Richard Owen

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Chapter IV

PROFESSOR AND CITIZEN

ON JANUARY 1, 1864, Owen unbuckled his sword and donned academic attire. He changed his title from colonel to professor as he assumed his teaching duties at Indiana University. He was then fifty-four years of age. Teaching was, however, no new experience for him. Years of soldiering and surveying had merely interrupted his main pursuit. As a young man he had taught elementary school children; for nine years he had taught at Western Military Institute. While he had been on geological surveys, he had lectured on various subjects to the citizens among whom he had carried on his work. Somewhat like Lincoln, he yearned to impart his knowledge to others. His academic training, as well as his experience, qualified him as a teacher. His schooling at Hofwyl and at Andersonian Institute had been thorough; his continued research with his brother, Dale, had sharpened his scholarship, and his studies leading to a degree in medicine had broadened his information. Most important of all, Professor Owen never relaxed his mental activity. Though he was professor for fifteen years, he was a student all his life. He enjoyed learning for learning's sake and, when he faced his classes in 1864, he was a man of mature scholarship. His speeches and writings reveal a wide acquaintance with many fields of literature.

Indiana University was not a large institution when Professor Owen began his teaching there. In 1863, there were 112 students in the collegiate department and 96 in the prepa-
The Archives of Purdue: Richard Owen

ratory school. The collegiate staff comprised seven professors, most of whom had been connected with the University in 1853, at which time "all save the president were scholarly men." Professor Owen did not lower the intellectual caliber; he was soon classified with the superior group, which became known as the "Big Four." They were Professors Ballantine, Kirkwood, Wylie, and Owen.

Professor Owen's mastery of his subject matter was indisputable. What is more important, he possessed a philosophy of education that gave tone and color to his teaching. It made him a teacher of men as well as of subject matter. At his own request the epitaph on his tombstone is: "His first desire was to be virtuous, his second to be wise." He was wont to remark, "The sum of wisdom is to know the laws of nature by which the universe is governed; the sum of virtue is to obey them." His ruling passion as a teacher was to qualify others to merit his own epitaph by unfolding for them the secrets of nature. And he took his responsibilities seriously, almost as conscientiously as a monk directing novitiates.

With a nineteenth-century ecclesiastical view of education, he implored every fellow-teacher to exercise a watchful care "over the health, the mental development and the moral purity of those entrusted to his charge or coming more immediately under his supervision in his classes, learning to view them as he would his own near and dear relatives, realizing further the solemn truth aroused by a sense of the educator's responsibility to God and our country for the immortal soul consigned to our care; the position of the instructor, rightfully viewed, may become one of pleasure; correctly appreciated by parents, should be one of reasonable profit to the instructor and judiciously pursued should evidently impress us as one of high responsibility.

"In view of these facts let us not be satisfied with barely performing our duties and obtaining a commercial equivalent,
Soldier

Professor
Professor and Citizen

but let us dignify the profession that students shall love to sit beneath our instruction and give heed to our admonition, that parents shall confide to us their jewels with abiding trust, that God Himself shall approve and shall pour out upon us a double portion of His Holy Spirit, sanctifying us to mold the future citizen of this glorious republic for such health of body, vigor of intellect, elevation in morality, purity in spirituality that all the nations of the earth shall through them respect her power, pay tribute to her intellect, commend her unwavering virtue, and imitate her obedience to human and divine law."

