

JOHN BRIGHT AND THE ENGLISH RADICALS.

IN the June number of this magazine a review of the career of Richard Cobden presented the lifelong activity and loftiness of purpose which distinguished that great man, whom we have so recently been called to mourn. It is our purpose to record something of his friend and ally, Mr. Bright, whose devotion to America has led him for once to raise his voice in vindication of war, as the only method of preserving liberty.

John Bright was born at Greenbank, near the thrifty town of Rochdale, on the 16th of November, 1811. His father was Mr. Jacob Bright, a gentleman who, by his own exertions, had risen from humble means to wealth, in the vocation of a cotton manufacturer. John was the second of eleven children, the oldest of whom died in infancy. The family were devoted members of the Society of Friends, and the subject of this sketch still adheres to the hereditary faith. John's health, during childhood, caused much solicitude to his parents. His constitution was apparently feeble, and it was found that study injured his already delicate system. At the age of fifteen he was taken from school, and placed in his father's counting-room. Mr. Jacob Bright was a shrewd, yet highly honorable man, entirely engrossed in the superintendence of his business, and an adept in the conduct of his manufactory. It was his ambition that his sons should follow in his footsteps, and should become, like himself, influential members of the commercial community. He doubtless underrated, as the class to which he belonged are apt to do in England, the value of a university education; and as soon as the boys reached the suitable age, they were set to work in the mills. Had John Bright received the culture which a residence at Oxford or Cambridge would have afforded him, he would doubtless have occupied a place in the first rank of that group

of accomplished statesmen who now grace either House of Parliament, and whose elegant erudition is as conspicuous as their enlightened statecraft. As it was, we find him spending his youth at the desk, learning how to buy and sell, and how to rule the miniature commonwealth which an English manufactory presents. In the discharge of these duties he proved himself skilful, prompt, and energetic.

As he grew to manhood, however, a new interest and a new ambition awoke within him. He had always been more of a thinker than the other members of his family. When scarcely twenty, he had addressed the people of Rochdale in favor of the great Reform of 1832, and with the effect of giving him at that early age a local popularity. He had seemingly thrown his vigorous mind into the study of the complex elements of the Constitution, with especial reference to those parts which affected commerce and manufactures. From such studies he had become the confirmed disciple of those doctrines which, with a narrower view to self-interest, the commercial class almost universally adopted. When the passage of the Reform Bill had quieted for a while the agitation on that score, Mr. Bright, his interest being now thoroughly awakened to the excitements of a public career, turned his attention to the Temperance question, then much mooted in the larger towns. The idea of total abstinence was at that time new to Englishmen, and Mr. Bright was one of the earliest champions of that principle, which has since attracted so many powerful orators, and which has reclaimed so many from the debasement of the cup. In the year 1835, Mr. Bright, with a view to extending his experience, and in order to observe the systems of other nations, made the tour of the Continent, extending his travels to Athens and Palestine. On his return, he was invited to lecture before the local Institute at

Rochdale, and he delivered a series of lectures, taking as his subjects the observations he had made abroad. These he followed by another series on questions more nearly connected with the practical interests of his auditors,—putting before them with admirable perspicuity the ideas he had formed on the commercial policy of England. About this time contentions arose respecting the Church Rates, and Mr. Bright took active ground for their abolition.

The sufferings of the manufacturing class now revived that agitation against the Corn-Laws which had once before engaged the earnest attention of the country. Mr. Bright had the patent evidence all around him of the misery which the inequitable adjustment of the tariff had created. The class over whom he had supervision were materially affected by this injustice. With that promptness which is one of his conspicuous qualities, he devoted himself to the study of the science which would open to him the causes, consequences, and remedies of the evils which a legalized monopoly had brought into existence. He found that the landed proprietors, whose influence in Parliament had long continued paramount through the protection of the Tory party, had secured laws which enabled them to enjoy the monopoly of the corn trade, to the practical exclusion of foreign competition. Prices were thus increased to such an extent as to put it beyond the power of factory hands, with the wages which their employers could afford to pay them, to buy bread.

