Reign of the Beast

The Atheist World of W. D. Saull and his Museum of Evolution

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Cover illustration: A spoof of the "Devil's Chaplain", the Rev. Robert Taylor (left, on the podium). His patron, the atheist Richard Carlile, is seen on the right, landing a punch. The wine merchant W. D. Saull funded both men and grounded his evolutionary talks in their dissident sciences. Such pastiches reinforced the prejudices of pious readers, by depicting the moral rot caused by irreligion. The wall posters on the left advertize contraception manuals and licentious memoirs, and a lecture by "Miss Sharples", Carlile's common-law "wife". Taylor's character is being impugned by portraying the mayhem caused by his infidel oratory. Beyond the brawling and debauchery, thieves are shown in the audience (bottom right) and a dagger-wielding agitator (centre). In reality, Taylor's congregations were respectable and attentive.
Etching, in the author's possession, entitled "The Triumph of Free Discussion" (the motto of Carlile's Fleet Street shop selling subversive prints). The caption reads, "A Sketch taken in the Westminster Cock Pit on Wednesday the 24th. of September 1834. Subject A Lecture by the Revd R. Taylor, A.B.M.R.C.S. 'On the importance of Character'."
Cover design by Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

16. Lease-holder of the New Moral World

In the 1830s, Saull operated at the highest Owenite echelon. He had become financially indispensable. Robert Owen's London home for twenty years was his eleven-room town house, No. 4, Crescent Place, Burton Crescent, near the new London University. The American Henry Darwin Rogers, who had alternated geology lectures with Saull at Owen's Institution, had made himself "comfortable" here while lodging with Owen.[1] But it was not actually Owen's house. It was Saull's. He owned it and presumably leased it to Owen.[2]

Owen additionally hired cheap "dilapidated" rooms in the adjoining Burton Street,[3] and, in 1835, he moved his lecturing operations there. This was to be the centre of his newly-formed "Association of All Classes of All Nations"—a title not designed to appease the *Poor Man's Guardian* class warriors—which was to "effect an entire change in the Character and Condition of Mankind". The old immoral world was to be rejected—hence the title of the Association's penny weekly paper in November 1834, to replace the collapsed *Crisis*: the *New Moral World*. Ever the wag, Holyoake remarked that Owen's opening speech in 1835 occupied two entire numbers of the *New Moral World*, "long enough to weary both worlds at once".[4]

This new Burton Street venue saw Saull in 1836 give two lectures on "Geology in reference to Human Nature". With so many applying

1 Gerstner 1994, 24.
2 In 1852, after Owen moved, Saull advertised it at a rent of £50 per year: *Reasoner* 13 (16 June 1852): 288; 15 (28 Sept. 1853): 208.
3 Ron Dobie to Robert Owen, 18 Jan. 1831, ROC/4/25/1, Owen Collection 2011, Co-Operative Heritage Trust Archive, Manchester.
4 Holyoake 1906, 1: 137.

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to hear about the geological portents of mankind's moral destiny, these were then turned into a longer course. Saull directed audiences to good books on geology, which he himself consulted "for their concurrence with his views in some cases, as for their opposition in others". The opposition was obvious, for none would dare condone any sort of continuous, uninterrupted, filiation of fossil life. The most outstanding source was the monumental work of the moment: the Rev. William Buckland's two-volume *Geology and Mineralogy Considered with Reference to Natural Theology*, hot off the press in 1836. One of a series of Bridgewater Treatises, it was typeset, printed, and priced by Pickering, "a publisher of taste" to the gentry, in the mistaken belief that it was a theological work.[5] Conservative texts had always managed to fire up a reaction in radical readers.[6] Saull's judicious sifting was a good example. Acceptable were Buckland's deep-time chronology, loss of Moses (the Oxford divine had long done with the "Days" of creation and now recanted his belief in a geological Flood), and progressing diversity and periodic appearance of "higher" types of fossil life.[7] Jettisoned would have been the Reverend's designful explanations with their backdoor to Providence, as well as talk of "the direct agency of Creative Interference" to produce them.[8] Saull told socialists that the volumes were "of great importance in the settlement of leading truths in Geology", while "striking at the root of certain mysterious traditions".[9] He was trying to push Buckland into an uncomfortable role as a fifth-columnist.

