

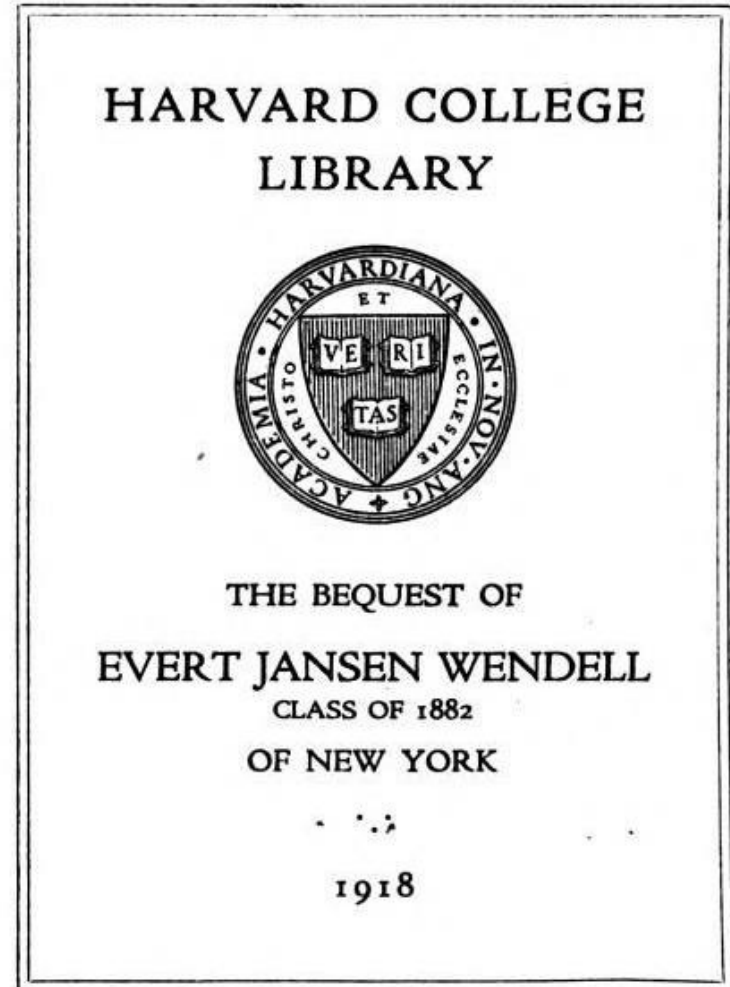
# THE COOPER UNION ALUMNI & PIONEER

The Real Cooper (rev 1)

<http://tinyurl.com/c3p7ehl>

## Life and character of Peter Cooper

Charles Edwards  
Lester



## Abstract

With links to supporting documentation, an 1883 biography quickly assembled from contemporary sources reveals the real Peter Cooper and The Cooper Union's 25-year first come-first served existence as a completely free charity institution giving preference to the most needy, excluding those who could afford an education elsewhere, eschewing those wishing to pursue high art or professional engineering, and completely reliant on Peter Cooper's devotion to using his own wealth to do good.

Charles Edwards Lester, an ordained minister who became an author and leader in the anti-slavery movement and spent much of his time "on the road," was asked – perhaps by his political allies, since much of the book is devoted to an explication of Peter Cooper's economic philosophy – to create this quickly assembled hodgepodge of a book about his friend of 25 years; not coincidentally, Lester knew Cooper before the founding of the college and Lincoln's anti-slavery speech in its hall. Published less than three weeks after Peter Cooper's death on April 4, 1883, and full of "inconvenient truths" for the entire twenty-first century Cooper Union Community, its 116 pages are filled with quotes from other sources which may have been doctored to avoid "inconvenient truths" or add political points for the intended audience. The long passages against national banks certainly make this a biographical sketch of "a wonderful life." Lester's account of his last visit with Peter half

a year prior may strike some as the made-up hyperbole of an overly religious ideologue, but Peter's tendency at the end of his life to quote long passages from Pope is confirmed in another source <<http://www.unz.org/Pub/Century-1883dec-00218>> from the same year, a moving portrait written by the superintendent of the women's art school. The contents here are not authenticated or annotated, although they align with a biography of Peter Cooper <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/26498/26498-h/26498-h.htm>>, don't conflict with a 1903 Old South Pamphlet <<http://tinyurl.com/cqc65fn>>, and are authenticated by disinterested historians at the National Park Service <<http://lweb2.loc.gov/pnp/habshaer/ny/ny0300/ny0359/data/ny0359data.pdf>>.

Pages 30 through 50 of the original concern the "Cooper Institute," three chapters comprising 1, 5, and 16 sub-chapters, with an engraving of the original building scanned by the Harvard College Library as an insert illustration that doesn't interrupt the page numbering. Three of the Roman numerated subchapters have not been included as they do not concern the college, and, as a link to the on-line original is provided, it was not intended to reproduce all 116 pages – plus a dozen pages of advertisements for other books – here.

Of the 19 subchapters included, the first 3 are written by Lester, the next is from an 1879 Report of the US Commissioner of Education, and the next from the 1882 Annual Report of the Trustees. Then Lester turns to an unidentified writer for *The New York Herald* newspaper for the remainder of his third chapter. This would have been contemporaneous, because it contains the phrase, "The last thing Mr. Cooper did before he died was to purchase ten typewriters." This, then, is a portrait of the school in April of 1883, with quotes from Curator Zachos, Director of the Night Schools Plympton, and Women's School Superintendent Carter. The writer describes a first come-first served charity school, in which those most needy are given preference, and

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those who can afford higher education are turned away. The purpose of the day school is to provide employment opportunities and even earnings to the female student body. The night school is for tradesmen who wish to elevate themselves to become inventors and engineers, but there are also “operable” drawing classes for those wishing to become architectural draftsmen. There are new classes in telegraphy, and typewriters have been purchased to train women in secretarial skills. Stationary and materials required in the chemical and modeling classes are furnished free, and books are sold at cost. Except for an extra class offered outside of regular hours for “amateur” women who are “abundantly able” to pay, everything is free (the “amateur” classes disappear by 1887, according to Sangu Iyer <<http://sangamithra.wordpress.com/2012/04/07/on-amateurs-and-access/>>).

It is written in the context of upper class opposition to both Peter Cooper, for his anti-slavery, anti-bank, anti-gold politics, and opposition to the institute itself – some thought the lower class should not be educated (later, there would be a strange bedfellow pairing of the birth control movement and the eugenics movement), some suspected Peter of building a dynasty, and some just thought him foolish. No one else is joining him in this philanthropic endeavor, not the rich, the middle class, the government, or companies, except for the Western Union Telegraph Company (similar to RCA Institutes a century later). Why don't other companies who employ these skilled workers provide money to the school, the writer asks. There is no pressure on graduates to provide money or honor to the school, but if they become successful businessmen and earn more than they need, then like Peter Cooper, his heirs, Andrew Carnegie and, later, the robber barons after the end of the gilded age, they are expected to use that wealth for public purposes. The “rally round this institution” language probably refers to political pressures, not financial, for the school teaches oratory and expects its students to become activists and voters in workers causes. He treats his workers well and is anti-union. His primary cause is debt, and he cites the country's founding fathers as passing legislation forbidding bankers from holding elective office. He would never imagine a middle class family, let alone a student, taking out a loan in order to become educated, and he would never allow his own institute to become indebted to a bank. He has no need for accreditation or other “professional” forms of employment. He wants people to graduate, become self-supporting, and serve the public good; the “abundantly able,” like himself, will provide free education for those who otherwise cannot afford it. As to himself, “If now and then some of us don't give a little too much, how shall we make up for those who give too little?”

It was chartered as “The Cooper Union,” but such a name is too fraught with meaning after the end of the civil war.. Robert Topper has uncovered some of the history behind the Chrysler Building land <[http://engfac.cooper.edu/pages/topper/uploads/peter\\_cooper\\_lect\\_wbib&ed\\_Final.pdf](http://engfac.cooper.edu/pages/topper/uploads/peter_cooper_lect_wbib&ed_Final.pdf)>, but not the politics behind the PILOT. Although Hewitt was opposed to Peter's politics, he wasn't opposed to Peter's understanding of its educational mission. We need research into the evolution of the college from an open admission policy to merit-based, and on how the college evolved to become an accredited institution. Research into the financial and political structures of the college are needed as well, not to aid in their use, politically, but because they must not be used politically. It can't be a coincidence that the Library has been the one part of The Cooper Union that all parties are willing to do without.

