

## THE BROTHERHOOD OF SAINT SIMON.

BY THEODORE STANTON.

“THE three chief aspects of France at the moment of the advent of Saint Simonianism were, in the social order, competition; in the moral order, skepticism; in the political order, anarchy.” So writes Louis Blanc in his interesting chapter on the sect in his *History of Ten Years*. He continues: “This school rehabilitated the principle of authority in the midst of the triumphs of liberalism; proclaimed the necessity of a social religion at a moment when the laws themselves were atheistic; and advocated the organization of industry and cooperative ideas at an epoch when the deceptive success of competition had attained its highest point. With an intrepidity which has never been equaled and with a vigor well seconded by lofty talent and profound study, this school laid bare all the sores of the century and opened up to the intelligent a vast and new vista.”

The teachings of the Count of Saint Simon, the founder of French socialism, produced but little effect during his lifetime (1760-1825). But at the very start he won over to his views some of the most brilliant young men of the day, such as Auguste Comte and Augustin Thierry, and during the two years which followed the revolution of 1830 Saint Simonianism became a power in the intellectual world of France, to become later a power also in the industrial world and even to exercise a certain influence in the political world.

Perhaps the best way to enable Americans to understand the intellectual side of Saint Simonianism is to point out that many of its tenets and acts resembled those of our own transcendental movement of the middle of the last century. What Emerson said of a certain meeting of the Transcendental Club, that it was like “going to heaven in a swing,” might be repeated of many of the Sunday lectures in the Rue Taitbout or of the gatherings of “The

Family" in the Rue Monsigny. We are told that at some of the lectures or sermons the congregation was often so moved by an appeal, for example, to the privileged classes to help the working classes that tears were shed, while, amidst applause, the listeners began to embrace one another and scenes occurred that remind one of a Methodist revival or an American camp-meeting. This Family, which consisted of seventy-nine members, exclusive of the catechumens, and included the two Supreme Fathers, sixteen Fathers of the College, two of whom were women, took their meals in common, when all the principles of Saint Simonianism were discussed, while a deep spirit of fraternity prevailed, all of which reminds one of the atmosphere and conversation which prevailed in the plain dining-room of Brook Farm.

The comparison holds good in almost every particular. Just as the monks of Ménéilmontant—the Saint Simonians led a monastic life for a season—sought to organize a regular religion, so there was a tendency of this same kind at Brook Farm, with William H. Channing as a sort of embryonic *Enfantin*. In the department of music John S. Dwight was the *Félicien David* of Brook Farm, and in the field of journalism *The Harbinger* was the *Globe*. George William Curtis, who hovered on the outskirts of the farm, just as did several choice spirits of France on the heights of Ménéilmontant, speaks of "this effort at practical Christianity," while Saint Simon's doctrine was often described as "the new Christianity." In a general way transcendentalism has been defined as the doctrine that the principles of reality are to be discovered by the study of the processes of thought, while the transcendentalists themselves preferred to call themselves "disciples of newness," though a less reverent observer dubbed them "a race who drove into the infinite, soared into the illimitable, and never paid cash."

"Its most systematic historian," as Higginson styles Lindsay Swift, says of the Brook Farm experiment which lasted from 1841 to 1847, that "there was a distinct beginning, a fairly coherent progress, but a vague termination," which also well describes the history of Saint Simonianism, as, in fact, all these socialistic attempts in general. Curtis said in one of his "Easy Chair" essays of 1869: "It is to the transcendentalism, that seemed to so many good souls both wicked and absurd, that some of the best influences of American life to-day are due. The spirit that was concentrated at Brook Farm is diffused, but it is not lost." Professor Charléty makes much the same remark concerning Ménéilmontant: "These apostles had many friends, who while lamenting their foolishness admired their

talents," and Georges Weil, in the latest and one of the best studies of the sect, *L'Ecole Saint-Simonienne*, points out that it is a mistake to imagine, as most people do, that Saint Simonianism ended with the famous trial of 1832. "Up to the time of the death of Enfantin, in 1864, and even later," he says, "though there was no longer a Saint Simonian sect, there was a group of Saint Simonians, and there was especially a Saint Simonian state of mind. Its remarkable influence did not even disappear with the extinction of the last of the disciples." And, lastly, the superiority of the individual character of so many of the original Saint Simonians, for, taken as a body, they were a grand lot of men and women, also finds its counterpart in their American pendants—in Hawthorne, Ripley, Dana, and others. But curiously enough, it may be said in passing, I do not find that the transcendentalists remarked, either before or after their dispersion, this resemblance between themselves and their French precursors.