While this may seem like an extravagant delineation of duty, Professor Owen did not miss his own ideal very far. A large number of former students attest his scholarship, character, and nobility of soul. Mrs. Emma Jennings Clark, of the class of 1873, seventy-one years after attending his classes still remembers him as an "excellent teacher and noble gentleman." Mr. Charles F. Carpenter, another surviving student, says that Professor Owen "was unquestionably master of his subject matter. Evolution was a new doctrine; Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall were living then, and he was abreast of their work. His deep reverence for truth resembles that of Kepler bowing in awed humility and saying, 'I am thinking thy thoughts after thee, O God.' And we students, surrounded by thousands of forms of life, beheld through his eyes the epic of creation unfolding. To me Dr. Owen was hero, sage and friend." Dr. William Lowe Bryan, though never a student of Professor Owen, knew him well and admired him deeply. Professor Owen infused in students not only an appreciation of his subject matter, but also an affection for himself. Nor did his colleagues fail to appreciate his high qualities. The late David Starr Jordan observed him as "a gentle and reverent man, unassuming and unselfish in all his relations. A man of perfect courtesy of thought: a man whom everybody loved because
his love went out to everybody. He was the highest type of teacher, of naturalist, of scholar, of soldier even, because above all he was the highest type of man.” The same nobility of soul, excellence of character, and simplicity of manner that impressed the Confederate prisoners at Camp Morton left their mark upon his students and associates. Knowledge of subject matter is an important qualification in a teacher. Character, whose traits are conveyed more by example than by precept, is no less essential in a leader of youth. Judged by either standard, Professor Owen met the full requirements.

As a classroom manager he was superb. He maintained an atmosphere of dignity and scholarship. Raucous hilarity springing from demagogic stimuli was entirely absent. To him the classroom was not a place for entertainment, light bantering, or exhibition of the instructor’s personality, but rather for the revelation of a theory or the exposition of a principle. He held that the quest for knowledge is sufficiently intriguing to scorn tawdry appeals; the consciousness of conquest, sufficiently inspiring to drive the students in search of new triumphs.

This devotion to scholarship and ideals did not make him aloof and remote, for Professor Owen was full of human sympathy. To him the members of the class did not appear as did Queen Victoria to Gladstone, a public department, but rather as she did to Disraeli, a woman, a personality. Bright students with an inquiring mind eagerly lingered after class for further discussion of the subject under consideration, and none of them left without having peered a little farther into the unknown. Nor did he ignore those who had scholastic difficulties. In 1913 Senator Newell Sanders of Tennessee remarked that “Dr. Owen was especially kind and helpful to those of us who were from the country and behind in our studies.” The human touch was not missing. Indeed, if the occasion demanded it he could “use his temper, and not lose it.”

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Extant outlines reveal that he made careful preparation for his class meetings. Long before pedagogues advised the use of lesson plans, Professor Owen organized his discussions into introduction, motivation, body, and conclusion. He rarely used the lecture method; he placed his confidence in discussions. He made generous use of charts to illustrate his discussions. These covered the walls and boards of his classroom and presented to the eye the geological formation of the earth as well as the classification of animal and vegetable kingdoms. He also adorned his room with the busts of the great scientists: Cuvier, Audubon, Linnaeus, Huxley, Tyndall, and others; and their names and those of many others frequently were referred to during the class hour.

When he was first engaged to teach at Indiana University, he had agreed to offer instruction in geology, chemistry, and natural philosophy. In 1873, owing to the shortage of modern language teachers, and to his competence in German and French, he began teaching in these fields also. Years spent at Hofwyl had fortified him for such an emergency.

As a teacher he manifested a lively interest in his subject matter. His absorption in what he was teaching was so complete that only one who believed that his auditors shared his fervor could have sustained so high a pitch of enthusiasm. And yet his ardor revealed no excitability, but rather a total engrossment. His immersion in whatever he was teaching was so entire that he assumed that all his students followed with an equal zeal; or perhaps he was so aglow with what he was doing that he did not observe any attitude to the contrary. At any rate he did not try to compel any attention by arbitrary technique. He marshalled a fund of information and interpretation, opened new avenues of thought; and students who desired to profit by it were welcome to anything he had to offer. Those who preferred to meditate upon the last class rush or election, he did not disturb. He was not the drill-master.
An old student device to escape responsibility for an assignment is to sidetrack the discussion to the professor’s special field of interest. Indiana students three-quarters of a century ago practiced this universal guile, and Professor Owen was peculiarly susceptible to it. Even before he arrived in the United States he had traveled considerably upon the European continent, and he was of course conversant with England, Wales, and Scotland. In 1869 he traveled in Europe and the Near East. He loved to relate his experiences in foreign lands and to describe distant countries. With appropriate conscientiousness, he would open a discussion of the day’s assignment only to be interrupted by a laggard whose object was to seek safety from pointed questions rather than information in Professor Owen’s special hobby. Inquiries regarding the rock formations of Palestine or the Peloponnesus, the relative merits of Grant and Lee as strategists, and the most recent geological surveys by the instructor usually insured immunity from searching questions for forty to fifty minutes. This game with variations was played by the students ad infinitum.