History belongs to historians, not to contemporary politicians, on either side of the tuition debate. Let's not let truthiness, press releases, search engines, and debates substitute for history. It is unfortunate that we live in a world where words have more than one meaning.

*process* - **1** made by artificial modification **2** a series of actions or operations conducing to an end **3** progress

*sustain* - **1** to carry or withstand **2** nourish **3** to give support or relief to

*free* - **1** not costing or charging anything **2** not united with, attached to, combined with, or mixed with something else **3** not subject to the control or domination of another **4** not hampered or restricted in its normal operation

*scholarship* - **1** knowledge **2** a grant-in-aid to a student

- Barry Drogin EE'83

## OFFERING.

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Many a time during my somewhat prolonged authorship, have I been called on to portray the lives of the great and good with whose acquaintance and friendship I had been honored. But never have I responded to such a request with so much alacrity and cheerfulness, as when I was asked to pay some literary Tribute to my beloved friend, the late **PETER COOPER**.

I knew him well for more than a quarter of a century, and my veneration and love for him grew with every year. And now, when some of the illusions of life have faded for me, and all of them for him, and I survey him robed in his fadeless garments beyond the tomb, I cannot withhold from him the unbidden homage: *Hail! Thou purest and noblest of men!*

He needs neither eulogy nor monument. Such things can do nothing for him now. They may for us. His name will outlive all earthly memorials built by other hands. But to help those who are to come after us, better to comprehend the greatness of the man, and the grandeur of the legacy he left to his countrymen, and

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## OFFERING.

to all mankind for all time, it may be well to give some brief record of his life and character now, while the tender grass is springing for the first time over his grave, and he far away, in the Summer Land.

C. E. L.

NEW YORK, April 20, 1883.



# LIFE AND CHARACTER OF *PETER COOPER*.

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## HOW I INTEND TO WRITE THIS SKETCH.

Next to an intimate personal knowledge of a man who rises above the common level, is such an account of his life and occupations, so truthfully written, as to enable the reader to form a just estimate of his character. This is all I attempt to do in this brief record.

The chief portion of my materials are drawn from notes and observations jotted down at intervals during my acquaintance with the man, with such citations from the statements of others worthy of implicit reliance.

My object is to write such a sketch as will make the reader feel, when he gets through, that he knows *Peter Cooper* almost as well as I did.

Here is the great charm of portraiture. That painter succeeds best who not only copies with fidelity the form and features of his sitter, but transfuses into the canvas the character, the intellect, and very soul of the man he delineates. This he must do with the integrity of the photograph, but he must do what the photographer never has done, and probably never can do—interpret the character of the sitter, which can be limned only by the cunning pencil of genius. It has, therefore, always seemed to me, that the most satisfactory biographies are those which are written very much as the best portraits

are painted by the artist who comprehends the character of his subject, who catches the characteristics flashed from the soul of his sitter and transfers them to the canvas.

Later biographies may be written with more philosophical analysis, or fascination; the style may be wrought into classical perfection, and the mind of the reader may be charmed by a gifted writer of genius who lives long after the subject of his biography has passed away. But to take a single instance. It is very doubtful if a careful reader of Boswell's Johnson ever gets so clear an idea of the great lexicographer's mind and characteristics from all his other biographies, as he gets from Boswell.

The only motive, therefore, which inspires me in this unpretending sketch, is to do with my subject what may prove to my reader the same kind of satisfaction he feels in looking at a well-executed portrait in oil, marble, or bronze.

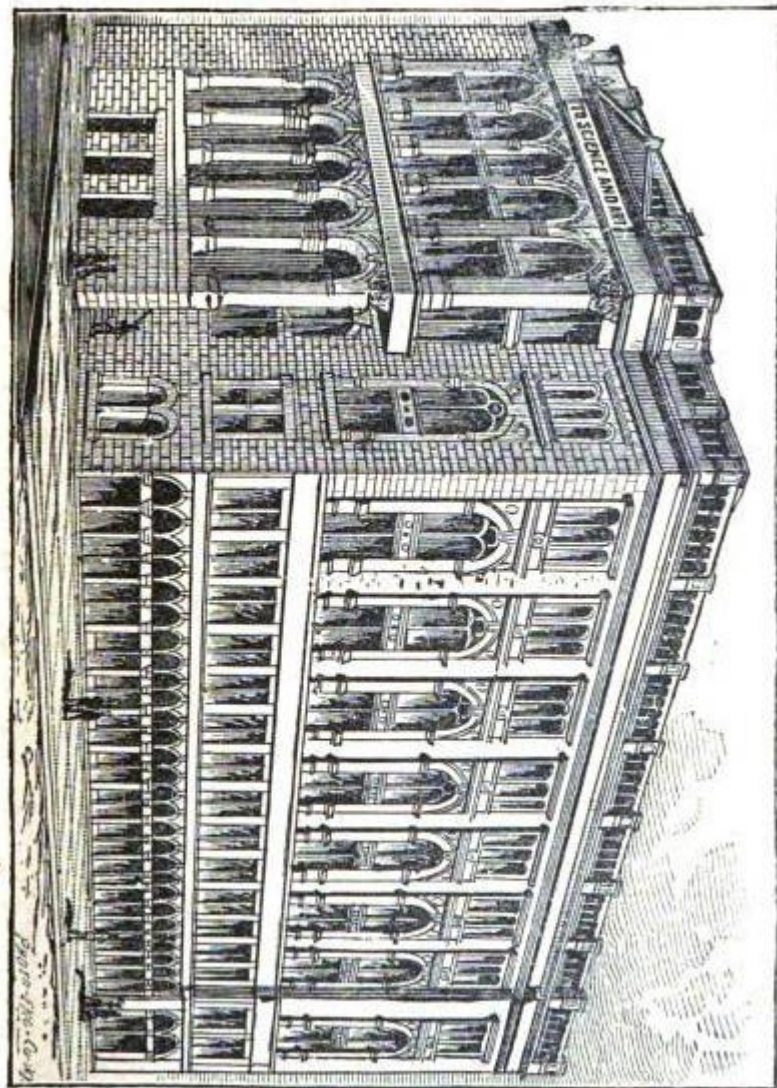
money, and thinking to augment it rapidly, he invested his capital in a lottery ticket. He lost it, of course, as millions of older fools have since. But he never regretted it, and he often recalled the fact with good humor and thankfulness, for he said it was "the cheapest piece of knowledge he ever bought." Believing that his native city was the best place for doing business, and knowing that the only road to success was by steady hard work, he found, after long searching, a place in the carriage shop of Burtis & Woodward, on the corner of Broadway and Chambers Street, where a great marble structure was afterwards raised by A. T. Stewart, and there he bound himself out as an apprentice until he should reach the age of twenty-one. He was to receive his board and a salary of twenty-five dollars a year. Here he began life in earnest, and he attributed his after success in a great degree, to those four years of steady, hard work, with the economy which his little earnings enforced; and during the whole time he not only did not run in debt one cent, but he always had a little money laid by. With not only a tact but a genius for mechanism, he became so much a master of his trade, and had so won the confidence of his employers by his ability and devotion to their interests, that they offered to set him up in the same business in the Bowery. But he declined the offer; for one of his maxims, thus early established, was never to be in debt. Although he had made a number of improvements in the machinery for manufacturing carriages, particularly an apparatus for making hubs, the principle of which was embodied in later inventions, yet he

## THE COOPER INSTITUTE.

### I.

The founding of the "Cooper Union of Art and Science," was the great achievement of Cooper's life. It was entirely his own creation. No other person has ever claimed the credit of it, or if such claim were made, it would never be allowed. The conception of it was original in the mind of the founder. The design of the edifice in all its parts and proportions, and the very





## THE COOPER INSTITUTE.

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curriculum of its studies, the primal and ultimate objects to be accomplished, and its administration up to the time of his death, were all the work of its founder. It was his life work. In comparison with it, he regarded all his other labors as insignificant; and by it he will be forever known. To it he gave the labors, the savings, the solitudes and the enthusiasm of his great soul, for a longer period than the vast majority of the human race live. During this time, hardly an hour of conscious life passed by, or a night of dreams, in which his great object did not claim the highest place. No other thing inflamed or sustained his lofty ambition. Among his parting words, as he was calmly contemplating the endless future, through whose gates "on golden hinges turning" to admit him, amidst tender words to his children who stood round his bedside, were whispered utterances, almost with his last breath, about the Cooper Union. Such a solace in that parting hour, was the most

### III.

But he had from 1839 been a most active member of the Public School Society, till it was superseded by the Board of Education, of which he was elected president, which position he found perfectly congenial to his tastes and feelings. Here he first entered upon what he called "the hobby of his life;" saying to some of the principal citizens that "he hoped he should live to see the day that better provision would be made for free instruction, especially for those boys and girls who were unprovided with the means of education;" recalling his own experience, as a perpetual inspiration. He had had to do nearly all the work in the Public School Society. Others were too much occupied with their own affairs, or less enthusiastic than himself. He held the laboring oar with a strong arm, and it was a good apprenticeship to prepare himself for that kind of work for which nature and fortune seemed to have designed him. While he was serving as assistant alderman in 1828, he had fully determined to make arrangements for the construction of the great institution which bears his name, and he lost no opportunity to gather information from the best sources relative to such a work.

