

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Jerome Rilke George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Melville Grimm Jerome Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schilling Kralik Schiller Iffland Sokrates
Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschechow
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntatz
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Brook Farm Historic and Personal Memoirs

John Thomas Codman

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BROOK FARM
HISTORIC AND PERSONAL MEMOIRS
BY
JOHN THOMAS CODMAN

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INTRODUCTION.

There were two distinct phases in the Associated life at Brook Farm. The first was inaugurated by the pioneers, who introduced a school, and combined it with farm and household labors. The second phase began with an attempt to introduce methods of social science and to add mechanical and other industries to those already commenced. These different phases have been called the Transcendental and the Industrial periods.

Each individual had his special experiences of the life. The writer chronicles it from his standpoint. None, perhaps, was more interested in it than he, young as he was, but many were more able to elaborate it and write it in details, and did he not feel that it was an important duty neglected by all, these memoirs would have remained unwritten.

The record books of the institution are missing, and are doubtless long ago destroyed. These chapters have been compiled and written from few memoranda, at various times, very often after the arduous duties of days of professional life, and with a desire only to present the subject truthfully, faithfully and simply; and also, not wholly to gratify curiosity, or to record the doings of the noble men and women who were wise before their time, but to whisper courage to those who, like their predecessors, are seeking some solution of the social problems that involves neither the too sudden surrender of acquired rights, the reckless abandon of old ideas to untried and crude radicalism, or the more to-be-dreaded feuds between classes, that mean desperation on one side and war on the other; but to aid, if possible, in inspiring a belief that a peaceful adjustment of our surroundings will, in time, bring order out of chaos and harmony out of discord.

The reader will have observed long before he lays down this book, that the Brook Farm life and ideals were purely coöperative and philosophical, that all the elements of true society were recognized, and that the attempt was for the better adjustment of them to

the changing and changed relations of their fellow-men, brought about by the pervading moral, scientific and social growth of the past and present centuries.

The nation is older, richer and wiser, since the Brook Farm experiment began. It is more tolerant of one another's opinions, more enterprising, progressive and liberal, and surely a few weak trials made half a century ago, are not enough to solve the majestic problem of right living and how to shape the outward forms of society, so that within their environments all interests may be harmonized, and the golden rule begin to be, in a practical way, the measure of all human lives.

The author, in closing, will confide to his readers the wish of his heart, that this sketch of his early days may inspire some who can command influence and means with an interest to continue the experiments in social science, along lines laid out with more or less clearness by the Brook Farmers.

J. T. C.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BROOK FARM MOVEMENT.

Early in the present century, New England was the centre of progressive religious thought in America. A morbid theology had reigned supreme, but its forms were too cold, harsh and forbidding to attract or even retain the liberal-minded, educated and philosophic students of the rising generation, or hold in check the ardent humanitarian spirit, that embodied itself in ideals that were greater than the existing creeds.

Yet nowhere prevailed a more religious spirit. It showed itself in tender care of masses of the people, in public schools and seminaries, in lectures, sermons, libraries and in acts of general benevolence.

From these conditions developed the idea of greater freedom from social trammels; from African slavery, which had not then been abolished; from domestic slavery, which still exists; from the exploitations of trade and commerce; from the vicious round of unpaid labor, vice and brutality. Protestations were heard against all of these evils, not always coming from the poor and unlearned, but oftener from the educated and refined, who had pride that the republic should stand foremost among the nations for justice, culture and righteousness.

The old theology was crumbling. A new church was springing from its vitals based on freer thought, in which the intellect and heart had more share in determining righteousness. The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man became the themes of discourse, oftener than those of the vengeance of an offended Deity; and pity and forgiveness, oftener than those on everlasting punishment.

In truth, the new departure which had begun, soon attracted to itself the most cultivated persons of the time, some of whom, Sept.

19, 1836, formed a club that met at one another's houses and discussed all the important social and religious topics of the day. They were mostly young people, college-bred, learned, artistic and thoughtful, and of high ideals in intellectual acquirement, religion and social life. They were all agreed that there were many evils to be eradicated from society; in what way—individualistic, governmental or socialistic, or by a combination of ways—few were agreed.