The distress of the operatives from this cause was already great, and was constantly becoming more serious and more alarming. The lower classes of England have never been patient under unusual pressure. They are prone to take redress by violent resistance to law. Thus the agricultural ascendancy threatened to drive the rival element to desperation. The Tories, led by Wellington, already obnoxious from their long opposition to Reform, steadily maintained the existing laws, and continued

to be the devoted partisans of the landed interest. The aristocratic Whigs, who were in power under Viscount Melbourne, and who were reaping the fruit of a reform carried by the cooperation of popular leaders, were reluctant to do more than make slight modifications,—modifications which still left the evil great and dangerous. At this juncture, a new force sprang up, which from small beginnings finally effected a total revolution in the economical policy of the Government. This was the Anti-Corn-Law League. It was instituted by a number of liberal noblemen and gentlemen in Parliament, who had the sense to perceive, and the wisdom to provide for, the gloomy crisis which seemed to be impending. Charles Pelham Villiers, a son of the Earl of Clarendon, and one of the ablest of the younger generation of statesmen, was the most prominent leader. The object of the association was to organize a crusade against agricultural tyranny, and to effect the abrogation of the odious laws by which farmers grew rich by starving manufacturers. As usual with all organizations for reform, the League at first met with clamorous denunciation from all quarters, was sneered at in Parliament, and laughed at by the great proprietors. But it grew rapidly. Every day people awakened more and more to the increasing necessity. The champions of the League, spreading among the rural communities, eloquently and convincingly pointed out the great evils which they sought to eradicate. They were untiring in their exertions, and their success was beyond their best hopes.

The great advantage to be gained by keeping their cause in constant agitation before the public made the Leaguers desirous to employ active and eloquent orators. John Bright, in his twenty-seventh year, began to speak in advocacy of commercial reform in his own neighborhood. The League heard of him, called him to their assistance, and he became one of their authorized speakers. This was a triumph not a little flattering to a young mer-

chant whose training had been in a manufactory, and to whom the field of forensic eloquence was entirely new. He was thoroughly convinced, both from observation and from a naturally quick reason, that the principles of which he was now to be a public advocate were just and practical. His whole soul was in the effort to alleviate suffering, and to find a balance between interests which had been, but were not of necessity, conflicting. With that hearty zeal which has ever since marked his public career, he entered the political arena, turned over to his partners the affairs of the firm, and devoted himself to the study and exposition of the new commercial theories. Through the influence of the League, he obtained opportunities to speak in many considerable places; and he every day increased his reputation as a vigorous reasoner and a pleasing speaker. He went boldly into the agricultural districts, where the hard-headed old Tories who believed in Wellington formed his audiences, and put to them unwelcome truths which they found it hard to swallow. On one occasion he appeared before a large assemblage at Drury-Lane Theatre, when the effect of his eloquence was such that his name became immediately known throughout the kingdom. Copies of the speech were distributed by order of the League, and Bright found himself in demand from all quarters. Working in concert with Villiers, Morpeth, and the other leaders, he assisted in instituting branches of the League in the principal cities. Besides his unquestioned ability as an orator, he had one advantage which most of his co-workers did not possess, — he was emphatically a man of the people. He came out from the busy community in which he was born and reared, to labor for the people. Those who might distrust a Villiers or a Howard, — who might suspect that an agitation set on foot by noblemen was designed for selfish ends, — who might be indifferent to those whom they had been accustomed to regard as political schemers, — would trust and follow one who threw

aside his commercial vocation and came forward to sustain that commercial interest in which he himself was concerned. He could gain the ear and reason of many who would not listen to one whose profession was political agitation. Thus his influence became considerable; his origin reassuring his hearers, his eloquence charming them, and his honesty and earnestness commanding their sympathy and approval.