The only institution he could learn of in the world that carried out in any considerable degree the objects he wished to attain, was the Polytechnic School of Paris. It had received the special attention of a well-informed American gentleman just returned from France, who described to Mr. Cooper all he had seen and learned of that institution. He represented that the pupils who were admitted had, many of them, been obliged to go through great hardships to get the benefit which the lectures and instruction afforded. Mr. Cooper conversed with professors and teachers of higher schools, and having at last settled upon the kind of a school that was most needed for those having no other source of advancement, and having laid up, with a view to such an ultimate result, money enough to start on, he proceeded to buy the ground for the building, keeping his purpose pretty much to himself. He secured the site just about where the Bowery branches into Third and Fourth Avenues, and began to prepare the ground for the building. He was his own architect. Being a master mechanic in several trades, and having erected large edifices, he justly felt himself competent to do that work, commanding such assistance all through, as he needed, and subjecting his plans to the severest criticism on all occasions. He was determined to put up a building as nearly fire-proof as could be made, since it was to be of stone, brick, and iron. The corner-stone of the Union was laid. Within that stone was placed a scroll which bore this inscription: "The great object that I desire to accomplish by the erection of this institution, is to open the avenues of scientific knowledge to the youth of our city and country, and so unfold the volume of Nature, that the young may see the beauties of creation,



enjoy its blessings, and learn to love the Author from whom cometh every good and perfect gift."

V.

The school was "to be forever devoted to the Union of Science and Art in its application to the useful purposes of life." The work went steadily on under his direct supervision for five years; and from the foundation, deeply and securely laid, rose a brown-stone and iron structure of massive Roman architecture, an irregular quadrangle in shape, its dimensions on its four sides being 90, 146, 165, and 195 feet, rising four lofty stories above the great basement hall, which has ever since been the largest and most popular lecture-room in the city. From that hall more light and knowledge have been diffused, than from any other single room in the United States, or perhaps in the whole world. The original plan embraced a sixth story, which was to be added in subsequent years, as the demand for increased facilities for education multiplied. When it was completed, the structure had cost, together with the expense of the ground, nearly seven hundred thousand dollars. This was in the cheap days of New York, and every dollar of that money had been earned by Mr. Cooper. Further expenditures, which have been steadily increasing, with his own endowments, made the entire outlay at the time of his death considerably more than one million dollars. Large areas were devoted to rent for business purposes, so that from all sources the income for several years has exceeded \$50,000 per annum. It therefore rests upon a permanent foundation: all the work of one man, without the contribution of a dollar from any other source. Thus far for the history of the construction of the edifice and its endowments.

II.

In the Report of 1879 of the United States Commissioner of Education, we find the following statement:

"*The Cooper Union Free Night Schools of Science.*—These afford a remarkable example of the intelligent application of a great charity. Their purpose is the technical instruction of the laboring classes, which is accomplished through the agency of a free library and reading-room, free lectures, and two classes of schools, viz., the Evening Schools of Science and Art, and the Art School for Women. The course of study in the former, embraces the ordinary English branches, with advanced courses in mathematics, mechanics, physics, literature, and rhetoric. The art department of the evening schools, embraces instruction in all branches of drawing, viz., free hand, architectural, mechanical, and drawing from cast; also industrial drawing, and design and modelling in clay. Women are admitted to the scientific classes, but not to the art classes, a special



school of Art being maintained for them. The latter is divided into five departments—drawing, painting, photography, wood-engraving, and normal teaching.

“In both of the Art schools the training is constantly directed to the preparation of the pupils for those employments in which the arts of design and drawing are the principal or accessory occupations; 2820 pupils were registered the present year in the Evening Schools of Science and Art, of whom 2707 were engaged during the day in various trades and occupations. Owing to the exigencies of their industrial life, but few of the pupils can remain long enough in the institution to complete the whole course and receive the diploma and medal of the Cooper Union. Certificates of proficiency are awarded to those who pass satisfactory examination on the work of a particular class; 634 such certificates were awarded in 1879.

“The number of pupils admitted to the free morning classes of the Woman’s Art School, was 255, and to the engraving class for women, 37. In the art school the earnings for the year were \$9,525.75, and in the engraving class, \$1,820.59. All money earned in the schools belongs to the pupils, and a number are thus enabled to support themselves while studying.

“The subsequent career of the graduates is followed with constant interest, and the facts thus brought to light, afford the most gratifying evidence of the practical results of the instruction. A large proportion of the graduates command lucrative positions as teachers of art, photo-colorers, decorators, and designers.

“The school of telegraphy for women admitted 35 pupils the present year. The Western Union Telegraph Company has so far interested itself in the school, as to nominate a teacher who trains the pupils in the

thorough methods of that company. Although under no agreement to provide places for the scholars, the Company has employed a large proportion of the graduates on its lines.

“Instruction in all the schools and classes above described, together with all privileges of the institution, is absolutely free. In consequence of the great pressure for admission, and the earnest offer of many to pay for their instruction, the trustees have allowed an amateur class to be formed, which meets in the afternoon out of the regular class hours, and the members of which pay a small fee. Half of the money thus realized goes to the teacher, and the other half to the free schools. The fees for the present year amount to \$2326.”

Higher praise could hardly be offered; and yet the Commissioner accords to the Cooper Institute the honor of placing it between the Stevens Institute of Technology, of Hoboken, and the Franklin Institute, of Philadelphia!

### III.

In the Twenty-third Annual Report of the Trustees of the Cooper Union—May 27, 1882—we find the following statement:

“Comparing the Art School of 1871-2 with its condition in 1881, I find in summing up the numbers the total of

Applicants for the school in 1871-72	was	173
“ “ “ “ 1881-82	“	1,397
The number of admissions in 1871-72	was	173
“ “ “ “ 1881-82	“	711
The number of classes in 1871-72	was	3
“ “ “ “ 1881-82	was	14

“The amount of all money that could be heard of all former pupils earning in 1871-72, was \$4000. The amount of money earned by present pupils, and by graduates of 1880-81 only, is, so far as reported, \$29,003.57. The last figures do not represent the entire amount, as I know that many of last year's graduates are earning money who have given me no report at all.

“The total number of pupils in the school who are earning, is 113, of whom 51 are in the photograph classes, and 27 in the engraving class. All the money earned belongs to the pupils themselves.

“Last year's report, *i.e.*, the annual report of 1880-81, shows that \$19,480.25 was earned, making an increase in this year's report of \$9452.32. This is very encouraging, as this season there has been a larger number than usual of new scholars in the Art School.

“This growth of the school is gratifying; yet, at the same time, one cannot but reflect that 686 persons, or nearly as many as were able to be admitted, were disappointed in their efforts to gain admittance. Were the Art rooms as large again, the income of the Cooper Union double, and the general appliances of casts, books, etc., double, we could use them all.”