Both of these observations are true of Saint Simonianism and the woman's rights movement in America. Not only had they many points in common, but the American reformers do not appear to have been aware of this fact. "Enfantin proclaimed as a religious necessity," says Louis Blanc, "the enfranchisement of woman and her participation in the supreme power alongside of himself in the religious system, when would be established what he called the dual priesthood." In fact, the Saint Simonian belief in a female element in the godhead exactly resembles a latter-day phase of the American woman's rights creed, which startled the more old-fashioned wing of the reformers and shocked the church. In reading the various writings of the Saint Simonians you are continually encountering ideas and even phrases which you find in almost exactly the same words in the publications of Elizabeth Cady Stanton during the closing years of her life.

In the Saint Simonian profession of faith occur such passages as these: "I believe in God, Father and Mother of us all, man and woman." "I believe that God has raised up Father Enfantin in order that he may call to his side the Woman Messiah, who, by the equality of man and woman, will consecrate the union of humanity and the world." Holstein, a distinguished Saint Simonian, declared almost in his last breath: "I believe in God, Father and Mother." Michel Chevalier thus states the credo of the sect: "I believe in social regeneration based on the equality of man and woman, and I await the coming of the woman who will bring this about." One of the songs of the Saint Simonian poet, Vincard, contains this line:

"Let us cause to reign our God, Father and Mother."  
(*Faisons régner notre Dieu, Père et Mère.*)

An article in the *Globe* has this sentence: "There is being prepared in the moral world something that is unexpected and unheard of; we anticipate the coming of a Woman Messiah." In the calendar drawn up especially for the sect, several days each month were sacred to "the Father and the Mother." Charléty declares that these dreamers "turned their whole attention toward the coming of the Woman; it was their fixed idea." For a moment it was even thought that she might be at hand in the person of George Sand! *Enfantin* had repeatedly and confidently announced her advent, and when she did not appear he lost influence, and it was the beginning of his discredit and the fall of the sect.

Saint Simonian ideas are also reproduced in a more general way in the American woman's rights movement. The *Ménilmontant* thinkers did not overlook the educational and political claims of their female co-workers, nor forget their promises when the day for fulfilment seemed at hand. When the second Carnot, an old Saint Simonian, became minister of public instruction under the republic of 1848, he authorized at the College of France the opening of a series of lectures especially devoted to woman, while *Olinde Rodriques*, one of the ablest of the early Saint Simonian leaders, gives women their political rights in the constitution which he drew up for consideration at this same crisis. Even the female dress was reformed. The Saint Simonian women wore a sort of Bloomer costume—a kind of riding hat, black veil, short black skirt, leather belt, and trousers. Though it is true that *Rosa Bonheur* first put on male attire in order to facilitate her art work in the Paris slaughter-houses, it is also true that since her father was a Saint Simonian she had probably seen, as a child, the Saint Simonian women dressed in this way, and her own mother, possibly among them, so that it must have become very easy and natural for her to don a somewhat similar costume when necessity called for it.

*M. Henry D'Allemagne*, one of the best living authorities on Saint Simonianism and the Saint Simonians, tells me that it is generally believed that it was *Raymond Bonheur*, the father of *Rosa Bonheur* and himself an artist, who designed the peculiar costume of the men of the order—a short tight-fitting violet-blue frock-coat, without a collar; a red waistcoat fastened up the back with hooks and eyes; white trousers and a black leather belt with a brass buckle. "White is considered to signify love; red, work; and violet-blue, faith," wrote *Raymond Bonheur* to *Lacour*; "and the whole costume

symbolizes, therefore, that Saint Simonianism is based on love, is fortified by labor, and is enveloped by faith." Furthermore, in the words of Father Enfantin, "the waistcoat is the sign of fraternity, for you cannot button it alone"; and, lastly, as each one of the faithful assumed the responsibility of his own conduct, his name was written in large letters across his breast.

The remarkable industrial talent of the Saint Simonians has rightfully excited wonder. Saint Simon himself, when in the New World at the time of the American Revolution, proposed to the Viceroy of Mexico to make a canal between the two oceans, and half a century later his disciples went still farther in this same direction, when, in August, 1833, Enfantin wrote: "It is left to us to make, between ancient Egypt and old Judea, one of the new routes from Europe to India and China; later we will dig the other at Panama." Professor Charléty says: "Enfantin was the promoter, inspirer, and the first engineer of the Suez Canal. The glory of the enterprise rightfully belongs to the Saint Simonians and the Polytechnic School."