Whether he spoke on curricular or extracurricular subjects, there was no disorder in his classes. His treatment of any subject was usually so engaging that it held the student’s attention. Furthermore, a noble and dignified personality did not generate an atmosphere hospitable to frivolity.

Even during a period when the pressure to publish scarcely existed, Professor Owen wrote, not from any external compulsion but rather from an inner urge. In 1864 he made a geological survey of New Mexico and Arizona, and the report of this reconnaissance was published in the following year. In 1867 he made a similar survey of North Carolina. The report of this survey glows with prophecies of great opportunities: “Most excellent iron can be manufactured from magnetic iron ore, the iron rendered more valuable by the presence of tungsten.” He believed that the Blue Ridge had large deposits of
of gold, quartz, and copper, and that rich deposits of porcelain clay existed in both states. He predicted that, with the completion of the railroads in the area, prospects were good for the development of marble quarries. "As regards the agricultural facilities," he wrote, "I think it would be difficult to find a region which combines more advantages than are to be realized in the Blue Ridge tracts—pure water, extensive grazing range, proximity to market and fine scenery." He was most impressed by the agreeable climate, which he compared to the disadvantage of every other section of the country. The price of the land there, he asserted, was from $1 to $2 an acre, as compared to as much as $10 in other areas no better for settlement. He strongly recommended the section to prospective settlers.

In 1864 there appeared an article on "The Rock Salt of New Iberia," Louisiana, in the Transactions of the St. Louis Academy of Science, Vol. II. Other papers of his were published in the reports of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Scientific American, and the American Meteorological Journal. Even while he was contributing to these professional periodicals he also sought a wider reading public in the popular periodicals of his time as well as in the larger daily and weekly papers, including the New York Tribune. Less well-known papers to which he contributed were the Indianapolis Journal, the Indiana Farmer, and the Evansville Journal. He also published a series of articles in the Southwestern Journal of Education (Nashville) detailing some observations not found in physical geography. To these he gave the title: "Aids to the study of Geography." During his European tour in 1869 he published a series of fifteen letters, which appeared in the Evansville Journal (Indiana). Other letters were published in the New York Tribune.

Professor Owen's style was both facile and versatile. His articles in professional journals were scholarly and commanded
the respect of the ablest readers; those written for popular consumption were characterized by sweeping generalizations and comprehensive conclusions. He was an artist of simplification. The causes and characteristics of earthquakes were discussed in the vernacular of the market place; in describing the influence of geography upon society he combined the verve of a realtor’s talk and the integrity of a scholar’s exposition. The reports of his geological surveys reveal the analysis of the scientist and the vision of the sociologist.

Professor Owen’s activities were not confined to the classroom, for on January 29, 1864, less than a month after he took up his residence at Bloomington, he was chosen secretary to the faculty. This may have been a questionable honor, for it involved duties whose execution could scarcely produce claims to distinction. Professor Kirkwood, the retiring secretary, was no doubt glad to surrender the post to the academic recruit. And yet Professor Owen’s performance of these duties was executed with fidelity and dignity until 1872, when he resigned as secretary, because he wanted to devote his time to the improvement of his own department. As secretary he drafted resolutions and petitions in gracious English, and he wrote condolences and congratulations in dignified diction. Nor were his services completely unappreciated, for upon the cessation of these responsibilities, the faculty passed a resolution commending his “courtesy, energy, and high Christian character worthy of appreciation.”

On January 13, 1864, less than two weeks after his arrival on the campus, the faculty appointed him to “prepare some suggestions in regard to securing a geological cabinet and otherwise promoting the interests of the University.” The geological collection referred to comprised the specimens gathered, largely, by David Dale Owen. In 1864 it contained more than 85,000 items and was valued at more than $50,000. These rock specimens exemplified the stones and fossils typical of western
Europe and the United States. Many of them were so arranged as to reveal the order of rock superimposition of the various geological epochs. Other arrangements displayed the specimens in the order of their luster, hardness, or cleavage.