#### IV.

And yet these statistics give but a faint idea of what the Cooper Union really is. It can be better learned from a more minute description by a careful writer in *The New York Herald*, who embraced a more complete conception of the plan Mr. Cooper carried out. He says: “A quarter of a century ago, lacking one year, Peter Cooper realized the dream of his life in the establishment of the institution which bears his name. Believing, as few, very few, rich men do, that his wealth

was a sacred trust to be used for the benefit of his fellow-creatures, Mr. Cooper gave not merely of his money, but his life thenceforth, and anxious thought to the building up and maintenance of the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art. The title, while it expresses a high purpose, falls far short of conveying any idea of the vast range of the good work of the Union. The advancement of science and art is well enough; but to teach, without one cent of charge, 40,000 men and women to earn a good living at skilled trades; to cultivate, without money and without price, the hands and brains of scores of thousands so that they may advance themselves in the world, and to exalt, mentally, morally and physically, the poor and friendless, are far nobler objects. What the schools of the Cooper Union do is to give boys and girls that practical education which will be inestimably valuable to them in their trades and professions, and enable them to earn bread and butter, and something besides, for their families.”

#### V.

*Schools in the Different Departments.*—“The schools occupy the greater part of the building. The whole of the large structure above the reading-room, which is on the second floor, is divided into class-rooms and devoted to educational purposes of a wide range. There are now thirty-five hundred pupils, and there would be many more if the building would accommodate them. The demand is growing every year, and in all the departments the applicants seeking admission far exceed the accommodations. In some classes the number of those who were turned away at the beginning of the present year, was greater than the number admitted. The pupils are received on the simple rule of first come



first served, the necessary qualifications on the part of the applicant being good character, a suitable age, and an expressed intention to turn the advantages of the institution to industrial purposes and self-support. Great care is taken to select for admission those who are the least able to pay the usual charges of educational institutions for special instruction. Young men and girls with poor parents, or who are dependent upon their own resources, are always given the first choice. Amateurs in art or science are not wanted and not admitted, with a single unimportant exception, to be hereafter explained. Such is the reputation for thoroughness in the instruction given in these schools, that many parents who can and will pay liberally are anxious to have their children received. The building could be filled with these amateurs twice over every season, but it would be directly contrary to the wise purposes of the founder to receive this class, and they are never knowingly taken. The private pay schools furnish ample provision for them.

“ ‘It is a great pity we have not more room,’ said Curator Zachos; ‘this great institution should be multiplied fourfold. In some of the branches—notably the women’s art school—applicants for admission sometimes wait for two years before they can be received. We use every available inch of room.’ ”

#### VI.

The writer continues: “The actual work of the Cooper Union is one of the largest of any educational institution in the world. The reading-room furnishes amusement and instruction to over two thousand people every day, and over three hundred papers and magazines and five hundred books are called for. It is open

from eight in the morning until ten at night through the week, and on Sundays after twelve o’clock, and every respectable person is admitted without any formality or restriction. It is the largest reading-room in the country, is well lighted and comfortable, and fully supplied with the periodical literature of many languages.

“But the reading-room is the least important part of the educational machinery of Cooper Union. The number of pupils who entered the various classes last year was 3334. And besides these there are public lectures every Saturday night during the fall and winter in the great hall of the Union, where about two thousand people assemble once every week, to hear the most distinguished men in the country discourse upon the questions of the day in science, art, and literature.”

#### VII.

*For Boys and Men.*—“There are both day and night schools. The former are for girls and young ladies, the latter for boys and young men. The male schools are in two sections—the department of science, and the department of art. The first admits about one thousand scholars during the term, and has classes in algebra, geometry, trigonometry, analytical and descriptive geometry, differential and integral calculus, elementary mechanics, natural philosophy, engineering, astronomy, elementary and analytical chemistry, geology, scientific mechanical drawing, oratory and debate.

“The art school admits over 1200 pupils during the term, and teaches them drawing in perspective, mechanical and architectural drawing, drawing from the cast, form drawing, industrial drawing, free-hand drawing and modelling in clay. The students join whatever classes they please, choosing those, of course, which

will best fit them for the calling which they expect to follow. Some of them cannot afford the time necessary for the complete course, and the personnel of the classes changes considerably before the school year is over. Nearly all the pupils work at their trades during the day—and attend the schools at night. The hours are from half-past seven to half-past nine, and every class-room is occupied every evening. The students must be over fifteen years of age and have a good rudimentary education in reading, writing and arithmetic. The majority are lads of from eighteen to twenty, serving their time in workshop or office, but it is a common sight to see a middle-aged man standing by the side of a boy of seventeen."

#### VIII.

*The Scientific Classes.*—"Most of those in the scientific classes are embryo machinists, designers, artistic woodworkers, stone cutters, jewellers, painters, and workers in metals. As nearly all of them are obliged to work at their trades during the day, the pupils find a nightly attendance at school, too confining, and that is one reason why the classes are not identically the same at the close of the term as at the beginning. The lads are generally bright, ambitious and industrious, and, beginning with the school year in October, they want to study everything. They join all the classes and come every night, but after a few months they find they have undertaken too much, and allow some of the studies to drop, devoting themselves to others and averaging about four nights a week at school. Stationery, materials required in the chemical and modelling classes, etc., are furnished free, and text-books are sold at cost price. The classes in oratory and debate are the largest, and

next come algebra, geometry, and elementary chemistry. It is considered by Professor Plympton, the director of the night schools and professor of philosophy, mechanism and astronomy, that a full course of mathematics is a necessary preliminary to any thorough scientific study. Very few have come to the schools prepared with elementary mathematics for the study of practical engineering and mechanics. 'It is to be regretted,' says Professor Plympton, 'that very few students can remain to pursue the whole course of scientific studies which entitles them to the medal and diploma. But nothing less than such a course can enable a man to achieve the highest sphere of usefulness in the ranks of modern industry. Certificates of proficiency are, however, given to those who have attended the class on any particular subject and passed a satisfactory examination.' The lectures on natural philosophy, chemistry, English literature, elocution and rhetoric are attended by many who do not belong to the classes."

#### X.

*The Art Schools for Men.*—"The male classes in the art schools are for the most part made up of apprentices in architects' offices, and of designers of tiles, wall papers, oilcloths, carriage painters and makers, mechanical sculptors, and of kindred trades where artistic workmanship is called for. There is no other school in New York where facilities of this sort are furnished free. The Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen gives free lectures to artisans on certain branches occasionally, but they do not pretend to the scope and thoroughness of the Cooper Union courses. The largest classes in the art department are in free-hand drawing, and in mechanical, architectural and industrial drawing. All

the lessons are practical, and bearing on the employments in which the arts of design and drawing are principal or accessory occupations. But if the pupil shows a talent for high art, and has the leisure and means to pursue it, he is recommended to other schools in this city established for the special instruction of professional artists."

## XI.

*The Women's School.*—"To provide honorable and useful employment for women, is one of the problems of civilization. The necessity for self-support is as imperative to many women as to men, and skilled employments of some kinds are better adapted for women than for men. Nothing seems to supply this want so well as the industrial art schools of Cooper Union.

"The art school for women is open every day from nine to one. Mrs. Susan H. Carter is the principal. There are about eight hundred pupils, and every room is crowded. The course of instruction includes all that is taught in the male art schools, and much more. Many of the graduates find places as teachers of drawing, painting, and so on, and others become designers for carpets, oilcloths, wall papers, tiles, etc. Mr. R. Swain Gifford is the instructor in painting to graduates from the drawing classes.

"The school is divided into five departments—drawing, painting, photography, wood engraving, and normal teaching. The drawing and painting school is conducted on a high plane of skill and taste, and has furnished many teachers in these departments. It is the purpose of the instruction in the art departments, to unite the two instrumentalities in the productions of art—both designing and careful execution. Invention is

specially promoted by the lectures on art which the pupils receive, the instruction in perspective drawing, and especially the lectures and instruction given to the normal class for the preparation of teachers of drawing in private and public schools. It is the purpose of the trustees to extend the instruction in the schools of art more into the departments of invention and design, as answering a demand most truly American, where the inventive faculties are more active than in any part of the world."

## XII.

*The Pupils' Earnings.*—"It is worthy of note that the purpose of giving such instruction in practical art and applied sciences as will put an independent employment in the hands of every student, is in many instances commenced while the pupil is still under instruction in the institution. This is especially the case in the art school for women. The amount reported as earned for themselves by pupils in the different departments of the women's art school last year, was \$28,932.