Nor did the sect confine its efforts in this field to interoceanic canals. The first railway built in France, that from Paris to Saint Germain, which was opened in 1837, was the work of these remarkable men. In fact, they were the very soul of the whole early railway construction of the country, and several of their sons and grandsons now hold high posts in the management of the chief lines.

Politically, too, Saint Simonianism presents a striking interest. Saint Simon himself was a friend of the first revolution, but when he saw that the republicans were incapable of governing, he accepted Bonaparte and put all his faith in him. In 1848 his followers did the same thing in respect to Napoleon III. During the reign of Louis Philippe almost all of the Saint Simonians were republicans, and some even conspired against the government. So when the revolution of 1848 broke out they were much stirred. But a letter from the Father urged the disciples not to take part in the uprising. In a word, the Saint Simonian school welcomed the advent of the Second Empire, for to most of them political liberty was a secondary consideration. What they desired above all was a government strong enough to preserve order and assure progress. What they had looked for in vain in a parliamentary republic, a despotic government gave them; and so they rallied to its support. M. Weill says: "Napoleon III was, for a period at least, Saint Simonism crowned. . . . If we follow Napoleon III in his speeches and his letters we will find him continually in accord with the Saint Simonians. . . . It was not

only the ideas, but the men of the Saint Simonian school who triumphed under the Empire; several even lived in the immediate circle of Napoleon III." In fact, the folly of the democrats was equaled only by the selfishness of the conservative burgher class in 1848. Under these circumstances "the conduct of the Saint Simonians was remarkable," a close observer has pointed out. They stood almost alone between two extremes, and, though they approved of the change, they strove to draw from it only practical results, such as primary schools for all, a better banking system, and large appropriations for public improvements.

The socialistic side of the new doctrine was indeed very pronounced. "Two forms of modern thought," writes Professor Charléty, "which are closely allied, though not necessarily confounded in the same men, positivism and socialism, really spring from Saint Simonianism." Though the reform failed, "it prepared the way both for socialistic rhetoric and sociological studies." It should be remembered that, at the moment of the revolution of 1848, it was a Saint Simonian who, first in France and in Europe, proposed to solve the difficulties between capital and labor by the system of profit sharing. It is a common mistake, however, to think that the social question was introduced into French politics by the revolution of 1848, whereas it was precipitated into the arena by the outburst of 1830. Pierre Leroux, a distinguished Saint Simonian (who, by the way, once blamed Victor Hugo to his face for never having made a verse in honor of the founder of the sect), was the first, in 1834, to employ the word socialism, while the new socialists, Cabet, Louis Blanc, and Proudhon, were very much in evidence throughout the reign of Louis Philippe, though highly distasteful to the advocates of pacific progress, the peculiar characteristic of the Saint Simonians after they had come to their senses and were dispersed.

During the days of July the people of Paris came generously to the support of the sorely pressed liberal burgher class, and when the victory was won the working classes naturally felt that they should share in the consequent benefits. During the Restoration the burgher class had alone been on the scene. But the Orleans monarchy brought the people into politics, and the Saint Simonians, who were quick to perceive the innovation and immediately took advantage of it, owed much of their early success to this fact. Some of the more sanguine leaders even thought for a moment that they might get control of the new situation and bring about a complete social revolution in accordance with their ideas. Lafayette, who for a short period was the arbiter of France, was even approached with

this end in view ; in fact, so carried away were the most ardent, that they did not hesitate to turn their eyes toward the Tuileries, and Louis Philippe himself was summoned to yield his place to the apostles of the new sect !

The Saint Simonian doctrine may be stated briefly as follows : Saint Simon divided society into workers and non-workers, and held that the future belonged exclusively to the first ; which he strove to classify as exactly as possible, finally concluding that as man feels, thinks, and acts, all human work can be done by those who address themselves to our sensibilities, who cultivate our intelligence, and who set in motion our activities. Consequently, the three social functions consist in moving, enlightening, and enriching men ; and hence there are three classes of workers—artist, teachers in the broadest sense, and manufacturers. Under the name of neo-Christianity, Saint Simon brought together all his scattered ideas and reduced them to three dicta, viz., universal cooperation, based on love, and consequently subversive of competition, the formula “to each man according to his capacity, to each capacity according to its works,” which destroyed the principle of inheritance ; and, lastly, the thorough organization of industry, so that war is put an end to. In a word, Saint Simon attacked every privilege of birth and declared all armed conflicts impious. “The golden age,” he said, “which a blind tradition has always placed in the past is really in front of us.” “Like all reformers,” says Louis Blanc, “he started from the perfectibility of humanity.” But his disciples who followed were not always so precise in their definitions. “The Saint Simonian doctrine,” says one of them, “was neither a Koran nor a Leviticus ; it was a conception with a frame, a preface with a tale of contents.” Lerminier’s definition is somewhat similar, “a vast and confused table of contents, a hasty prospectus of the French philosophy of the nineteenth century, ” while another declares that it is simply “a new reform of Christianity—nothing more, nothing less.”