In 1861 the Owen family, through Richard, had offered this collection for sale to the state of Indiana for $25,000. No action was taken on the matter until the faculty's appointment of Professor Owen to consummate the purchase. Upon his recommendation a special hall was constructed in which the collection was housed. There for many years it enriched his teaching; but unfortunately a fire in 1883 destroyed the building and most of the rock exhibits, as well as the catalogue of the contents.

Professor Owen was of value to the University in other ways. Upon the resignation of faculty members the President relied upon his judgment in the selection of new incumbents. When a new University code was drafted in 1872, it was largely the work of Professor Owen. When calls came to the University for speakers throughout the state, he was minute man with a battery of addresses ready for delivery at a moment's notice, for he was a versatile platform performer. He took an active part in the encampments of the Grand Army of the Republic; he frequently gave the main address in the state meetings of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, of which organization he was a member; no Masonic meeting, to which organization he also belonged, was quite complete without his presence. Few professors anywhere in Indiana had as many contacts throughout the state as did he, and few could have represented the University so well.

A project of greater interest to him was the location of the land-grant college provided for by the Morrill Act of 1862. He had not been at Indiana University one month before the faculty passed a resolution designating President Nutt and Professor Owen "a committee to attend on behalf of the faculty, to
securing if circumstances permit the establishment of the proposed Agricultural and Normal School in connection with the Indiana University, and report from time to time.” Professor Owen took this assignment seriously, so seriously that he failed to attend faculty meetings because of “Agricultural College business.” Shortly thereafter he was appointed to another faculty committee, composed of President Nutt, Professor Hoss, and himself, to confer with the County Commissioners to induce the location of the Agricultural College at Bloomington. Largely through Owen’s persuasive powers the County Commissioners offered to appropriate $50,000 in order to locate the College at Bloomington, Indiana. Professor Owen traveled and spoke throughout the state in favor of selecting the University site for the proposed college.

He did more than that. He drafted a comprehensive plan for the organization of such an institution. It was to be situated upon a model farm of one hundred acres laid out in ten-acre plots. In the exact center of this farm was to be a model garden of ten acres. Dispersed around this plot were to be the nine fields of equal size but of various shapes to afford surveying students experience in their pursuit. In these fields the following crops were to be raised according to a definite system of rotation: (1) grass, (2) clover, (3) wheat, (4) barley, rye, or oats, (5) corn, (6) flax, (7) hemp, (8) a root crop, (9) fruit.

Special emphasis was to be given to the garden. It was to be fenced with posts placed at intervals of one rod, or one-half, in order to train the students in measuring distances. Special posts, higher than others, were to be set at intervals of one hundred yards, one hundred feet, fifty feet, etc., etc. For similar reasons pieces of ground were to be laid off so as to show the size of two acres, one acre, etc., etc. In this garden were to be cultivated all the useful and ornamental fruits.
He proposed to organize the instructional work of the college into eight departments, i.e., chemistry, languages, history, mathematics, natural history, music, drawing, and military tactics. Heads of departments were to be paid $1,500 a year, and the "adjunct professors," $1,000 a year. The estimated instructional budget for one year came to $19,000.

Professor Owen drafted minute regulations for the operation of each department. Foreign languages were to be learned through the conversational method, and not by memorizing innumerable rules, "usually forgotten before their practical application is called for." Under the department of mathematics he grouped physical geography and meteorology, and for this department as well as for all others he enumerated extensive lists of materials as instructional aids. These revealed a wide range of information outside his own field. For the agricultural section he recommended displays of the best implements and machinery, models of steam engines, water-wheels, dams and bridges, cotton and woollen milling equipment, etc., etc. On the farm should be samples of every important forest tree; in the farm museum should be specimens of every kind of wood. All the different varieties of seeds should be exhibited. His scheme provided for no engineering department, no doubt because eighty years ago differentiation was not as essential as it is today.