At Owen's yearly birthday celebrations, the rational entertainment preceded the dancing. As at bourgeois *soirées* and *conversaziones*, curios were exhibited as talking points. In Burton Street, splendid lithographic drawings would line the walls; on tables sat phrenological busts, while large electrical instruments would be set in motion.[10] These pre-dance

5 Topham 1998, 242; Topham 2022.
6 Rose 2002, 39.
7 Rudwick 2008, 426 et seq.
8 W. Buckland 1836, 1: 586; Hilton 2000, 187, for an understanding of Buckland's "succession of separate dispensations" within a law-based Creation.
9 *NMW* 3 (10 Dec. 1836) 53.
10 *NMW* 3 (20 May 1837): 235. J. F. C. Harrison 1969, 223 on the Owenites' fondness for dancing; Morrell 1976, 137. Morus 2010a, b on the choreography, and Morus 1998 on the electrical entertainments of the moment. Socialist conversaziones mirrored those in polite society, with their "learned lectures and dazzling displays", scientific curios, and organ music: Alberti 2003.

performances were as delicately choreographed as in any scientific auditorium—a mix of showmanship and technical wizardry, stage-managed to proclaim a rival authority for a compatible Owenite nature: electrical machines to sustain Mackintosh's self-regulating cosmos, fossils to establish trust in a self-regulating evolution. And, for that, Saull's ancient saurians and crinoids were invariably on display, with Saull on hand to give impromptu explanations.[11] His specimens could be show-stoppers. Big was always best—and his museum had the biggest and the best. Since these were given priority by travel guides, we know most about them: the gigantic reptile *Iguanodon* was estimated by Mantell to have reached seventy feet long, but specimens in Saull's cabinet appeared to have come from even larger individuals. His fossils were simply "of enormous size", and what better to amaze the guests than its seven-inch claw? Not only was the marine reptile *Ichthyosaurus platyodon*—a dolphin-shaped saurian—the largest known from the rocks of Lyme Regis and Gloucestershire, but Saull had the largest known vertebra, which measured almost eight inches. Then there were the tusks of mastodons, a "full three times" the size of an elephant's, or else a huge, showy ammonite, *Ceratites nodosus*, a "museum quality" specimen from Hanover, highly ornamented with elaborate wavy sutures. Rarity too was a draw. At events, Saull would show scarce fossil palms[12] or tree ferns from the British coal mines, perhaps even the trunk of *Sigillaria saullii* that Adolphe Brongniart had named after him.

Burton Street could be a transformative experience for inquisitive youngsters just setting out, none more so than the future 'Darwinian' evolutionist Alfred Russel Wallace. Old and celebrated, Wallace, in *My Life* (1905), recalled leaving school at fourteen and joining his apprentice-carpenter brother in London for a month or two "early in 1837":

> our evenings were most frequently spent at what was then termed a "Hall of Science", situated in John Street, Tottenham Court Road ... Here we sometimes heard lectures on Owen's doctrines, or on the principles of secularism or agnosticism, as it is now called; at other times we read

11 *NMW* 3 (20 May 1837): 235.

12 *Crisis* 1 (5 Jan. 1833): 174; *Ceratites*: Spath 1934, 477; tusks: *Gardeners Gazette*, 29 Dec. 1838, 827; *Court Gazette*, 29 Dec. 1838, 614–15; A. Booth 1939, 122; *platyodon* vertebra: Lydekker 1889a, 94, 97, 101–02; claw: G. F. Richardson 1842, 402; A. Booth 1839, 122.