The rapid spread of Free-Trade principles, resulting from the organized efforts of the League, and from the demonstration, which actual occurrences confirmed, that the farming monopoly could not continue, gave the leaders of the League much importance in Parliament. The Whigs, nay, even the more moderate Tories, began to profess conversion to Free-Trade doctrines. When Parliament was dissolved in 1841, both parties went to the country on the issue of Free-Trade or Protection. Sir Robert Peel, who afterward became the patriotic instrument by which the Corn-Laws fell, represented those who adhered to Protection and the agricultural interest. Lord Melbourne came forward as the advocate of those principles which the League had been the first to avow, and which as Premier he had not been anxious to put in practice. Notwithstanding the Reform of 1832, the landed nobility still retained a large control in the composition of the House of Commons. Peel had organized the Conservatives with great tact, and the ministry of Melbourne was suffering from the weakness of internal dissension. The result of the election was, that Peel's candidates were so generally successful that he gained a clear working majority in the House, and he consequently became Prime-Minister.

It was soon after the Conservatives thus attained office that John Bright came forward as a candidate for Parliament in the northern city of Durham. The Free-Traders were wise enough to seek the assistance of the best men their ranks could furnish. Bright, it was universally thought, would be a valuable auxiliary, coming as he did from the

mercantile class, and possessing a clear mind and ready tongue. Durham was conservative by tradition. In 1843 the city rejected Bright; but in 1844, so rapid was the growth of Liberalism, that the same constituency returned him to the House of Commons by a handsome majority.

Meanwhile Sir Robert Peel, elected and supported by Protectionists, was gradually turning his steps toward the more liberal policy which his opponents had advocated. Soon after assuming office, he had proposed a modification of the tariff. The Duke of Buckingham, representing the extreme wing of the Protectionists, resigned in alarm. The Premier did not falter, but approached still nearer the Free-Trade standard. Lord Stanley, a stronger man than Buckingham, retired from the council-board. When John Bright entered Parliament, Peel was rapidly coming to the abolition of the Corn-Laws. Bright at once mingled in the debates, which now daily absorbed the attention of the House, on the one question before the country. The little band of Leaguers stood in the front rank of the opposition. They were pressing Sir Robert, by steady and oft-repeated appeals, to make the final concession. To the voices of Villiers, Morpeth, Russell, Gibson, were added the sonorous tones of the merchant-orator, and he maintained the debate with the best, whether of friends or foes. He reasoned with such clearness, he brought the evils of the corn monopoly so vividly before the minds of his auditors, he pressed the necessity and justice of its abrogation with such power of argument, that from that day he took rank as one of the first speakers and logicians in the lower House.

Sir Robert soon threw aside all party and selfish considerations, and did fearlessly what his judgment convinced him was urgently demanded by the interests of the country. He proposed the repeal of the Corn-Laws. He thus exhibited a rare spirit for an English statesman, — a spirit of self-sacrifice for the public good. His old associates

assailed him with bitter, powerful eloquence. The Whigs, whose thunder he had stolen, looked with the coldness of partisan selfishness upon his conversion to their views. But in spite of every discouragement, he carried that magnanimous measure through both Houses by his influence as First Lord of the Treasury. Hardly ever during the present century has Parliament been more electrified by stirring and splendid contests of forensic genius than during these debates on the repeal. And in these debates John Bright proved a worthy competitor to Disraeli, whose caustic oratory was justly feared, — and to Stanley, whose excellence in rejoinder made him to be regarded as the equal of Fox in extempore debate.

The fall of Sir Robert Peel, who could not retain power whilst Tories and Whigs were alike arrayed against him, was followed by the elevation of Lord John Russell and his Whig friends to the ministry. Several of the leaders of the League accepted office; but John Bright received no overtures from the new Premier. No thought of personal ambition, indeed, seems to have entered into his views. Possessing that independence and fearlessness which men of his origin are apt to exhibit, and deeply interested in the new field in which he found himself, his sole desire seems to have been to arrive at a knowledge of what would most benefit his country. In this search, he rejected all party creeds. He declined to put himself under a pledge to abide by the will of a caucus. He considered himself bound by no precedent which was unjust, committed to no policy which did not have a present reason. He was ready to act with the party that sustained, in each individual case, the measure which he considered right; nor would he hesitate to vote with those with whom he usually found himself at variance, if they brought forward measures which his judgment approved.