The problem was an open one. The theories proposed and the discussions were extremely interesting, but no record of them is at hand, except a few essays published in the *Dial*, a quarterly magazine which was edited by members of the organization, which finally took the name of "The Transcendental Club." One of the *Dial* editors, as well as one of the founders of the Club, and at whose house it had its first meeting, was Rev. George Ripley, a Unitarian minister who was born at Greenfield, Mass., in the beautiful valley of the Connecticut River. He was of good farmer stock and had a fine physical presence, though of medium stature. He was a lover of books, a graduate of Harvard college, and a well trained and religious scholar. He was then settled over a Unitarian church worshipping on Purchase Street, in Boston, and faithfully fulfilled his duties. Above all things his head and heart sought righteousness for all men. He believed in the justice of God and the divine nature of man His best creation. He believed man to be involved in an intricate and un-Christian social labyrinth, and with deep earnestness of purpose and thorough convictions of his personal duty in the case, set himself at work to evolve a way to extricate at least some of humanity from their vicious surroundings; and finally proposed to the Club a plan which he urged with his customary vigor and eloquence.

This plan was, in short, to locate on a farm where agriculture and education should be made the foundation of a new system of social life. Labor should be honored. All would take part in it. There should be no religious creeds adopted. The old, feeble and sick were to be cared for, the strong and able bearing the greater burden of the labor. There would be no rank, to entitle the owner of it to superior considerations because of the rank; and truth, justice and order were to be the governing principles of the society.

The theologians and philosophers of Europe, with whose writings and logic Mr. Ripley was well acquainted, had impressed him with the truth of the divinity of man's nature, or had convinced him more thoroughly that his own ideas of it were right. He had wrestled with progressively conservative giants, professors of colleges—notably Andrews Norton—and had won well-earned laurels. Norton was professor of sacred literature at Harvard, one of his own professors, sixteen years his senior, and made a point that the miracles of Christ and the writings of the gospel were the only sure proofs existing of spiritual truths.

The Transcendental philosophy to which Mr. Ripley had become a convert, claimed that there was in human nature an intuitive faculty which clearly discerned spiritual truths, which idea was in contradistinction to the beliefs of the day, which declared that spiritual knowledge came by special grace, and was proven by the divine miracles; this latter belief being largely joined to the doctrine of the innate depravity of man. Mr. Ripley's own words to his church on Purchase Street, declared that

"There is a class of persons who desire a reform in the prevailing philosophy of the day. These are called Transcendentalists, because they believe in an order of truth that transcends the sphere of the external senses. Their leading idea is the supremacy of mind over matter. Hence they maintain that the truth of religion does not depend on tradition nor historical facts, but has an unswerving witness in the soul. There is a light, they believe, which enlighteneth every man who cometh into the world. There is a faculty in all—the most degraded, the most ignorant, the most obscure—to perceive spiritual truth when distinctly presented; and the ultimate appeal on all moral questions is not to a jury of scholars, a hierarchy of divines or the prescriptions of a creed, but to the common sense of the human race.

"There is another class of persons who are devoted to the removal of the abuses that prevail in modern society. They witness the oppressions done under the sun and they cannot keep silence. They have faith that God governs man; they believe in a better future than the past; their daily prayer is for the coming of the kingdom of

righteousness, truth and love; they look forward to a more pure, more lovely, more divine state of society than was ever realized on earth. With these views I rejoice to say I strongly and entirely sympathize."

The prevailing tone of New England life was Calvinistic. Its doctrines may be said to have entered every household, penetrated every sanctuary and influenced all the leaders of society. The new departure was not a going away from religious thought, but it joined intellect and heart. It ignored unreasonable extravagances of statement wherever found. It ignored faith alone. It did not believe that faith stood above works. It pointed always towards action. It summed up the lesson and meaning of all good doctrines, that man should *lead a better life here*, where the duties to our fellows should not be passed by as now, but fulfilled. It was a newer way of thinking, to be logical with religion and put it to the test of every-day life. If the new departure meant anything then, if it means anything to-day, its object is to accomplish a better life here on this earth. In his soul, penetrated by divine aspirations, Mr. Ripley heard these words ringing out: "A truer life, a more honest life, a juster life—accomplish it!"

It was at the Club that he again urged the realization of his plan. There gathered together were the brightest intellects, the highest minded, the most sympathetic, thoughtful and talented young men that New England contained. Preaching was good, but more than preaching was wanted—the Christian life; could it not be commenced? Could they not educate the young in practical duties as well as in books, and by their own good example so surround them that the interior life could be awakened—the soul's inward goodness and the power to discern the true destiny of man?