Saint Simon died in 1825. The journal which he was bent on founding at the moment of his death, the *Producteur*, appeared from October, 1825, to October, 1826. Then followed two years, 1826 to 1828, of “the silent expansion” of Saint Simonianism. Toward the end of 1828 the little group of Saint Simonians instituted a series of sermons concerning the religious side of the doctrine. This went on for nearly two years, when these sermons were eventually published in two volumes, and constitute the chief philosophical work of the sect. These public lectures were followed up by private talks, when conversions to the new faith were accomplished.

Each believer was expected to bring a friend or two to these evening reunions, who were argued with and their objections refuted, with the result that a new adherent was generally secured. Among the early apostles were many young and brilliant graduates of the famous Paris State Polytechnic School, which has always played such a prominent part in the liberal movements of France. They were one of the chief sources of strength of the reform. To these were added sentimentalists, mystics, and persons troubled by religious anxiety and who hoped to find rest for their weary souls in this new haven. "Many of the neophytes," writes Gustave d'Eichthal, "sought here consolation of some sort; others hoped thus to escape from the state of vague melancholy into which they had been plunged by romanticism, while still others were fleeing family troubles, or seeking rest from the fatigues of a wild and misspent youth." Professor Charléty says: "The Saint Simonians poured into the hearts of the young of both sexes a generous spirit of enthusiasm. To their minds was offered the elevated pleasure, the joy of possessing the truth. The appeal was heard. All those whose souls were unsettled, who were looking for a belief or were impatient to do something; all those who, weary of the commonplaceness of received opinion, longed for 'something else,' who, tired of the inaction in which some insufficient calling left their souls asleep, who were ambitious—all such persons flew to the Saint Simonians, as in other times they sought out literary circles or political clubs."

The youthfulness of the Saint Simonians was very notable, and explains much of the attractiveness of the reform. So immature were several of them that nature refused to second the rule of the sect that all its members should wear full beards! The principal apostles were indeed a very young body of men. Only one of them had reached forty, and he remained but a short time. Thirteen were in their thirties, while eighteen were under thirty, and three of these, youths of twenty. No wonder, then, that Charléty declares that "the retreat of the apostles to Ménilmontant was not unfruitful, for it filled their old age with pleasant memories and gave strength to their middle life,—Ménilmontant, where they had loved one another so dearly, where, in the exuberancy of youth, they had entertained such wild but sublime hopes, such noble joy, which appeared, through the flight of memory, purified from all dross," which reminds one of Renan's remark: "It is almost always a principle with great lives that during some months they feel God, and this sensation suffices to fill whole years with energy and sweetness."

Several dicta of the new doctrine made a strong appeal to its



adherents. It was declared at the very start, as we have already seen, that humanity was to have a triple governing power—knowledge, industry, and the fine arts—and when the sect was definitely founded, a large part was reserved to artists. It was pointed out in the *Producteur* that art was too individualistic, at the mercy of the caprice of each artist, “the symbol of the moral anarchy in which we live.” “But the moment is doubtless at hand,” continues the Saint Simonian journalist, “when the painter, the musician, the poet who shall have attained to the complete development of his faculty to feel, will possess the power of pleasing and moving in as certain a manner as the mathematician now possesses the power of solving a geometrical problem, or the chemist the power of separating a body into its elements. Then will the moral side of society be definitely constituted.” Art has its social side; “it should move the masses.” This was the germ of the theory which certain of the leaders soon pushed to an extreme. It was taught that the religious side of the sect would be directed by the man of the most artistic nature, who would be the supreme priest. Every one was drawn to the reform by the fine presence and attractive manners and language of *Enfantin*, whom all agreed in pronouncing “a real charmer.” Of course, knowledge would have its head and industry, too, but the religious head would be he of the most artistic temperament. So the artist became the prophet, and when Saint Simonianism assumed the garb of religion, and killed itself thereby, the artist became the high priest. No wonder, then, that many young painters like *Raymond Bonheur*, that *Félicien David*, *Liszt* and *Halévy*, that sculptors and architects, either coquetted for a moment with, or openly and ardently embraced, the new faith that gave them the place of honor in the society which it was to organize. But it was more to be wondered at that a whole group of young men, intelligent, and most of them endowed with a strong personality, should shut themselves up in *Enfantin’s* house and submit to the severest rule which had no other sanction than the praises or the reproaches of the Father; many of them having to break with family ties that were very dear to them, and yet not one of them hesitating an instant to do so—this was indeed the triumph of art!