The cost of the physical plant for such an institution he reckoned at $200,000. This sum would cover the cost of a main building as well as an annex, a chapel, a laboratory, and faculty homes valued at $2,500 each, and those for the head gardener and farmer at $2,000 each.

He estimated that Congress would grant Indiana 390,000 acres of land, which if sold would yield $300,000, a sum greater than the initial cost of erecting the institution.

The institution should require no tuition fees. Selection of four students from each of Indiana’s ninety-two counties every
two years would assure an enrollment of 368. Characteristically, as one of the Owens, who were deeply moved by humanitarian impulses, he recommended the establishment of a school for Civil War orphans in connection with the agricultural college. And in harmony with Owen practicality, these children as well as the collegiate students should spend part of their time laboring on the college farm, under the direction of the head gardener and the head farmer. Those professors who desired to improve their physical health and energies might be provided with pitchfork or ax. Golf clubs were not included as essential equipment in a frontier agricultural college.

The farm crops were to be consumed right on the campus, for the orphaned children should not only be gratuitously instructed but also gratuitously boarded out of the profits of the farm and garden. Unmarried professors and students who took their meals at the college boarding house should pay for them on the basis of a fair price.

The influence the father had not been lost on his youngest son, for Professor Owen recommended the establishment of nursery and kindergarten schools, where mothers could be relieved of their children by day, and where youngsters might play in well-arranged grounds and gardens under competent direction. Though he recognized childhood and infancy as important periods in an individual's life, he cautioned against the imposition of intellectual strain on young minds.

This in brief was the first conception of Purdue University. It was by no means the preview of what the university has become in its physical aspect; but it foretold the spiritual and intellectual nature of the institution which, from its site on the banks of the Wabash, radiates tolerance, enlightenment, and scientific discoveries.

Professor Owen pursued many projects and imparted to each the enthusiasm that most people reserve for their main activity. Besides teaching, advising the President on appoint-
ments, drafting plans for a new institution, he found time to carry on research. This study was confined chiefly to the field of geology. He did extensive work in detecting and predicting earthquakes. He demonstrated by means of the galvanometer the existence of thermo-electric currents in the earth’s crust, which he revealed ran from east to west in the southern, and from south to north in the northern, hemisphere. He also constructed an electrical globe to demonstrate and explain the declination of the compass. Papers bearing on these subjects and terrestrial magnetism as related to the dynamics of geology were read at several meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and were also published in various periodicals, the Scientific American, the American Polytechnical Review, the Transactions of the Academy of Sciences at St. Louis, the Yale College Courant, the Reports of the Department of Agriculture at Washington, and the Tennessee Farmer. He also published papers on rainfall, the preservation of timber, the cause of Indian summer, and other subjects connected with physical geography. He investigated the flying weevil and published the results in the Albany Cultivator.

Satisfaction with one’s achievements—resting on one’s laurels—is the first evidence of intellectual disintegration. Professor Owen knew that when one does not go forward he goes backward, and to maintain the forward motion he pursued an active program of reading. His diary covering his teaching period contains several entries every week of books which he had read.

Further to stimulate his intellectual processes, he secured a year’s leave of absence in 1869 to travel in Europe and the Near East. He went to England, visited his childhood surroundings, and renewed family friendships. He arrived in London on August 3, 1869, and enjoyed its sights. He discoursed on geological subjects with his namesake, Sir Richard Owen.

From there he went to the continent, revisited Hofwyl, dear to the hearts of all the Owens, and journeyed down the Danube
to the Crimea and the Black Sea. At Sevastopol, Balaklava, Simferopol, and other places he collected geological specimens. He gathered basalt on the Bosporus, souvenirs in Constantinople, specimens of the bones of the *hipparion* in Athens, and other items at each point of his travels. He visited Nazareth, Beirut, and Damascus. He experienced a revivification of his spiritual zeal as he walked where Christ had labored. While in Jerusalem he met Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria-Hungary and the Crown Prince of Prussia, who were enroute to the opening of the Suez Canal. He attended the reception at Port Said for the royal representatives of the various nations.