At the time Lord Russell came into power, Mr. Bright was regarded as opposed to the Established Church and

to the House of Lords, as favorable to a system of general suffrage, and as decidedly anti-monarchical in political theory. With opinions so radical the aristocratic Whigs were the last to have any sympathy. They were much less likely to encourage that class of politicians than their old antagonists, the Tories. The reason is evident. Radicalism, by startling the masses by the novelty of its doctrines, and thus driving a large majority to seek certain safety under the protection of the Tories, had kept the Whigs out of Whitehall for half a century. John Wilkes and Horne Tooke secured Pitt in his power. Francis Burdett and his confederates faithfully served Liverpool. If Lord Russell should recognize the later Radicals by calling one of their leaders to his counsels, he might well fear a defection far outweighing the acquisition. Thus Mr. Bright, an active participant in the contest for Free Trade, which had just resulted in a complete victory, cheerfully continued to be simply an independent commoner, representing the constituency of Durham,—free to judge, and to speak his honest thought,—at liberty to advocate reforms more thorough than ministers dared to propose,—ready to represent the feelings and wants of that great multitude of Englishmen to whom the timeworn restrictions of the franchise prohibited a voice in the Government,—anxious to keep ideas in agitation which needed stout hearts and steady heads to maintain them in existence.

In 1847, the ministers having caused his defeat as member for Durham, he became the successful contestant for the seat for Manchester. This metropolis of manufacture was then the centre, as it is now, of extreme liberal notions. The fame of Mr. Bright, who had gone forth into public life from its immediate neighborhood, was grateful to a district which sorely needed such an advocate. He continued to represent Manchester through the Parliament which sustained and finally ousted Lord John Russell. In 1852, when the Premier, joining issue with Lord

Derby, (formerly Lord Stanley,) went to the country, Mr. Bright again stood for Manchester, and was gratified by receiving a majority of eleven hundred. It was the just reward of labors incessant and courageous, to keep the interests of the constituency always before the legislature, and to bring about that system of equality to which they were thoroughly devoted. Mr. Bright continued to represent Manchester until 1857. During the session of that year, the late Mr. Cobden, the earnest co-worker with Mr. Bright, brought forward a motion condemnatory of the Chinese War, then transpiring under the conduct of Lord Palmerston's Government. The House divided against the minister. The Radicals and Conservatives were in a majority. Palmerston dissolved Parliament, and appealed to the nation. Bright once more went before his constituents, on the issue of war or peace with China. His notions respecting the iniquity of war in general, which resulted from his Quaker education, and his opinion that this attack on the Celestial Empire was especially unjustifiable, were not welcome to the electors of Manchester. His opponent, like himself a radical Whig, but an advocate of the war, was returned by five thousand votes. In 1859 Palmerston being again forced to the expedient of a new election, Mr. Bright was invited to stand as a candidate for the constituency of Birmingham, by whom he was returned to Parliament, where he has since continued to represent them. Here he has been very active in the advocacy of his own peculiar doctrines, some of which have within a few years gained much in public estimation. Independent of all parties, he votes usually with the ministry, but sometimes follows Mr. Disraeli and Lord Stanley below the bar on a division of the House.

