

intimately acquainted with his ways knew him to be a busy merchant whose one end in life seemed to be to appear at his office at precisely the same moment every morning, to transact his affairs in a most prosaic and business-like fashion, and to disappear into the suburbs every afternoon. "John Owens seems to have gone like a mill horse round and round a narrow circle all his days, and probably nobody who met him in business ever dreamed that he took thought for the morrow except on grounds of strict personal expediency. Yet this humdrum old bachelor, cautiously picking his way through the busy streets on a cob as staid and old-fashioned as himself, beheld in secret vision the dawn of a better day." As a specimen of the "pious founder" he was about as far removed from Anglo-Saxon king, lordly prelate, or haughty Tudor, as a man well could be. His statue now stands in a gorgeous canopied niche in the stately pile which now adorns the Oxford-road and which bears his name. He stands there, as John Dalton, the great chemist does, at the angle formed by two of the principal streets, as one of the two great modern patron saints of this home

of the busy. "Poor old fellow," says one of the reviewers, "sweetness and light do not seem to have been meted out too liberally to him, but at all events he was determined that those who came after him in the sordid streets of Cottonopolis should at least have the opportunity, if so minded, of acquiring a larger store." John Owens was not a great politician, but his radical sympathies were shown by his subscribing £50 to the anti-corn-law league, and by his leaving no less a sum than £500 in his will as a friendly legacy to that rising young statesman, Richard Cobden. He was not prominent as a member or adherent of any of the churches. At one time he was a member of the congregation over which the eloquent Mr. McCall, the Congregational minister of Mosley-street Church, presided. The popularity of the orator was rather a nuisance than an attraction to the quiet old bachelor. He took and paid for a large old-fashioned square pew in which he was accustomed to sit by himself. Crowds came and invaded that pew. It was suggested to the occupant that being unencumbered with a family he might occupy a smaller pew. This offended his dignity, and he withdrew, and thenceforth he worshipped in St. Saviour's Anglican Church near his own home.

John Owens died on July 29, 1846, at the age of 55. Some curiosity was felt as to the sort of will that he had left, for no one knew what he had intended to

do with his money. That document proved that he had not forgotten either relatives or friends, for he provided liberally for them all. The residue of his estate was destined for the purpose of founding the college which now bears his name. The amount available for this purpose was stated to be over £100,000. A vigorous but vain attempt was made to induce the Government to waive the legal claim to 10 per cent. as legacy duty. The duty was, however, paid, and the executive were able to place at the disposal of the college trustees no less a sum than £97,000. There is a story told touching this will which reflects credit not only on Owens himself but still more on a certain curious and most unselfish friend of his named George Faulkner, who afterwards became chairman of the trustees.

The story has been often told, and it is believed to be true, that Owens wished to make his friend George Faulkner his heir. It is given as follows:—The friends, though so dissimilar in many respects, had grown up from boyhood, having the most perfect mutual confidence, so that they familiarly called one another “thee” and “thou,” and they seldom allowed a day to pass without seeing each other. One day Owens called on Faulkner and said, “I have made my will and have left thee all I have.” “Then,” said Faulkner, “thou may make another, I won’t have it; I have quite as much of my own as I can answer for, and won’t have anybody else’s on any account.”

It is said they parted that day sulkily, and did not see each other for a week. But they were too wise to be blind to their respective merits, and too much attached to let this be a cause of quarrel. Owens called on his friend and asked him why he would not receive the money, as he had no near relative to give it to. Mr. Faulkner repeated his objection, and urged Owens to leave his fortune to found a college or educational institute; reminding him that, as he had such strong prejudices against the tests imposed at the older English universities, he could enable young men to obtain an education equal to that of the favored institutions without these hindrances. The advice was taken.

The provisions of this will, which were drawn up, it is believed, by the two friends in concert, were admirably clear and precise. Mr. Owens was especially careful to guard his bequest from being appropriated to any particular sect or party. He had a perfect horror of sectarian bigotry or ecclesiastical exclusiveness. This feeling found expression in the following singular sentence:—He made the trust subject to “the fundamental and immutable rule and condition . . . that the students, professors, teachers, and other officers and persons connected with the said institutions shall not be required to make any declaration as to, or submit to any test whatsoever of, their religious opinions, and that nothing shall be introduced in the matter or mode of education or instruction in reference to any religious or theological subject which shall be reasonably offensive to the conscience of any student, or of his relations, guardians, or friends, under whose immediate care he shall be.”

This action on the part of John Owens has been followed by the founders of the Universities of Adelaide and Melbourne, and no one now ventures to harbor any doubt as to its wisdom. In any earlier period of English history such independent and unecclesiastical conduct would have been neither understood nor appreciated. The will of John Owens and its cordial reception by the world is a striking evidence of that onward march of practical and liberal thought which is the boast of this nineteenth century, which is none the less religious on that account.

With such a large sum as a nest egg the trustees set to work to try to increase it by soliciting personal subscriptions towards building a library and sundry scholarships. The college commenced in a very modest manner. A certain faded

mansion in what had once been a fashionable street was rented as a collegiate institution. This ugly but roomy old place had a history of its own, for it had belonged to Mr. Cobden. The ballroom was turned into an assembly-hall. The dining-room was fitted up with desks, and became the lecture-hall of Dr. Greenwood, professor of classics. Another professor was located in the drawing-room, and where the kitchens had aforetime witnessed the preparation of many a culinary display a useful little chemical laboratory was contrived. The trustees made a good choice in selecting their professors. That wonderful genius, Professor A. J. Scott, M. A., the friend of Carlyle and Irving, was appointed to the chair of logic and philosophy, and was made principal of the college. Mr. J. G. Greenwood, B. A., was made professor of classics. Mr. Sandemann, M. A., was the first occupant of the chair which Professor Lamb now fills. The other chairs were those of chemistry, natural history, political economy, and modern languages. The professors of the youthful college were excellent and able, but the students were few. Prosaic Manchester began to talk about "that foolish old man Owens," and to say that the college was before its time and was not wanted. The schoolmasters of the ordinary "commercial academies" were jealous and discontented because the college authorities found their pupils insufficiently prepared to receive the advantages of such an advanced training as was now afforded.