Upon his arrival in the Holy Land he wrote his wife, “But most interesting of all was the sight of Gethsemane the church which stands over the supposed spot of the tomb of our Savior.” Faithful and devout believer that he was, he nevertheless wrote, “Regarding the Mt. of Olives and Gethsemane there can be no doubt, as well as about the situation of the Temple, but when they show you the Temple of the (Trojin) and the House of Pilate, the exact spot where Stephen was martyred, and the stone which was rolled from the sepulchre, you cannot help doubting; and when they undertake to exhibit the stone on which the cock stood when it crowed, after Peter denied our Lord, and similar relics, we are disgusted and mortified.” From Jerusalem he traveled to Damascus and Samaria and then to Paris, thence to England and Scotland, and then finally back to Indiana University in 1870. Accounts of new experiences and varied geological specimens and visits with distinguished Europeans enlivened the treatment of his class discussions.

The man with constructive imagination is either honored as a genius or ridiculed as a fool. By the shallow-minded, Professor Owen was classified in the latter group because he strung fine cords over part of the Indiana University campus. He arranged his students in a circle clasping hands and then tested
the circuit for electrical currents, first without moistening the hands of the students, then after they had inserted them in a strong saline solution. The unintelligent made no effort to ascertain the reason for the activity, and if they had been apprised of the object, they would have held him in still lower regard. He deserved better. He had divined the existence of ether waves and he was trying to prove their reality. He was endeavoring to catch their vibration even when Heinrich Rudolph Hertz (1857-1894) was still in his teens and Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937) was entertaining himself with kindergarten toys. Had he been able to devote all his time to research, perhaps his name might have been identified with wireless telegraphy and radio.

Though some may have regarded his experiments as ludicrous, the Wabash College faculty and trustees appreciated his ability and contribution. In 1875 that institution conferred the degree of LL.D. upon him. The Scientific Association of Louisiana elected him to honorary membership.

Though he was deeply interested in science, he did not pursue its investigation to the exclusion of religion. During many years of residence in Bloomington, Indiana, he conducted a Sunday school class in the Presbyterian Church. His extant outlines reveal that he prepared for these sessions with the same care that he did for his secular courses. His class developed into a discussion group, which considered a variety of topics, such as religion, morality, economics, politics, ethics, frivolity, and family relations. From verbal exchanges on such topics it is obvious that he was permeated with a deep spirituality. He did not dispute or oppose the Supreme Will, but accepted with resignation the dictates of the Almighty: "Why Omnipotence chose to create man so that he might under certain circumstances err, or why God should create man at all, knowing that he would err, is not for the creature to ask. A Creator who has made a universe, every portion of which, as far as man
can understand it, is perfection—he would certainly not fail in His crowning work—the creation of man. Therefore, man, a being unable to prolong his existence one moment beyond the period assigned by the Almighty, . . . would exhibit consummate ignorance and presumption to ask why God had made him . . . .”

To Richard Owen, God was a stern but loving and merciful judge. Men were wayward, but fortunately God was indulgent if only mortals recognized His supremacy: “People may not understand the mysteries of the compass, but they know that reliance on it has brought many a ship into port . . . So too the Christian may observe that many an anxious soul has been guided to a haven of rest by the teachings of the Scriptures.” To him immortality was assured, “for that which we crave is given,” and God has assured us that “our earthly bodies are converted into dust, but that our spirits are immortal and consigned either to happiness or misery.”

Calvinist that he was, he demanded observance of the commandments. The Sabbath should not be used for “junketing” or even public social amusements, “but it should be devoted to consecration and prayerful thankfulness for God’s prosperous mercies.” Religion was to him a source of comfort. Observance of its demands and compliance with its principles were not added burdens but aids to serenity and composure. His faithful observance of Christian principles may perhaps in part account for the absence of a single note of irritation among the hundreds of entries in his diaries. His own spirituality enabled him to comfort others; consequently, he was frequently asked to conduct funeral services.

