the subscriptions so increased that the society was enabled to buy tea, sugar, and other articles, and distribute them among the members at cost-price. They superseded the shop-keepers, and became their own tradesmen. They insisted from the first on payments in cash. No credit was given.

The society grew. It established a store for the sale of food, firing, clothes, and other necessities. In a few years the members set on foot the Co-operative Corn-mill. They increased the capital by the issue of one-pound shares, and began to make and sell clothes and shoes. They also sold drapery. But the principal trade consisted in the purchase and sale of provisions—butter, meat, groceries, flour, and such-like. Notwithstanding the great distress during the period of the cotton famine, the society continued to prosper. From the first, it set apart a portion of its funds for educational purposes, and established a news-room, and a library, which now contains over six thousand volumes.

The society continued to increase until it possessed eleven branches for the sale of goods and stores in or near Rochdale, besides the original office in Toad Lane. At the end of 1866, it had six thousand two hundred

and forty-six members, and a capital of ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and eight pounds. Its income for goods sold and cash received during the year was two hundred and forty-nine thousand one hundred and twenty-two pounds; and the gross profit thirty-one thousand nine hundred and thirty-one pounds.

But this was not all. Two and a half per cent. were appropriated from the net profits to support the news-rooms and library; and there are now eleven news and reading rooms at different places in or near the town where the society carries on its business; the sum devoted to this object amounting to over seven hundred pounds per annum. The members play at chess and draughts, and use the stereoscopic views, microscopes, and telescopes placed in these libraries. No special arrangements have been made to promote temperance; but the news-rooms and library exercise a powerful and beneficial influence in promoting sobriety. It has been said that the society has done more to remove drunkenness from Rochdale than all that the advocates of temperance have been able to effect.

The example of the Rochdale Pioneers has exercised a powerful influence on working-men throughout the northern counties of England. There is scarcely a town or village but has a co-operative institution of one kind or another. These societies have promoted habits of saving, of thrift, and of temperance. They have given the people an interest in money matters, and enabled them to lay out their earnings to the best advantage. They have also given the working-people some knowledge of business; for the whole of their concerns are managed by committees selected at the general meetings of the members.

One of the most flourishing co-operative societies is that established at Over Darwen. The society has

erected a row of handsome buildings in the centre of the town. The shops for the sale of provisions, groceries, clothing, and other necessities occupy the lower story. Over the shops are the library, reading-rooms, and class-rooms, which are open to the members and their families. The third story consists of a large public hall, which is used for lectures, concerts, and dances. There are six branches of the society established in different parts of the town. A large amount of business is done, and the profits are very considerable. These are divided among the members, in proportion to the purchases made by them. The profits are for the most part re-invested in joint-stock paper-mills, cotton-mills, and collieries, in the neighborhood of Darwen. One of the most praiseworthy features of the society is the provision made for the free education of the members and their families. Two and a half per cent. of the profits are appropriated for the purpose. While inspecting the institution a few months ago, we were informed that the science classes were so efficiently conducted that one of the pupils had just obtained a Government scholarship of fifty pounds a year, for three years, including free instruction at the School of Mines, Jermyn Street, London, with a free use of the laboratories during that period. There are also two other co-operative institutions in the same place; and we were informed that the working-people of Darwen are, for the most part, hard-working, sober, and thrifty.

The example has also spread into Scotland and the South of England. At Northampton, a co-operative society exists for the purpose of buying and selling leather, and also for the manufacture of boots and shoes. At Padiham and other places in Lancashire, co-operative cotton-mills have been established. The

Manchester and Salford Equitable Co-operative Society "combines the securities and facilities of a bank with the profits of a trade." But the business by which it mostly thrives, is by the purchase and sale of food, provisions, groceries, draperies, and other articles, with the exception of intoxicating liquors.