> papers or books, or played draughts, dominoes, or bagatelle, and coffee was also supplied to any who wished for it. It was here that I first made acquaintance with Owen's writings ... I also received my first knowledge of the arguments of skeptics, and read among other books Paine's "Age of Reason"... I have a recollection of having once heard him [Owen] give a short address at this "Hall of Science", and that I was struck by his tall spare figure, very lofty head, and highly benevolent countenance and mode of speaking.[13]

The flame was sparked here, and Wallace became a torch-bearing socialist and future land nationalizer. "Here", writes Jim Moore, "Wallace picked up the political values that stayed with him more or less for life: human nature is perfectible through education and changed environments; all humans are equal partners in progress."[14] But *where*, exactly? What *was* the venue? Seventy-year-old memories are notoriously flaky, and anachronisms abound in Wallace's recount. If it really was "early in 1837", then the institution was in Burton Street. Owen himself was around in January and February 1837,[15] so Wallace could have heard him then. There is a possible alternative though—a daughter institution that actually was in John Street: at No. 49, the Community Friendly Society (1836–39). By 1837, the labour exchanges and the co-ops had nearly all collapsed, and this was a rare survivor. It was small, only thirty-three members, yet it had a grocery store, paid out sick and unemployment benefits, and, more to the point for an inquisitive fourteen-year-old, held Sunday meetings with lectures, and it celebrated its anniversary each April with dancing and singing.[16] Moore himself, however, favours the probability that Wallace attended the John Street Institution (founded 1840, at No. 23) in the forties but mis-remembered the year. Whatever the venue, the impressionable youngster was imbibing the flagrantly anti-Christian ethos which encouraged materialist explanations of nature and Saull's evolutionary ascent of life. The strong cultural relativism here would mark Wallace's

13 A. R. Wallace 1905, 1: 79, 87, 89, 104.

14 J. R. Moore 1997, 301; G. Jones 2002, 74. Jim Moore (pers. comm.) thinks Wallace probably saw Owen in 1844, giving the reasons in his forthcoming study of the young Wallace.

15 *NMW* 3 (7 Jan. 1837): 85.

16 *NMW* 3 (22 April 1837): 202; (6 May 1837): 220–21; Garnett 1972, 145–46.

social thought, just as the environmental conditioning and emphasis on perfectibility would shape his evolutionary optimism.

Owenism had always been a broad church, with the materialists making up one wing. Saull's deism of the 1820s had become atheism by the thirties. The fracture points inside the Owenian fellowship were already evident by 1838 as the sacred socialists started pulling away from Saull's materialists. The split widened as Saull injected big money into educational communities. To bypass Church- and Dissent-administered education for the co-operators' children, Saull had long argued for a demystified, science-based 'rational schooling'. Nothing but an emancipationist programme would counter the gentry's efforts to put the children into livery.[17] However his transcendental friends were looking to a more mystical, holistic, ascetic communitarianism, and schooling for them would require a spiritual dimension.

The issue exploded in 1838 when Saull received £100, subsequently upped to £1000, from an anonymous donor, with instructions that the Owenite community rent land in order to establish an Educational Friendly Society. There were few strings, except that Saull was to be Treasurer and new recruits to the community were to be sought immediately.[18] Middle-class philanthropy always raised the spectre of loss of independence, but, given that there were few conditions, a *New Moral World* editorial was in favour. Not so a long-standing Saull colleague, the vegetarian transcendentalist Charles Lane. He was an acolyte of the Pestalozzian James Pierrepont Greaves, and (like Saull and Hetherington) had been a radical in the London Mechanics' Institution, where he introduced Pestalozzian teaching techniques, encouraging invention and mutual-instruction classes. All three men had been further radicalized in the reform years and had worked inside the Metropolitan Political Union.[19] But Lane's growing transcendentalism meant a complete rejection of Saull's money offer: only the "submissive harmonious concurrence of humans" can lead to true co-operation, and accepting middle-class cash would "ruinously fetter its operations".

17 *Crisis* 3 (4 Jan. 1834): 150.

18 *NMW* 4 (20 Jan. 1838): 100; (17 Feb. 1838): 131–32; *NS*, 3 Mar. 1838. Johnson 1979, 98–99, on the fear of middle-class control.