This record of eighteen years in the House of Commons is certainly a remarkable one. While constantly opposing both of the great parties, Mr. Bright has won the respect of all. His ability as a logician and as an effective speaker, and his evident honesty

and earnestness of purpose, are conceded by every one. The courage and persistency with which he has upheld unpopular doctrines compel the admiration of those who recoil from the changes which he seeks to effect. It is not too much to say that his character has greatly enhanced the influence of those for whom he acts, and of whom he is the unquestioned leader. The Radicals were a mere handful when Bright entered Parliament. They are now beginning to be feared. Several of the largest and most prosperous cities regularly send Radical members to Westminster. Some of the profoundest thinkers in England are inclined to admit that the time is approaching when Radical ideas shall become practical. Many of them already declare these ideas to be abstractly just. The English are getting *accustomed* to Radical doctrines. In due time they will be ready to pass a fair judgment upon them.

The progressive party in a nation too often possesses leaders who, being low-born, are coarse and lawless, or who seek to foster discontent by an artful demagoguism. A good cause is often discountenanced and rendered futile by reason of the ignorance or wickedness of those who have been prominent in its advocacy. John Wilkes and Thomas Paine scandalized the cause of progress in their time by the profligacy of their lives and the badness of their motives. So did Robespierre and Danton by the cruel ambition which actuated them. The character of such men naturally frightened people of honest intentions from their leadership; while the extremities to which they carried their views deterred men of practical sense from upholding them. The reformers of the present generation, however, exhibit traits which command respect. They pursue a course which, if not altogether moderate or suited to the times, is evidently grounded upon deductions of thoughtful reason.

If we were to compress the description of Mr. Bright's character into a few words, we should say he was honest, earnest, fearless, eloquent. He is

honest; for he casts aside the objects of personal ambition in a life devotion to an unpopular cause. He is earnest; for he is constant to his faith, untiring in the effort to instil it into the community. He is fearless, — morally fearless; for he permits no obstacle, no obloquy, no powerful antagonism, to check him in the expression of unwelcome thoughts. He is eloquent; inasmuch as he stands up amid the silence of the most critical and restless legislature in the world, and compels members to listen, without interruption, to ideas which in the opinion of the vast majority are hateful and destructive. His character, as it has been displayed by a consistent public record, bears the stamp of truth and ingenuousness. He is candid, almost to a fault. He has no subtle statecraft; he recognizes no code of expediency. He is impatient of that spirit which actuates statesmen as a class to sacrifice something of good for the practical attainment even of a worthy end, — a spirit which, for our own part, we cannot wholly disapprove. While as a business man his integrity is perfectly unimpeachable, as a legislator his opponents have only to fear his strong and indignant eloquence: they are safe from any thrust which is not open and manly. He was not destined to become a great statesman: he is too rash, too little tolerant of antagonistic opinion, too much inclined to absolute conclusions, too open by nature in giving expression to his thoughts. In the demolishing process which properly precedes, in a long-established polity, the constructing process, he has every quality which would fit him to be a leader. His Quaker blood is of little avail in making him sit in patience whilst deep social wrongs stare him in the face on every side. The uprising of the people, especially that peaceable uprising to which the English people are by nature and precedent inclined to resort, seeking to cure by prompt action what statesmanship has failed to mend, would give him the best of opportunities. Quaker though he is, he would revel in taking the van of a law-

ful reformation aimed at the abuses he hates so heartily. So far as the expunging of an iniquitous law from the statute-book goes, his work would be well done; but when the time came to fill up the page with a new and just enactment, it would be his part to yield to more deliberate and judicious counsels. Like Lord Brougham, he is great in opposition. He can defend well; he can attack far better. Aggressive warfare is his forte. He is as positive in his theological and social as in his political opinions. He is a practical philanthropist, leads a life of strict probity and temperance, and seeks his pleasure, as well as his duty, in benefiting the human race. He carries the nervousness and enthusiasm of his public displays into the amenities of private life. Hearty in his friendships, and affable in social intercourse, he is liked by most persons and respected by all. He possesses in a remarkable degree that faculty which is considered as the trait of an accomplished gentleman,—the faculty of putting you at once at your ease. In temperament impulsive, he is perhaps too little mindful of the feelings of others, and somewhat careless of his expressions when pursuing a subject in which his attention is engrossed. In his manner there is a blunt sincerity which one who is in his company for the first time is apt to mistake almost for ill-temper. It, however, results from his entirely candid disposition, his rigidly practical and business education, and his carelessness of forms,—by no means from a want of kindness or an intention to be discourteous.