In the enthusiasm for the new tenets the activity of the members was not limited to the purely art side of the work, which was rather humdrum. They were also ardent propagandists. Paris was divided into four “sections,” under one or more “directors”; and to further extend Saint Simonian influence among the working classes of the capital, a committee of three, composed of a physician, a director,

and a directress, was appointed for each of the twelve wards which then formed the city.

Then occurred an unfortunate departure in the movement. After the funeral of *Enfantin's* mother, on April 22, 1832, all the friends, several hundred in number, who went to the cemetery, returned with the Father to his home at *Ménilmontant*, where he pronounced a short address. Then all departed except the forty apostles, who were henceforth to abide with him.

The daily life at *Ménilmontant* resembled that of a convent. The brothers rose at five, breakfasted at seven, dined at one, supped at seven, and were in bed by ten. There were no domestics, and each apostle had certain menial duties to perform. Thus the cultivated *Gustave d'Eichthal* cleaned plates, while the Father Superior presided over the garden, and among the brothers who aided him in these horticultural tasks was the artist *Raymond Bonheur*, of whom there exists a picture, spade in hand.

At this moment the Saint Simonians were one of the chief centers of curiosity of the proverbially inquisitive Parisians. The gates of the convent were thrown open twice each week, on Sundays to all comers, and on Wednesdays to privileged persons. On Sundays as many as 10,000 persons would sometimes walk out from Paris to see the Saint Simonians go through their ceremonies, to look at them eat, and to listen to their songs. So great was the crowd that the government sometimes surrounded the spot with soldiers for fear of disorder.

One of the rules of this peculiar sort of monastery was that requiring the apostles not to leave its gates. This was the hardest one for many of the members to conform to, for it meant a voluntary separation from wife and children; and there were always friends and relatives to blame them for this course, though, as has already been stated, it was unhesitatingly followed by several of the apostles, some of whom occupied high social and mental positions. It should be remembered, also, that one of the fundamental principles of Saint Simonianism was that family, caste, city, nation were synonymous with antagonism; that all social forms made for war. The idea of association, however, had peace as its aim.

On August 27 and 28, 1832, the Saint Simonians were tried before the courts for immorality, though the impartial historian must admit that the charge, if partly true in the case of *Enfantin*, was wholly false concerning his faithful followers. The truth of the matter is that the sect had become troublesome, not to say more, to the powers that were; and in over-centralized France, espe-

cially in the time of the July monarchy, this was a grave political crime. So loose morals was seized upon as the pretext and article 291 of the criminal code as the real means of suppressing these *enfants terribles*. At 7 A. M., on the first day, *Enfantin* and the apostles, in full Saint Simonian dress, marched down from Ménilmontant, through the whole breadth of Paris, to the court-house, where several of the leaders were condemned to fine and imprisonment, in accordance with the article just mentioned, which reads as follows: "No association numbering more than twenty persons, which meets daily or on certain fixed dates, and whose aim is of a religious, literary, political, or other nature, can be formed without the consent of the government, or under conditions other than those which it pleases the public authorities to impose upon it." The application of this article in the case of the Saint Simonians was not approved by several of the liberal organs of the time, and it was finally abrogated seventy years afterward, in July, 1901.

In the month of October following the first trial the Saint Simonians were again arraigned, accused this time of dishonesty in money matters. But there was no ground for the charge, and all the accused were acquitted. After the first trial the sustaining fund of the monastery began to diminish, and the faithful had grown weary of a life of almost nothing to do. After the second trial the financial situation got still worse. Thereupon the Father divided the apostles into two groups, one, the smaller, remaining with him at Ménilmontant, while the other group was to go forth and preach the good word. But once having breathed again the free air of the every-day world, none ever returned to the restraints of Ménilmontant. This happened in the late autumn of 1832.