Professor Owen’s acceptance of the writings of Lyle on geology or Darwin on biology did not for him discredit the Scriptures. So far as he was concerned, he found nothing in science that was contrary to the Holy Writ. On the contrary, he discovered much to confirm his belief and heighten his faith
in the Creator of the Universe. "I readily admit," he said, "that Omnipotence could create the world in seven days or in seven seconds." To prove this point he cited Peter and the Psalmist, "One day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." Professor Owen regarded Mosaic days as periods of time.

In social matters Professor Owen possessed the enlightened viewpoint of his father. Richard Owen did not envisage a classless society, but like the Danes of a generation later he favored a community in which few should have more than they needed and still fewer have less than they needed. Even before the days of Samuel Gompers, he championed the cause of labor. For it he demanded adequate remuneration to maintain a family in self-respect. He denounced the iron law of wages; he repudiated the principle of *laissez faire*. In a speech delivered before the college chapel in 1874 he declared, "We must do our share for the less favored of our race. We may well foster building associations for the poor, to give them homes, mutual-aid insurance to aid in sickness, hospitals for the sick, asylums for the blind, deaf mutes, idiotic and insane. Nor should we forget the fallen and degraded who by our efforts may perchance be reclaimed." Then, to sustain his argument, he cited examples of social injustice. He supported his brief with Biblical quotations. Long before the constitution had been amended to legalize the graduated income tax, Professor Owen reminded his audiences of the statement from Luke XII, 48, "For unto whomsoever much is given of him shall be much required," and of other equally public-spirited citations.

Professor Owen recognized that as a professor in a state institution he enjoyed a privileged position in society, even though his salary was not bountiful. He possessed security of tenure; the community yielded him generous respect; and he relished the opportunity afforded by his position of gratifying his intellectual interests. There was little more that he desired.
But he did not overlook *noblesse oblige*. In an address delivered before a meeting of the Odd Fellows, on January 7, 1880, in New Harmony he reminded his listeners that “people should not seek professions for financial gain, but for the service to his fellowmen.” The state’s objective in maintaining educational institutions was not primarily to enhance the earning power of its graduates, but to advance the community welfare. Each contention he supported with appropriate Biblical quotation.

He was tolerant of all races, for he insisted that they were merely different forms of the same genus. Varying food, climate, habitation, clothing, and proximity to mountains or oceans had caused differences in color. Chemical analysis, he insisted, had revealed no essential difference in the blood of various races. What he had proved as a scientist he supported with Scriptural quotation, from Acts XVII, 24, 26 “God hath made the world,” “and hath made of one blood all the men that dwell on the face of the earth.” Anti-Semites and Ku Kluxers knew better than to appeal to him for aid and comfort.

His tolerant spirit, breadth of sympathy, and enlightened humanitarianism enabled him to see the criminal not only as a culprit but also as a social derelict, the victim of an environment beyond his control: “The wealthy who create the environment are therefore often responsible for the crime.” Like modern sociologists he urged prevention of crime and less emphasis upon its punishment. He favored the segregation of juvenile delinquents from the hardened professionals at a time when such advice was not taken for granted.

On economic questions he held utilitarian views, submitting issues to the Benthamite test of the greatest good to the greatest number. Any proposal that satisfied this requirement had Professor Owen’s support. In a general sense he subscribed to a *laissez faire* philosophy, and yet his concern for the welfare of the lower classes injected an attitude of benevolent paternalism. The nobility and dignity of humanity in his estimation
outweighed any claims of wealth or power. Though he endorsed nineteenth-century capitalism, he was conscious of its abuses, for he denounced “gigantic monopolies creating corners and famine, politicians’ logrolling and maneuvering.”

Though the New Harmony venture had socialistic characteristics, Richard Owen during his professorship did not champion any share-the-wealth program. He insisted that it was “rank injustice to demand that those having property should be compelled to divide with those that have little or none, still worse to enforce this by threat of bloodshed.”

While he was interested in the welfare of laborers, he did not want them to coerce capital. Laborers, in his view, while employed were supposed to obey their employers. If they could not peaceably accept the wages offered and the conditions under which they worked, they should resign. His advice was “obey first, remonstrate afterwards.”