A first glance gives one a very good impression of Mr. Bright's character. He is of medium height, a little inclined to corpulency, and quick and nervous in his movements. His eye is full of intelligence,—small, bright, and sharp, apparently powerful to read another through the countenance. Its expression is, perhaps, a little hard; it seems to search your thought, and to detect the bent of your mind. His face is a true British face,—round and full, with firmly set mouth, positive chin, and

that peculiar sort of *hauteur* which is a national characteristic. His hair, somewhat gray, is brushed off his forehead, which is broad and admirably proportioned; and he wears whiskers on the side of his face, like most middle-aged Englishmen. His voice is clear, his enunciation rapid, yet distinct, and his choice of words exact,—excellent, indeed, for one self-educated in the correct use of language.

Mr. Bright is very attractive as an orator. When it is known that he is to speak, the galleries are insufficient to hold the multitude which gathers to hear him. His delivery is prompt and easy. He has none of that hesitation and apparent timidity which mark the address of many English orators; but neither, on the other hand, does he possess that rich and fascinating intonation which forces us to concede the forensic palm to Mr. Gladstone of all contemporary Englishmen. He expresses himself with boldness, sometimes almost with rudeness. His declamation is fresh, vigorous, and almost always even. At times he is unable to preserve the moderation of language and manner which retains the mastery over impulse; his indignation carries him away; his denunciation becomes overwhelming; his full voice rings out, trembling with agitation, as he exposes some wrongful or defends some good measure: then his vigorous nature appears, unadorned by cultivated graces, but admirable for its manliness and strength. This impetuosity, which is so prominent a characteristic of his oratory, is in marked contrast with the manner of the late Mr. Cobden, his friend and coöperator. Mr. Cobden was always guarded, cautious, and studiously accurate, in his language. Mr. Bright often says things, in the excitement of controversy, which exaggerate his real sentiments, and which may be used to misrepresent his opinions. Mr. Cobden, whose temperament was more phlegmatic, was careful to avoid any undue heat of speech, and hence often passed, erroneously, for a more moderate thinker than Mr. Bright.

It is with pleasure that we turn for a moment to speak of Mr. Bright's course towards America, and especially while we were suffering under the plague of civil war. Ever since he entered public life, his admiration of our institutions and history has been frequently the subject of his discourse. He has not hesitated to declare that feeling when he must have been aware how unwelcome it was to the greater part of his countrymen. He has, indeed, recognized in our success the practical attainment of those views to which he has so long been devoted, and which his experience as a public man seems only to have confirmed. His magnanimous mind has scornfully rejected that too prevalent English characteristic, — envy at the growing power of a sister nation. He has only seen in our progress a benefit and an example to mankind. As such he has gloried in it, and not the less because we are a kindred race and an offshoot from British civilization. The fact that we have been the inheritors and partakers of the glories of the English nation, which seems to increase the asperity with which many English statesmen now regard us, is to Mr. Bright a greater reason why sympathy should be extended to us. His speeches on America manifest a thorough knowledge of our history and of the spirit of our Constitution. He has studied us in the earnest desire to know and believe the truth, and faithfully to present to others the results of his study. We do not think it extravagant to say that few of our own public men evince a more intelligent knowledge of our record than Mr. Bright: certainly in this respect he is far in advance of the leading English statesmen. When in 1861 the Rebellion broke out, Mr. Bright raised his voice boldly against the non-committal policy of England, in declaring herself neutral. He seemed to comprehend at once the causes of the war. He correctly regarded the North as really on the defensive, — defending the integrity of the nation. He saw the cause of republican liberty trembling in the balance. From that day to this, — at times when