Encouraged by the sympathy of his wife, sister and a few earnest spirits, Mr. Ripley started on his project. He was in his fortieth year. He was neither too young nor too old. A few years of life he could possibly spare for the experiment. He would then be only in his prime. He had no children to embarrass his movements. He could give all his strength of body and mind to it. He loved the country life. It was to be the fulfilling of what he had preached so long and

what is, alas, still preached to-day with not much attempt to realize it—the Christian life. People would laugh at him! I doubt if that gave him one disturbing thought. It *was right*; as it was right he would do it. But maybe in his secret heart he thought that more of those who seemed to have been awakened, as he had been, to the divine call, would follow and join with him than did; for, singularly enough, not one of the members of the Transcendental Club, who first met together, joined Mr. Ripley's movement. They were all radical to the prevailing theology, stiff, rigid as it was, and never, in America, was there a group assembled who aimed higher, or did more, first and last, to elevate humanity; for the Club contained a galaxy of mental talent.

Mr. Ripley led them all in practical endeavor to form the Christian commonwealth that many of them had preached.

William Ellery Channing, in whose veins ran the blood of one of the signers of the Declaration of American Independence, a beloved preacher, was there, full of earnestness, tenderness, faith and love. With vigor he poured out his eloquence to awaken thoughts for an enlarged theology, and with a sympathizing heart criticised chattel slavery, social slavery and domestic servitude, and afterward became one of the acknowledged leaders of liberal Christendom.

Young Ralph Waldo Emerson was there, very late from the ministry, known better as poet, philosopher and essayist; and James Freeman Clarke, talented writer and preacher; and faithful and independent Rev. Cyrus A. Bartol. Rev. Theodore Parker, son of a Lexington hero, doughty, bold and brave, on whose head fell the anathemas of the orthodox and the curses of the slaveholders at a later day, showed his ever calm, pleasant and earnest face at the board.

Rev. F. H. Hedge, Convers Francis, Thomas H. Stone, Samuel D. Robbins, Samuel J. May and another Channing—William Henry—were there; Christopher P. Cranch, divinity graduate, but now well known as painter, poet and story teller; and beloved John S. Dwight, famed mostly as writer on music, and musical critic; and Orestes A. Brownson, prominent essayist, who was, by turns, a Radical, Unitarian, Universalist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic.

All these above named persons were attached to the clergy. There were others who, like A. Bronson Alcott, were teachers, and sometimes lecturers. There was Henry D. Thoreau, a charming writer who spent two years in a hut in Walden woods; and Nathaniel Hawthorne, the writer of many familiar romances; also George Bancroft, the historian, Dr. Charles T. Follen, Samuel G. Ward, Caleb Stetson, William Russell, Jones Very, Robert Bartlett and S. V. Clevenger, sculptor. As an innovation in clubs there were lady members, among whom were Elizabeth P. Peabody, and her sister Sophia, who became the wife of Hawthorne; Miss S. Margaret Fuller, remarkable for her intellectual capacity, and who became the wife of Count D'Ossoli, of Italy; Miss Marianne Ripley, sister, and Mrs. Sophia Ripley, wife, of Rev. George Ripley.

Or if those persons were not all members of the Club, of which there seems to be no list extant, nearly every one was, and they can all be classed as belonging to the coterie or Transcendental circle; all at times attended the meetings, participated in the discussions, and wrote articles for the *Dial* and for what in those days were called the radical journals and magazines.

The winter of 1840 had been the time of talk. Early in the spring of the year 1841 it was announced that a location was chosen at Brook Farm, West Roxbury, nine miles from Boston, Mass. Mr. Ripley selected it. He and his wife had boarded there the former summer. It was retired and pretty. Mr. Ellis owned it; Mr. Parker, Mr. Russell and Mr. Shaw lived not far away, and a small amount of cash paid down would secure the place for an immediate commencement of the effort. The party who went earliest to settle at Brook Farm consisted of Mr. George Ripley; Sophia Willard Ripley, his wife; Miss Marianne Ripley, his elder sister; Mr. George P. Bradford, Mr. Warren Burton, Mrs. Minot Pratt with three children, Mr. Nathaniel Hawthorne and several others. Mr. William Allen acted as head farmer. There were in all about twenty persons. Doubtless there were blisters on the palms and aching bones, in the first raw days of labor, and the poetry of life was often lost in the fatigue of the body.

Of the men of the Transcendental Club only Hawthorne and Dwight joined what was called "Mr. Ripley's community"; and