19 Flexner 2014, 3, 32, 159, 161; J. F. C. Harrison 1969, 128–29; Armytage 1961, 138, 173–78, 182–83.

Money, he argued, can hardly buy the "FEELING of universal fraternity, of which community of property is the SOCIAL FORM". The editor of the *New Moral World* was more materialistically inclined (in all senses) and responded: "But the real truth is, that the principal bond of union, the primary agent in the production of real or apparent *spiritual* accordance, is the abundance and quality of the *material* foundation on which it rests."[20] Donations were now coming in from others quarters, £250 from a "very aged" socialist, £500 more when Pierre Baume toured Bradford as a representative of the new venture. By May 1838, there was £2500 in the pot.[21]

The freethinking Owenites carried the day. The sectarian split became total as Lane left to found the Alcott House community and boarding school in Ham, Surrey. Here, individual regeneration rather than social engineering would become the new goal—a sort of spiritual enlightenment gained by abstinence, celibacy, and raw carrots—a monastic retreat from the dehumanized industrial world where men grew long hair and beards.[22] Not much sympathy was shown by the other side. The social missionary Lloyd Jones complained that communitarianism here had become "a receptacle for all moral and intellectual delinquents—empty-headed young men bordering on idiocy, babblers and quibblers, long-haired, bearded and vegetarians, etc".[23] The cold and raw carrots drove many out, and Lane himself sailed to America in 1842 to found the short-lived Utopian Fruitlands community near Harvard University.[24] It was a foretaste of the Owenite splintering to come as the materialists became more vociferously atheistical.

Saull's group continued in their uncompromising anti-spiritual stance. They hosted debates on the divine inspiration of the Bible, in which up-and-coming social missionaries would take on young evangelicals, fresh out of divinity school. These were lively and always big crowd-pullers. A number of ambitious tyros on both sides cut their teeth of these lions-den sessions. For example, Saull chaired one before Christmas 1838, in which a Trinity College, Dublin graduate,

20 *NMW* 4 (10 Mar. 1838): 155–57; (17 Mar. 1838): 163–64, 168.
21 *Proceedings of the Third Congress of the Association of all Classes of all Nations*, 1838, 39; *NMW* 4 (31 Mar. 1838): 183; (14 Apr. 1838): 197; Holyoake 1906, 1: 145.
22 Frost 1880, 41–48; Latham 1999, 20–21; Hardy 1979, 60–61.
23 Claeys 2002, 261; McCabe 1908, 1: 113.
24 R. Francis 2010.

the Rev. Joseph Baylee, took on Holyoake's fellow student fresh out of Birmingham Mechanics' Institute, Frederick Hollick. (Even Holyoake stood in awe of the 25-year-old, who had "the brightest mind of any student in the Mechanics' Institution."[25]) The protagonists used the Social Institution as their career spring-board in 1838. The debate might have been lively, but it was not particularly enlightening. After Saull failed to stop Baylee from kicking off with a hymn and prayer, it settled into the standard bicker on Moses' plagiarism and the bishops' politicking to get certain gospels accepted as inspired.[26] But such public exchanges allowed both men to sharpen their rhetorical strategies. The protagonists would both become doctors, Baylee of divinity, Hollick of medicine (or so he claimed).[27] Baylee, a regular at such theatrical confrontations,[28] would go on to found St Aidan's Theological College, Birkenhead, in the forties. Hollick sailed to America in 1842 to gain fame for popularizing esoteric medical lore, as befitted an Owenite.