public indignation ran so high in England that it was almost dangerous to justify the North, — at times when to avow Northern sentiments was to be met with a howl from Spithead to the Frith of Forth, — at times when his own supporters, the manufacturing and commercial classes, feeling sore over the want of cotton, bitterly complained and pleaded for intervention, — John Bright has been our constant, zealous, and fearless champion, braving all England in our cause, and never silent when we were to be vindicated. In the issue of the war Mr. Bright will see the fruition of the hopes of the lovers of liberty everywhere. He will rejoice in it as the successful assertion by national power of those principles which he has devoted his life to advocating. To his mind the assassination of Lincoln will appear as the legitimate fruit of Southern treason. We may be sure, that, whilst the press of England endeavors to divert the guilt of this atrocity from the heads which gave birth to it, there is one Englishman at least — that Englishman, John Bright — who will be bold to trace it to its proper source.

We can do no better than to close this notice by quoting the conclusion of a speech made by Mr. Bright in December, 1861, to which our attention has been called during the preparation of this article.

“Whether the Union will be restored or not, or the South will achieve an unhonored independence or not, I know not and I predict not. But this I think I know, that in a few years, a very few years, the twenty millions of freemen in the North will be thirty millions or fifty millions, — a population equal to or exceeding that of this kingdom. When that time comes, I pray it may not be said among them, that, in the darkest hour of their country's trials, England, the land of their fathers, looked on with icy coldness, and saw, unmoved, the perils and calamities of her children. As for me, I have but this to say: I am one in this audience, and but one in the citizenship of this country; but if all other tongues are silent, mine

shall speak for that policy which gives hope to the bondsmen of the South, and tends to generous thoughts and generous words and generous deeds between the two great nations who

speak the English language, and from their origin are alike entitled to the English name."

Let Americans honor the Englishman who spoke thus nobly!

NEEDLE AND GARDEN.

THE STORY OF A SEAMSTRESS WHO LAID DOWN HER NEEDLE AND BECAME
A STRAWBERRY-GIRL.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT was a long and dreary winter which succeeded this beginning of my experimental life. The snow fell heavily, and so frequently that my plants were completely hidden from view during a great part of the season. But, so far from doing them an injury, the fleecy mantle protected them from the open exposure to cold under which the strawberry will sometimes perish. It was a privation to me to have them thus entirely shut up from observation; but more than once, when the snow had softened under the influence of an incipient thaw, I could not refrain from plunging my hands into it and uncovering a plant here and there, to see how they were faring. So far from perishing under the continued cold, I found them holding up their heads with wonderful erectness, their leaves crisp and fresh, with an intense greenness that contrasted strongly with the white blanket in which Nature had kindly wrapped them. Thus satisfied that they were well provided for, I endeavored to check my impatience for the coming spring: for really it seemed the longest winter I had ever known.

Both my sister and myself continued our labors at the factory, though we discovered evidences that even at machine-sewing there was likely to be some uncertainty as to continued employment

at the usual remunerative prices. We had learned to have entire confidence in its stability; but symptoms were appearing that the business, in some of its branches, was likely to be overdone. The makers of the first machines, having sold immense numbers at high prices, had acquired vast fortunes. This invited competition, and manufactories of rival machines having been established by those who had invented modifications of the original idea, the quantity thrown upon the market was very great, while prices were so reduced that additional thousands were now enabled to obtain machines and set them to work. The competition among the makers thus gave rise to competition among those who used the machines. Prices of work declined in consequence, and of course the sewing-girls were required to bear a large share of this decline, in the shape of a reduction of wages. We could do nothing but submit, for the needle was the only staff we had to lean upon. If we were to continue realizing as much per week as before, we could do so in no other way than by working longer and more industriously. This fell very hard upon us during that long winter. We could afford no holidays, no recreation, not even to be sick. As we felt we had no dependence but the needle, we still clung to the idea, that, if we could purchase machines of our own, we should do much better.