"There is an afternoon pay class for amateurs. For the establishment of this class there was a great demand. It meets in the afternoon, and does not trench upon the hours of the free classes. Said Mrs. Carter in her last report:

" ' Besides paying Mr. Gifford's salary from the proceeds of the afternoon class, I have been able to hire models constantly for the free-hand morning class, thus pushing the drawing of the school as far as portraiture, which has added thirty women more to the school. This class has been taught by Mr. Wyatt Eaton, Mr. J. Alden Weir, and Mr. Douglas Volk, and has raised the artistic reputation of the school till it is considered among the



best in the country. The necessity for a china-painting class, soon began to be felt, and for a small fee, much less than would suffice in any studio where the expense of rent, etc., must be defrayed, more than ninety women have annually learned this profitable and interesting branch.

“The practical results for the pupils of the art school ten years ago were comparatively insignificant. Some ladies went into art employments, and in the engraving class its pupils and all former graduates earned \$2285. This year the pupils now working in that class report \$4122, and our total report of money earned in the school by present pupils and last season's graduates, is \$29,033.57, against a total of \$4000 in 1872.”

### XIII.

*Engraving, Telegraphy, and Typewriting.*—“There are some forty ladies in the engraving class. The advanced pupils do clever work, and are employed on the *Century* magazine and other publications.

“There are sixty or more young ladies who study telegraphing. The Western Union Telegraph Company has so far interested itself in this school, as to pay a teacher who trains the pupils in the thorough methods of that Company. It can thus draw competent operators for its offices from this school, and it has provided a large proportion of the graduates of this school, in times past, with employment on its lines, although it is under no special obligation to provide a place for any.

“The last thing Mr. Cooper did before he died was to purchase ten typewriters. Instruction in their use has been added to the women's schools, and it has been found a very useful adjunct. Work can easily be procured for girls who understand this process of copying.”

### XIV.

*General Work of the Institution.*—“The last report of the curator says, concerning the general work of the institution:

“Within a few years, and largely due to the influence of the Cooper Union, technical schools and systematic instruction in skilled forms of labor, have been established in several large cities. The diffusion of wealth and intelligence among those called the operative classes, as distinguished from the professional, renders their demand upon the public wealth for educational facilities, more and more imperative; and nothing can satisfy this demand short of engrafting upon the common-school system the methods of the industrial and technical school. The Cooper Union and smaller institutions of a similar kind, are leading the way and inaugurating the methods, for a great system of instruction specially adapted to the wants of the industrial and skilled operative classes that form much the largest part of the population of those countries.

“The pupils who leave the schools with some proof of proficiency demonstrate the help which such instruction is to them, by the readiness with which they get employment. There is often a call, in advance, upon the principals of the scientific and art departments, for men or women thought competent to teach, or to conduct the different employments which they are taught here.”

### XV.

*The Summing Up.*—“In summing up this brief view of the Cooper Union, the thoughtful mind will reflect on the fact that, with a sum of money less than the an-

nual expenditure of many a wealthy family in this city, the Cooper Union counts its yearly beneficiaries by the thousands. This institution bestows its charity in the best form—that of promoting self-dependence and intellectual training for the work of life.”

## XVI.

*Income and Expenditures of the Trustees.*—“The present trustees are ex-Mayor Edward Cooper, the founder’s son; Mr. Abram S. Hewitt, Peter Cooper’s son-in-law and business partner; Mr. Daniel F. Tiemann, Mr. John E. Parsons, and Mr. Wilson G. Hunt. It costs about \$50,000 a year to run the institution, and it is practically self-supporting, the income being derived from the rents of the stores in the lower part of the building, the great hall in the basement, and the interest on the founder’s endowment fund. But hundreds of applications are annually refused for lack of accommodations. The entire expenditures of the trustees, on the building and education from 1859 to 1882, inclusive, were only \$1,549,192. Reckoning the thousands of pupils that have passed through its classes, and the hundreds of thousands benefited by its other advantages of instruction, this comparatively small sum spent in twenty-three years will appear a very economical means to very large and useful ends.”

## III.

He predicted such panics as we had in 1873, and the very panic which a few years later struck us, but nobody listened to it! Never had arguments on any public question been pressed with greater clearness and soundness of reason and logic. But the country was so insensible to it all, and so thoroughly “bulldozed,” that even the next monstrosity—the casting of silver out of circulation, with the taint of infamy stamped upon it—was on the point of being enacted without rebuke,

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## FINANCE AND STATESMANSHIP. 53

had they not been waked from their stupidity by the dreadful panic of 1873; nor did they see it after wading through the troubles which disturbed and depressed the business of the country during the next seven years.

At last, however, some impression was made; some of the most clear-headed men of the country yielded to the pressure, and the Greenback party was formed! And had any degree of wisdom prevailed in the councils of its leaders, the odium of “rag baby” and the “lying silver” currency would have been escaped.

All these results were as clearly foreseen by Mr. Cooper before, as after they took place; and he stands justified to-day by events, as being the most sagacious statesman, on that crucial test of finance, that our age has produced.

He wrote essays, letters and appeals almost without number, and gave to them a broad circulation—by the million—and in all instances at his own expense.

The banks having control of the press, neither answered these arguments, nor allowed them to be answered, if in their power to prevent it. When spoken of, they were treated with ridicule, and the bank monopoly was left to go on undisturbed, consolidating its power, and binding legislation and opinion with bands of iron.

#### IV.

A careful survey of this great, heroic, and persistent crusade, as waged by the writings of Mr. Cooper, will hereafter prove his title to the highest type of statesmanship, and to the gratitude of the American people. Nothing but the veto of Mr. Hayes defeated the funding bill, which gave to the banks, for the moment, the poor victory they achieved; but it was gained at a fatal

expense to them—it *Greenbackized vast masses of the nation*. The indignation excited throughout the country by the bold exposure of the power of the banks to fix the value of all property by determining the amount of paper circulation, did for a while subside, but the next check to the general prosperity—which will arise from the same cause—will inflame that indignation with greater intensity.

The time had indeed come when Senator Windom used the following language in a letter to the Anti-Monopoly League, at their public meeting at the Cooper Institute, on the 21st day of February, 1881:

“I repeat to-day, in substance, words uttered seven years ago, that ‘there are in this country four men who, in the matter of taxation, possess and frequently exercise powers which neither Congress nor any of our State Legislatures would dare to exert—powers which, if exercised in Great Britain, would shake the throne to its very foundation. These may at any time, and for any reason satisfactory to themselves, by a stroke of the pen, reduce the value of property in the United States by hundreds of millions. They may, at their own will and pleasure, disarrange and embarrass business, depress one city or locality and build another, enrich one individual and ruin his competitors, and, when complaint is made, coolly reply, “What are you going to do?”’”

And yet a few days later, General Garfield did not hesitate to put this man into the Treasury, where it was hoped monopoly would find some of its fearful power restrained, whether in railroads, banks, or telegraphs. The Secretary boldly laid down the great principle of constitutional law—that all these monopolies, the mere creatures of legislation, must be shorn of their power to do evil any longer. For putting such a man at the



head of the financial system of the country, President Garfield performed an act which brought him millions of allies, who looked forward to the emancipation of the business of the country at an early period of his administration. But his untimely death extinguished that hope. Secretary Windom would never have advised or favored an act of injustice towards any body of men acting as a legal corporation. But the appointment of such a statesman to a station of such vast power and responsibility, marks the hold which Mr. Cooper's sixteen years of tireless work had gained upon the minds and hearts of the people; and to him, more than to any other man, will posterity award the honor.

#### V.

The credit of even producing his own writings, now that their value and ability become apparent, was denied to him by the monopolists. Good as he was, beloved as he was, humane and generous as he had proved himself in all departments of life, they either dismissed his productions with a supercilious sneer, or denied him the credit of their authorship. "He must have had help." Had he ever asked for anybody's help, when, as a mechanic, he built with his own hands the first locomotive ever constructed in America? Had anybody helped him to found the greatest range of iron manufacture in the country? Was he not almost the only man carrying on various kinds of businesses successfully, through a period of seventy years, unscathed by a single one of the seven panics that had shaken our business world, and sent thousands of staunch men to wreck? Had anybody helped him in the wide scope of his inventions and improvements for the manufacture of iron and steel adapted to the construction of build-

ings, railroads and machinery? Who claims the credit of paying out of his own pocket three-quarters of a million of dollars to save the first Atlantic Cable, when the banks would loan the company no more money? Who claims the credit of devising and building the most valuable institute of "art and science," and the first one of any specific and practical importance, ever erected on this continent? Did the banks help him? He never trusted them with a dollar, or asked them to loan him one! Who taught him those grand principles of finance, to which the other statesmen of the country are now so fast coming?