25 Holyoake 1892, 1:49, 60.

26 Baylee and Hollick, 1839.

27 Hollick's "M.D." is problematic. From 1840 to early 1842, he was successively a social missionary in Liverpool, Edinburgh, and Birmingham. In August 1840, while in Liverpool, he gave four popular lectures on teeth (despite a lack of books), followed by a short course on human physiology. We get an idea of his (lack of) qualifications from a branch report:
"What! a Social Missionary,—a mere stripling, a youth of two-and-twenty ... presuming to step into a path hitherto trod only by the learned of the faculty! to teach a theme monopolised by colleges, and carefully kept within their time-honoured walls as something too sacred and precious for vulgar minds. These Socialists ... have upset the parsons, and are now tilting with the doctors. Who shall stay them before the world is turned upside down? Mr. Hollick delivers these lectures in the Hall of Science, and commands a larger audience than can be found to attend any other Institution in Liverpool; they are given in a scientific, popular, and practical manner, and so clearly enunciated, that every one may understand without difficulty [*NMW* 8 (26 Sept. 1840): 203]."
His movements show him in Edinburgh inaugurating the new Clyde Street Hall of Science and giving the same lectures in December 1840. These seem to have been his sole experience in 'medical' lecturing before emigrating to America in Spring 1842. In December 1843 he was at the new Social Institution in New York, and in 1844 press reports of his popular medical lectures here referred to him as Dr Hollick, while the title page of his *Origin of Life* has him "Frederick Hollick, M.D.", so it remains to be seen how he acquired this qualification. With licensing laws absent in most American states, and diploma mills not uncommon, it was not hard to obtain one. Like many Owenites, he was actually suspicious of medical power and merely exchanged a missionary platform in social engineering for a New York platform in anatomical popularizing.

28 *NMW* 6 (7 Dec. 1839): 940 passim; Larsen 2004, 106.

"Dr" Hollick—like other socialists and Chartists who published self-help science books[29]—went on to champion the democratization of anatomical knowledge. This was in spite of clerical distaste for anatomy and dissection and contemporary fears for the moral consequences of physiological knowledge among the "corruptible" poor.[30] Owenite teaching strategies were designed to demystify medicine as much as religion. This could mean breaking the doctor's financial hold on poorer patients and, with it, his moral influence, which too often perpetuated middle-class mores.[31] No more strenuous plebification of knowledge was to be found than Hollick's. He extended Owenite ideals of female liberation and marriage as a loving contract to pioneer books naturalizing sexual health and pleasure. The title of his first said it all: *The Origin of Life: A Popular Treatise on the Philosophy and Physiology of Reproduction, In Plants and Animals, Including The Details of Human Generation with a Full Description of the Male and Female Organs* (1845). This would have been difficult to publish in England. Even in New York, the revelation of Latin-guarded lore (which was how he presented it[32]) upset public propriety, and he was prosecuted for obscenity. But the book still passed through twenty editions in three years. For his part, the Rev. Joseph Baylee would see in print, among many books, the obligatory *Genesis and Geology; The Holy Word of God Defended from its Assailants* (1857).[33] It was a sign of the later times that Baylee eventually took a parish (Sheepscombe in Gloucestershire), where the sacred socialist Greaves's closest disciple,

29 For instance, William Lovett (1851, viii–xix), who concurred with Hollick that mankind's moral deficiency, exhibited in his "class dominations", showed him to be "defectively taught" and in need of a levelling anatomical education. Lovett superintended a day school for the London branch of the National Charter Association in 1846, which taught the secular sciences and other "improving" subjects. With encouragement from George Combe and John Elliotson (Lovett 1920, 2: 370–73, also 326–27, 384–89), the self-taught Lovett went on to publish an *Elementary Anatomy and Physiology*, which was well received as a plebeian teaching aid.

30 *Lancet* 1 (1 Jan. 1831): 470–72.

31 R. D. Owen 1839, 8–10.

32 Hollick 1848, xv-xvi; *UR*, 2 June 1847, 53–54, bound with *Reasoner* 3 (1847); J. F. C. Harrison 1987, 211. The Owenites' fascination with the creative aspects of electricity was taken further by Hollick, who used it to cure neuralgia, paralysis, and rheumatism.

33 Baylee's exegesis relied on an unrecorded length of time between God creating the world and then re-ordering its chaotic state in the Six Days. During this time, geological processes could occur in the supposedly chaotic undersea world (Baylee 1857, 8–13).