Though he was essentially kindly by nature, he was an authoritarian. He believed in order and obedience. Citizens should observe the laws of the land, and children should obey their parents “even when they did not comprehend the reason for an order.” This affirmation of autocracy did not disturb the harmony of his own household, owing to the judicious exercise of whatever jurisdiction he claimed for himself, and also to his practice of showing good cause for any order. His sons were devoted to their father, and he evinced paternal pride in and affection for them. He extended loans to them without interest charges, and he maintained with them a constant and cordial correspondence. He was helpful to them in practical ways. On his European trip in 1869 he contemplated buying English stock for their herds in New Harmony. Two years later, in 1871, he inspected herds in the neighborhood of Bloomington, Indiana, with a view to their purchase for breeding purposes. He was especially interested in shorthorn cattle, and paid $125 for a fullblooded bull fourteen months old.
In 1872 when his sons contemplated discontinuing farming, he discussed with them their prospective business ventures. He gave them his frank and sympathetic reaction to the establishment of a grocery, a dry goods, or a clothing store in Terre Haute, Indiana. He pointed out that city’s population, its number of establishments in the fields in which they were interested, the effect of railroad development in that area of Indiana, and the financial integrity of various economic groups in such a community. “I neglected to mention that Terre Haute has a good Episcopal Church and good graded school,” he wrote.

A business matter of more urgent concern in connection with his sons’ affairs came to his attention three months later, on May 25, 1872. In going security for friends unworthy of such confidence his sons, Eugene and Horace, had lost considerable money. In response to their letters informing their father of the deception played upon them, Professor Owen wrote, “It is gratifying to find that you both bear up well under your reverses and I hope and believe if you can work through you will acquire thereby business experience and warning which will be of infinite benefit through life. I am sure you will learn sooner than I did not to go security for anyone . . . . It is a great satisfaction that amid all your and our trials and troubles, we all keep well and have consciences void of offence, and trust in God to bring us out of our difficulties . . . . No amount that the world contains could induce me to exchange places with those who have been trying to defraud us: in fact have already succeeded to a great extent, because we could not believe the world as bad as it really is.” As usual he closed his letter with “warmest love from your mother and myself to each and to all of you, and kisses to our grandchildren, Your affectionate father.”

Though he reserved considerable authority for himself as a father, he readily accepted the decrees of his government. He appreciated his adopted country’s institutions and was thankful [ 66 ]
for political freedom: "We have perhaps the fullest and most rational amount of freedom anywhere existing. Compare England with primogeniture and entail, France with her revolution, other nations with imperfect suffrage and censorship of the press . . . with the sober seasoned thought of the American people and you will not hesitate in stating your preference." He traced the development of liberty from ancient Athens to modern America and pledged his faith in its ennobling influence. So long as liberty was not corrupted, he denied any justification for revolution: "It is rebellion to endeavor to enforce by right of arms any supposed injustice when the ballot box is open to us to bring about change if such change is consistent with the will of the majority."

Strangely, this advocate of authority and obedience was also under certain circumstances a patron of revolution. Like Jefferson, or Rousseau, he insisted that "when authority is no longer legally constituted or exercised according to constitutional compact," it is the right and the duty of the people to set aside such an abusive administration.

By 1879 Professor Owen had labored for fifteen years on the Indiana University Campus, and during that time grateful and admiring students had come and gone. Most of them eventually forgot much of what they had learned; but Professor Owen, then sixty-nine years of age, remained in their memory as admirable, judicious, and beloved to them as Colonel Owen had been to the Confederate captives at Camp Morton. His former students have carved no bust in his honor; but through their high regard for him Owen Hall stands as a monument of the esteem in which he was held, not only by his former students but also by his colleagues and other friends.

As he grew older his diaries contain frequent entries about his physical indisposition. The customary teaching load plus the numerous speaking engagements aggravated his physical ailments. Impaired hearing, as a result of a sunstroke, inter-
fered with his teaching and led him to offer his resignation in 1879. In a notable address delivered in the college chapel on May 11, 1879, he took his leave and returned to New Harmony where he spent the remaining eleven years of his life. Indiana University realized the loss it had sustained and, determined to repair it, chose as his successor David Starr Jordan.