To those who have studied the subject with care, and become familiar with Mr. Cooper's writings on finance, and the boldness and originality of his genius as displayed in a complete comprehension of the mechanical forces with the various devices to gain their control—to those who are judges of simplicity and force of style and argument—there will be discovered in Peter Cooper, merits and abilities that have seldom, if ever, been met in any of the great men that have gone before him. One of the grandest attributes of such original superiority is found in the expansive natural life he has led, when, at the age of ninety-two, his eye seemed to be yet "undimmed, and his natural force unabated."

These were some of the attributes and rare excellencies of Mr. Cooper's extraordinary character.

#### VI.

But his great work as a public economist and financial reformer, was not to be limited to millions of fugitive sheets which he had caused to be circulated, and he was urged from all quarters, by the statesmen of Europe and America, to embody the substance of his writ-

ings in an enduring form while yet living. He yielded to the entreaty, and to this important labor he gave the last year of his life. It was his last intellectual effort and his best. He superintended its progress through the press with perfect regularity from day to day, and sent a large edition of it to the statesmen, the thinkers, and the principal journals of the civilized world. He then felt that his work was finished, and in three days he rested from his labors, and his works do follow him.

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## ANALYSIS OF COOPER'S SYSTEM OF PUBLIC ECONOMY.

### I.

This can best be done by such a brief review as our space admits, of his last publication, a well-printed royal octavo volume of 400 pages, entitled,

*"Ideas for a Science of Good Government, in Addresses, Letters and Articles on a Strictly National Currency, Tariff and Civil Service. By Hon. Peter Cooper, LL.D. New York: Trow's Printing and Bookbinding Company, 201-213 East Twelfth Street. 1883."* He dedicates his book to "his children, grandchildren, and to the pupils of Cooper Institute," and introduces it to the public in the following brief preface:

"As this compilation of ideas from my intercourse and correspondence with statesmen, divines, scholars, artists, inventors, merchants, manufacturers, mechanics and laborers, may contribute to a *Science of Good Government*, based on a *strictly national currency, tariff and civil service*, I consider it my duty to transmit them to posterity in book form.

"In our young country these three topics are of the greatest importance, and must be regarded as the foundation for all governmental superstructures. When this nation, numbering now fifty millions, can realize that before these three topics, all others must dwindle into insignificance, she will have attained the highest degree of political wisdom. I have had much personal experience in practical business and money affairs for the last seventy years: over thirty years ago I learned finance with our veteran financier, Albert Gallatin, who was Secretary of Treasury under Jefferson and Madison. He was President of The New York Board of Currency, of which I was Vice-President. About that time I corresponded with Secretary Robert J. Walker, on the tariff. Since then I have been engaged in large financial, manufacturing and educational operations, such as railroads, telegraphs, Atlantic cable, iron, steel, Cooper Institute, etc.

"This varied experience with my daily reading enabled me to think, converse, speak and write on *finance, tariff and civil service*, which I tried to combine in this volume. Since the Rebellion broke out, I have sent petitions and letters to Congress, to the President and his Cabinet, and raised my voice in favor of a strictly national currency, a protective tariff, and a wise civil service, as will appear in the following pages.

"PETER COOPER.

"9 LEXINGTON AVENUE, NEW YORK,  
*January 30, 1883.*"

“On page 20 of the Journal of the United States Senate, first session of the Third Congress, convened at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, December 2, 1793, can be found the following resolution, offered on the 23d of December the same year, and passed by the United States Senate with but two dissenting votes, and signed by George Washington, President, and John Adams, Vice-President: ‘ANY PERSON, HOLDING ANY OFFICE OR ANY STOCK IN ANY INSTITUTION IN THE NATURE OF A BANK FOR ISSUING OR DISCOUNTING BILLS OR NOTES PAYABLE TO BEARER OR ORDER, CANNOT BE A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE WHILST HE HOLDS SUCH OFFICE OR STOCK.’

“Yet, a late Congress was composed of *one hundred and twenty bankers*, ninety-nine lawyers, fourteen merchants, thirteen manufacturers, seven doctors, four mechanics, and not a single farmer or day laborer. This agrees with a statement made by Moses W. Field, M. C.

“I think this law was invoked to prevent A. T. Stewart, the largest importer of foreign goods, from becoming Secretary of the Treasury.

“Why should it not be enforced now to oust speculators from our Congress, where they are making laws in their own favor, and against the interest of the people?

“The wise men, who achieved the Independence, drafted the Constitution, and established our Government, well knew that it was unsafe to trust the governmental law-making to bankers, usurers, or any one interested in such business. They knew it was morally impossible for persons, interested in money-lending, not to attempt to legislate in their own favor, and *against* the good of the people.

“I ever did, and ever shall, advocate a purely national

currency, as long as I live, as the only remedy against periodic stagnation, caused by special legislation, suggested and voted by banking representatives and speculators in the seats of our Congress.”

“Washington and Adams tried to imitate the Master, in driving the *money-changers* out of Congress; but as yet their legislation has not succeeded as Christ did nineteen centuries ago. We must hope the people will become so enlightened, as to expel them by an overwhelming vote.

“Washington declared a fact, when he said, that ‘In exact proportion as we either alloy the precious metals, or admit poor paper money into the volume of the circulating medium, just in that proportion will everything in a country rise, and labor will be the first that will feel it. It will not benefit the farmer, nor the mechanic, as it will only enable the debtor to pay his debt with a shadow, instead of a substance.’

“This was in answer to a letter from a member of the Maryland Legislature, asking Washington’s opinion as to the right of a State to issue *paper money*. He did not believe in *contraction* and *inflation*, which cause periodic *panics*.”

Never has a more withering appeal been made to a body—yes, *two* bodies, the Senate and the House of Representatives—to halt in the making of laws in direct conflict with the legislation and convictions of the men who made us a nation. Mr. Cooper was indeed denounced by the politicians of his time, but he and his coadjutors did interpose some restraint on their reckless, and otherwise fatal legislation. It is more owing to him, than to all other men, that Congress did not *work more ruin than it did*.



persuade our Government and people, that it is for our interest to buy from other countries all the luxuries they have to offer.

“ ‘These advocates of free trade propose, that our own mechanics shall either work at the starvation prices of the foreign laborers, or be forced to abandon their trades and become competitors with the agriculturists of the country.

“ ‘If we desire to bring upon our whole nation a fate similar to that, which has fallen to the lot of Ireland, Turkey, Mexico, and Hindostan, it is only necessary to arrange our tariff in a way, that will induce the people to have all their manufacturing done in foreign countries, and pay for it with the raw materials of our own. Such a policy will, if I am not mistaken, secure for our Union of States as rapid a decline and fall as that which fell to the lot of Spain, when the Moors, her principal manufacturers, were driven out of the country. Such a policy might gratify our thirst for all the dearly bought follies and fashions of European life; but it would bring ruin and wretchedness upon hundreds of thousands of the mechanics of our country, who have nothing to sell but their labor.

“ ‘To break up this diversified employment of so vast a number by a change of tariff, and then expect them to find for themselves other means of living, is about as reasonable as it was for Pharaoh to expect the Israelites to make bricks without straw.’ ”

## X.

This portion of my brief sketch may not perhaps possess any charm for youthful readers, who cannot easily understand *the true principles of good government*. But they may, in riper years, see their vast significance.

## IX.

I come now to the last quotations from the essays, letters, and addresses of Mr. Cooper on Political Economy, as they appear in his great volume. They refer to his views on the subject of Protection of the industry of his country, and I believe they were his last public utterances. Of them he said:

“ ‘While they were printing the last pages of this book, I was preparing this short address, to be delivered February 1, 1883, at the meeting of “The New York Association for the Protection of American Industry,” in the large Hall of Cooper Institute. As it may be my last public address, I add it here:

“ ‘We have assembled, my friends, to call your attention to one of the most important subjects, that can now claim the care of the American people. The advocates of free trade with foreign nations, are trying to

I could not, however, omit this great feature of Mr. Cooper's life as an illuminated statesman, without presenting a very much more incomplete portrait of him than I wished to paint, and I thought it better to quote his own words, than to attempt any feeble summary of them myself. Early scholarship could have done him no good. His honest, strong, earnest Anglo-Saxon needed none of the embellishments of art. It corresponded perfectly with the directness of his purposes, and the *naïve* simplicity of his character. He was a stranger to artifice. He went as straight to his object, as a carrier pigeon to its home cote. He had no more idea of deceit or evasion, than a man born blind has of colors. These passions ruled his life. He worshipped a common Father of mankind, and loved all men as his brothers. He *worshipped* the One, and took the others to his bosom.