The sole secret of its success consists in "ready money." It gives no credit. Every thing is done for cash, the profit of the trade being divided among the members. Every business man knows that cash payment is the soundest method of conducting business: the Rochdale Pioneers having discovered the secret, have spread it among their class. In their "advice to members of this and other societies," they say: "Look well after money matters. Buy your goods as much as possible in the first markets; or, if you have the produce of your industry to sell, contrive, if possible, to sell it in the last. Never depart from the principle of buying and selling for ready money. Beware of long reckonings." In short, the co-operative societies became tradesmen on a large scale; and, besides the pureness of the food sold, their profit consisted in the discount for cash payments, which was divided among the members.

Land and building societies constitute another form of co-operation. These are chiefly supported by the minor middle-class men, but also to a considerable extent by the skilled and thrifty working-class men. By their means portions of land are bought, and dwelling-houses are built. By means of a building society, a person who desires to possess a house enters the society as a member, and, instead of paying his rent to the landlord, pays his subscriptions and interest to a committee of his friends; and in course of time, when his subscriptions are paid up, the house is purchased, and conveyed

to him by the society. The building society is thus a savings-bank, where money accumulates for a certain purpose. But even those who do not purchase a house receive a dividend and bonus on their shares, which sometimes amount to a considerable sum.

The accumulation of property has the effect which it always has upon thrifty men; it makes them steady, sober, and diligent. It weans them from revolutionary notions, and makes them conservative. When workmen, by their industry and frugality, have secured their own independence, they will cease to regard the sight of others' well-being as a wrong inflicted on themselves; and it will no longer be possible to make political capital out of their imaginary woes.

It has been said that freehold land societies, which were established for political objects, had the effect, of weaning men from political reform. They were first started in Birmingham, for the purpose of enabling men to buy land, and divide it into forty-shilling freeholds, so that the owners might become electors and vote against the corn-laws. The corn-laws have been done away with; but the holders of freehold land still exist, though many of them have ceased to be politicians. "Mr. Arthur Ryland informs me," said Mr. Holyoke, in a recent paper on building societies, "that in Birmingham numbers of persons under the influence of these societies have forsaken patriotism for profits. And I know both co-operators and Chartists who were loud-mouthed for social and political reform, who now care no more for it than a Whig government; and decline to attend a public meeting on a fine night, while they would crawl like the serpent in Eden, through a gutter in a storm, after a good security. They have tasted land, and the gravel has got into their souls."

"Yet to many others," he adds, "these societies have taught a healthy frugality they never else would have known; and enabled many an industrious son to take to his home his poor old father—who expected and dreaded to die in the work-house—and set him down to smoke his pipe in the sunshine in the garden, of which the land and the house belonged to his child."

The Leeds Permanent Building Society, which has furnished healthy tenements for about two hundred families, sets forth the following recommendations of the influence which they have exercised among the working-classes of that town: "It is truly cheering to hear the members themselves, at occasional meetings, tell how, from small savings, hitherto deemed too little for active application, they began to invest in the society: then to build or buy; then to advance in life, and come to competence, from extending their savings in this manner. . . . The provident habits and knowledge thus induced are most beneficial to the members. And the result is, that the careless become thoughtful, and, on saving, become orderly, respectable, propertied, and in every way better citizens, neighbors, and more worthy and comfortable. The employment of money in this useful direction encourages trade, advances prices and wages, comforts the working-classes, and at the same time provides the means of home enjoyments, without which such advances would be comparatively useless, and certainly uncertain."

There are also exceptional towns and villages in Lancashire where large sums of money have been saved by the operatives for buying or building comfortable cottage dwellings. Last year Padiham saved about fifteen thousand pounds for this purpose, although its population is only about eight thousand. Burnley has also been very successful. The Building Society there

has six thousand six hundred investors, who saved last year one hundred and sixty thousand pounds, or an average of twenty-four pounds for each investor. The members consist principally of mill operatives, miners, mechanics, engineers, carpenters, stone-masons, and laborers. They also include women, both married and unmarried. Our informant states that "great numbers of the working-classes have purchased houses in which to live. They have likewise bought houses as a means of investment. The Building Society has assisted in hundreds of these cases, by advancing money on mortgage, such mortgages being repaid by easy installments."

Building societies are, on the whole, among the most excellent methods of illustrating the advantages of Thrift. They induce men to save money for the purpose of buying their own homes; in which, so long as they live, they possess the best of all securities.