On one of the balmy evenings of last autumn, I found my walk had led me by his house, and seeing him sitting near the window, I crossed the door sill and entered his familiar room on the first floor. It was a favored moment to see the real living Peter Cooper. He sat in perfect repose in his easy-chair looking away through the twilight, and his calm face appeared so serene I was half afraid I had disturbed him, and said so. "Oh, no, no; sit down: I am glad you came in. Can you guess what I was thinking of? Well, when I am in one of those quiet reveries which we are all apt to indulge in at the close of the day after its work is done, and the curtains of night are being drawn so tenderly around us by the loving Father's hands, I recall many of the blessed things we have read years and years ago. Well, Pope's "Universal Prayer" came back to me a little while since, so fresh, and it struck me very for-

cibly. Will you let me go over it *aloud*, and see if I have forgotten it?

Father of All! In every age,  
In every clime adored  
By saint, by savage and by sage,  
Jehovah, Jove or Lord!  
Thou Great First Cause, least understood,  
Who all my sense confined  
To know but this, that thou art good,  
And I myself am blind;  
Yet gave me in this dark estate  
To see the good from ill,  
And binding Nature fast in fate,  
Left free the human will.  
What conscience dictates to be done  
Or warns me not to do,  
This teach me more than hell to shun,  
That more than heaven pursue.  
What blessings Thy free bounty gives  
Let me not cast away;  
For God is paid when man receives:  
To enjoy is to obey.  
Yet not to earth's contracted span  
Thy goodness let me bound,  
Or think Thee, Lord, alone of man  
When thousand worlds are round.  
Let not this weak unknowing hand  
Presume Thy bolts to throw,  
And deal damnation round the land  
On each I judge Thy foe.  
If I am right, Thy grace impart  
Still in the right to stay;  
If I am wrong, oh, teach my heart  
To find that better way.  
Save me alike from foolish pride,  
Or impious discontent  
At aught thy wisdom has denied,  
At aught Thy goodness lent.  
Teach me to feel another's woe,  
To hide the fault I see;

That mercy I to others show  
That mercy show to me,  
Mean though I am, not wholly so,  
Since quickened by thy breath;  
Oh lead me wheresoe'er I go  
Through this day's life or death!  
This day be bread and peace my lot;  
All else beneath the sun  
Thou know'st if best bestowed or not,  
And let Thy will be done.  
To Thee whose temple is all space,  
Whose altar, earth, sea, skies!  
One chorus let all Being raise,  
All nature's incense rise!

He spoke more and more earnestly, and as he went on, his voice grew tremulous with feeling, and large tears rolled from his glistening blue eyes down his smooth and still ruddy cheeks, and looking upward, he exclaimed, "Oh, my dear friend, if everybody felt as Pope did when he wrote those words, what a world this would be!" As I gazed into the beaming face of the patriarch and philanthropist, it seemed to me the most beautiful countenance I had ever seen.

"While I most heartily thank the Convention through you for the great honor they have thus conferred upon me, kindly permit me to say, that there is a bare possibility, if wise counsel prevails, that the sorely needed relief from the blighting effects of past unwise legislation, relative to finance, which the people so earnestly seek, may yet be had through either the Republican or Democratic party; both of them meeting in national convention at an early date. It is unnecessary for me to assure you that, while I have no aspiration for the position of Chief Magistrate of this great Republic, I will most cheerfully do what I can to forward the best interests of my country. I, therefore, accept your nomination, *conditionally*, expressing the earnest hope, that the Independent Party may yet attain its exalted aims, while permitting me to step aside and remain in that quiet, which is most congenial to my nature and time of life."



"I think you will agree with me, when I say, that prosperity can never be restored to our beloved country, by a national policy that enforces idleness and financial distress on so vast a number of the laborers and business men of this country. Our nation's wealth must forever depend on the application of knowledge, economy, and well-directed labor to all the useful and necessary purposes of life, but also a proper legislation for the people.

"The American people can never buy anything cheap from foreign countries that must be bought *at the cost of leaving our own good raw materials unused, and our own labor unemployed.*

would be a general and great subscription to the endowment fund of the Institute. This would be in harmony with the builder's character, and the highest act this metropolis is capable of performing. And it would be the first contribution made by this city, or any other body of men, to this noble cause.

In human history a parallel cannot be found, in which so small an amount of money for the cause of education, has produced such immense results.

It can hardly be comprehended how the partial or complete education in the useful arts of forty thousand young people had been accomplished. The rich man's son is not supposed to be prepared for and taken commendably through a collegiate and professional education for anything less than five thousand dollars; and, in most instances, he goes out no better fitted to get his living and be a useful citizen than he would have been if he had stayed away.

At this rate of five thousand dollars a head, for forty thousand young men and women going out from the Institute now earning their living—and most of them at their own price for their work—let the reader go to his multiplication table; the sum is bewildering. But these figures cannot lie.

another school, or series of schools, like this; and, in any event, it would take a long time to set it going, while there would be no hope that anything superior to it would be devised, or with anything like the economy that has been displayed here.

It is the best system of free technical schools in the world. The instruction here given to the poorer youth of both sexes of this city has been an inestimable benefit, not alone to those who have received it, but to the city of which they are inhabitants. One of our chief journals has well said: "To enable a poor young man, or a young woman, to obtain such thorough instruction in the practical arts as is offered free of charge by Cooper Institute, is to enable a constantly increasing number to enter these avocations, which are not only better paid than the work of mere laborers, but which also raise those who perform them, in the scale of intelligence, and make them therefore the more valuable citizens. What would please the founder most, would be the enlargement and secured continuance of the Institute schools."

#### VII.

These views were also still more strikingly enforced by an appeal to the leading capitalists of the metropolis in the *New York Herald*, when speaking of "the debt of New York manufacturers to the Cooper Union." I cannot refrain from quoting it:

"Few statistics of the census of 1880 were regarded by the country with greater interest than those which revealed last year that the city of New York is the first city of the Union in manufactures as well as commerce. Philadelphia had been so accustomed to boast of that distinction for herself that her inhabitants were bewildered by the contrast between their claim and the

They are enough to put to the blush every college and university in the United States. It is to-day a practical miracle, and it will remain so until Peter Cooper's character is far better understood; and the scale of calculating the cost of that kind of education cannot be comprehended.

#### VI.

All the Institute requires now to increase its usefulness is more money. There is no necessity for establishing

we have cited warrant a belief that it is attributable in a larger degree to the artistic skill of the operatives.

“This brings us to the point to which we wish to direct attention—the debt New York manufacturers owe to the technical and art schools of the Cooper Union, which educate labor to the high standard of skill that is needful, and the obligation that rests on them to endow, enlarge and foster those schools out of self-interest for the future as well as gratitude for the past. Whatever the explanation may be, it is a fact which does discredit to them that they never have supplemented the generous gifts of Peter Cooper which have inured to their advantage. We do not know of a cent that any of them ever has contributed in this direction. We have heard of the gift of a moderate sum by a Massachusetts manufacturer annually for the last seven years for special instruction in industrial design in the drawing classes of the Woman’s Art School of the Union; and that is the solitary instance, we believe, of any such benefaction, and its results ought to make New York manufacturers blush still more deeply. Pupils who have enjoyed this special course provided by the intelligent liberality of a citizen of another State—although they are women, and although their instruction was general and not technical—have been eagerly invited into employment by New York makers of glass, carpets, wall-papers and other fine fabrics, and are to-day intrusted with very responsible charges in their factories.

“New York and Philadelphia both have outgrown the era in their development as manufacturing cities during which they safely could rely upon deriving a suitable and sufficient supply of artistic laborers from other communities. The textile manufacturers of Philadelphia, with an intelligent perception of their needs,

opened more than a year ago a subscription, which soon mounted to a large sum, to found a school there for special instruction in the textile arts. Almost at the same time General McClellan, then Governor of New Jersey, urged the Legislature of that State to make a liberal appropriation to encourage special instruction for ceramic manufactures. In these and other instances that may be cited a clearer perception of self-interest is shown than New York, with one noble exception, has displayed.

“Peter Cooper was not merely charitable—he was far-sighted and public-spirited in the highest degree in his foundation of the Cooper Union. His benefaction was not merely for the scholars in the Union schools, it was also for the particular advantage of the manufacturers of New York and for the general welfare of his native city. He was a quarter of a century ahead of any of his fellow-citizens in his foresight. He anticipated one of the most serious of their present necessities. It remains for them to take up his noble work and carry it on for their own advantage. The New York manufacturers owe to the Cooper Union an immediate endowment of its schools with at least the sum he contributed to them, which, at the most moderate estimate, exceeds two million dollars. It is a fair test of their intelligence whether they will hasten to make such an endowment. There never will be a more propitious opportunity for them than this to combine self-interest with a grateful recognition of their obligation to the good man whose praise to-day is on every tongue. Nor should contributions come from manufacturers alone. The whole city is interested. Whatever harms or helps any branch of its business—industrial or mercantile—harms or helps all branches. Whenever and wherever



efforts are visible to develop better talent, skill and taste in manufactures than New York has, or to draw away from New York the best that it possesses, the whole community is concerned. New York needs to be as jealous of competition with its industries as it is of incursions on its commerce."

It is impossible to believe that New York will not respond with her proverbial munificence to so grand and splendid an object.

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## TRIBUTES TO THE MEMORY OF PETER COOPER.

### I.

They were universal and sincere. His native city could not help clothing itself with the emblems of mourning, but they indicated a feeling far different from that which usually lowers the flags and standards of nations at half mast, and displays the signs of private sorrow. There was no gloom, no sadness, none of the pain of bereavement which the early doom of the brave, the loved and the beautiful inspire; it was a higher and sublimer sentiment. The eyes of all the generous and the good filled with tears of gratitude that the great friend of humanity had lived—not that he rested from his labors when his noble work was done. We knew that no tomb could hold *him*—only his *ashes*. He was with us still, and would be with all the future. For such a man there is no death—only immortality.

Some near relatives of the family had brought with them, early, baskets of flowers, and they at once began to deck the lid of the coffin with them, arranging in a harmonious mass the tea roses, including deep jacqueminots and Catherine de Medicis. Besides there were hyacinths, pansies, lilies of the valley, delicate adjantum ferns and smilax. They placed the beautiful tokens of love tenderly upon the coffin, their eyes the while almost blinded with tears. Touching as this sight was, there was

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another spectacle that was even more so. The eldest son of Mr. Hewitt noticed that the hair and whiskers had been slightly disarranged by a gentle breeze. Silently he took a small comb from his pocket, and lovingly smoothed back the truant hairs.

Soon after 9 o'clock there arrived at the church a committee of eighteen of the alumni of the Cooper Union. They were dressed in black, with crape upon their left arms, and had marched in double file from the Cooper Union to the church. Proceeding to the front of the church they divided, nine going to the north, and nine to the south, where they seated themselves in the pews on either side of the pulpit. Four of their number then took their places as a guard of honor, and each half hour were relieved by four others.

"When the doors were opened, in streamed, slowly and almost noiselessly, the multitude all through the day. All classes and conditions were represented. There were rich and poor, black and white, Christian, Hebrew and infidel, young and old. Men, tottering on the verge of the grave, walked behind mothers carrying their infants, and to whose skirts clung other children. Silently the seemingly endless line of humanity passed up the south aisle, viewed the remains and passed down the north aisle. It was an affecting sight. Many out of the thousands who made the sad visit, had received of Peter Cooper's bounty. As these passed and saw his lifeless body, peacefully resting in the coffin, and realized that his heart was still in death and could no more throb responsive to the appeal for help, the tears welled up and could not be repressed. Others, who only knew the philanthropist as the world knew him, had occasion

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to use their handkerchiefs as they passed out of the church. Every person felt that a rare friend was about to be taken from them. They were right."

It was at 10.30 when the alumni and students of the Cooper Institute, who had marched from that building in procession, entered and passed before the casket, led by the scholars of the Ladies' Art School, with Miss Susan M. Carter at their head. Each of the young ladies carried a single flower, which she reverently laid on the lid of the casket. The effect of this simple but touching tribute was greatly heightened by the low strains of the organ. The ladies were followed by the Alumni Association, under President James R. Smith; the faculty of the Institute, with Dr. Zachos, the curate, at their head; the students of the chemical, literary and scientific departments; the members of the cast and form architectural and drawing classes, and the members of the Inventors' Institute. The entire delegation aggregated 3500.

v.

When, at a later hour in the afternoon, the church was filled with an assembly embracing delegations from all the great municipal bodies and associations, the simple but sublime honors with which Christianity dismisses the souls of its believers to the endless life, the Rev. Robert Collyer paid the following affectionate tribute to his revered and beloved friend:

"We gather about the dust of our dear friend to-day, and thank God for his life, I trust, more than we mourn his death, who are not bound to him by the tender ties of kinship and the home, to find a joy in our sorrow like the joy in harvest, and to say for him what he never felt free to say for himself after all these years of noble striving. He has fought a good fight; he has finished

his course; he has kept the faith, and has proven himself a workman who needeth not to be ashamed now that the long day's work is done; for by pureness, by knowledge, by kindness, by love unfeigned, by word of truth, by the power of God, and by the armor of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left, he has won such reverence as is seldom won by any man in his own lifetime.

“The man whose home was a more sacred shrine than any church we can name in our city; whose presence in these later years where men are most eager to be about their business, brought a courtesy and deference of air akin to that they used to show in the old time to princes, and whose name was held dear, even in the hamlets of misery and sin, and was spoken, as I know, by the poorest and most forlorn, with a tenderness which is seldom won by the priests of God; who had learned to feel no fear as he went about our streets, because the very roughs had become his guardians, and would have fallen into ranks about him in any danger, and held their lives in pawn for his safety; whose white head

matched to his lovers and friends by any speech of a monarch from his throne, and who—all blessings rest on him for that also—entered as sweetly into the enjoyment of it, and the joy, as we did who heard him; and yet never through the spirit which tarnishes such speech now and then in our great benefactors, and creates the suspicion that they may still be proud of their humility when they have shorn themselves of all other pride; but through the beautiful innocence and simplicity which, ever since I knew him, was native to his heart, and clasping the latest years with the earliest, compelled us all to say, ‘Of such is the kingdom of heaven.’

“He brought back to my memory when I would see him that good apostle Eliot who, when he was a very old man, and a friend asked him how he fared, said: ‘My understanding is not what it was some years ago, and my memory fails me a little and my speech, but I thank God my charity holds out well and grows.’ So he might have said.

“I love to think, as we prepare to bear his dust to the burial, of his absolute life-long integrity. Here was a man whose word was so divine to him; that his bond became a memorandum.

“I love to remember again the wisdom which lay within his noble gift to our city and our land.

“‘The great object that I desire to accomplish by the erection of this institution,’ he says, in the scroll hidden away in the corner-stone, ‘is to open the avenues of scientific knowledge to the youth of our city and country, and so unfold the balance of nature, that the young may see the beauties of creation, enjoy its blessings, and learn to love the Author from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.’ He wanted no such monument as we would have built for him gladly. He was wise in



that, because he was so modest and simple, he has such a monument as no art could contrive built by his own hands; but those words should be graven on it in letters of gold for all men to read until this island falls back to a heap of ruins.

“Dear friends who must sorrow as we cannot sorrow for this parting, who cannot remember when he was not with you, who will dwell in your home in the sweet way no more, while the long use and unit of his life will still hold the ear to listen for his voice, and the hand ready for all tender offices, we cannot ask you not to mourn, for then we should be less than human, while he was so human we all loved; but while we sorrow with you we can bid you be comforted, and wait for the day, near at hand, when your sorrow will give place to a tender joy. The life he lived so full on earth is consummated in heaven now, and crowned. This is not a memory you will cherish, but a living presence while you live and forever more. That divine word comes true again, the Master said, ‘He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die, for life is ever lord of death, and love can never lose its own.’”

#### VI.

A vast procession moved down Broadway, bearing the precious dust forever from the great city whose million hearts uttered their tenderest benedictions on the memory of its best citizen.

*The current version of this document can be found at <<http://www.notnicemusic.com/cooper.pdf>>. The original version was posted on December 15, 2012, with a later version completed on December 16, 2012.*

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