Georgina Welch, now rather orthodox, patronized and supported his church.[34]

The People's Charter

At the end of the thirties and into the hungry forties, there was an angry cast to poor urban life. Reform for the middling sort had palpably failed the working class. The economic depression begun in 1836 had reached a peak, leading to hunger, frustration, and increasingly violent agitation, including the abortive Chartist uprising in 1839. In the first Birmingham council elections, in 1838, the Tories were "mangled and minced". The radicals took power, and the Mayor's court even included a Charter signatory. With the Birmingham Political Union in control, and the local police force yet to organize, Chartists in May 1839 moved their national Convention to the city—to finalize their national petition for male suffrage—away from the heavily-policed capital. But sixty Metropolitan policemen were bussed in from London, and their attempts, backed by the military, to stop banned meetings in the Bull Ring, led to riots in July. The insurgency was fierce: some Chartists were armed, a neighbour of Holyoake's had his nose chopped off, and ten policemen were hospitalized. Lovett was arrested for printing placards condemning the magistrates and was sent to Warwick gaol.

Birmingham also beckoned the socialists. The printing of the *New Moral World* was shifted there, and the Central Board set up in the town. Holyoake and Hollick were made paid social missionaries by the local branch. In May 1839 the fifty countrywide Owenite branches convened the longest socialist congress to date (sixteen days) in the town.[35] At this tense time, the socialists distributed half-a-million tracts locally, discussing everything from co-operation to female emancipation and the abolition of traditional marriage. Fear of the Chartists led to a sparse meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Birmingham that August. Many of the savants were simply frightened away. In the event, the government commuted the death sentences on three Bull Ring rioters, which dampened the insurgency, but the town

34 Latham 1999, 148.

35 Maccoby 1935, 194–98; Hovell 1918, 156; Holyoake 1892, 1: ch. 5, ch. 17; Holyoake 1906, 1: 127; Fraser 1979, 88–89; Royle 1974, 50, 62.

was still a "feverish quiet" with peace ensured by "men in green and men in red, police staves and cavalry sabres".[36]

Birmingham was the citadel of English Jacobinism, or so said the *Courier*.[37] It was also young George Jacob Holyoake's town. Holyoake was one of the new-breed recruits, aggressively pushing the secular implications of Owenism. Extremely talented, he had come out of Birmingham Mechanics' Institute, where he had studied science and won the maths prize, and had ended up on the committee conducting classes.[38] The socialists having set up in Allison Street, he sat their lectures too[39] and he heard Robert Owen speak there on 15 June 1836. By 1839, he was a social missionary, and, in 1840, actually wrote a book on Euclid for use in schools and Owenite halls. But despite this science interest, he, like Hetherington before him, now emerged arguing that such intellectual pursuits were secondary to the political struggle. One can understand it, given the horror of the economic depression, which peaked in 1839–42. But he still had little sense of materialist science's longer-term ideological pay-off.[40] He knew that geology was all the rage, and, already displaying that brilliantly humorous streak of his, he talked of "Saurian" Tories as long extinct, if they but knew it, and the age clamouring for "Geology, and Gaslights".[41] However, it was not long before he too was forced into the fray, denying orthodox claims that geology supported true religion.[42] Then came the obligatory recommendation that autodidacts visit Saull's "excellent Museum", so vast now, and "so rich in curiosities", that enumerating the exhibits would require "converting [his report] into a Catalogue".[43]

Shock waves from the 1839 socialist congress in Birmingham rippled through polite society. The Bishop of Exeter stood in the Lords to

36 Morrell and Thackray 1984, 257, 321–22, 326–27; 1981, 252.
37 *Courier*, 26 Dec. 1836, 4.
38 George Jacob Holyoake, "Brief Notes of Lectures" (1838–1839), MS, passim and "Log Book" No. 1, MS, Bishopsgate Institute, London. Holyoake 1892, 1: 142; McCabe 1908, 1: 48.
39 *NMW* 2 (19 Mar. 1836): 168; Holyoake "Brief Notes," passim.
40 *NMW* 9 (6 Feb. 1841): 88. However, he never failed to respond when provincials wanted a lecturer to demolish some itinerant's geology-supports-genesis line (*NMW* 10 [26 Mar. 1842]: 311).
41 *NMW* 10 (9 Oct. 1841): 114.
42 *NMW* 10 (26 Mar. 1842): 311.
43 *Reasoner* 1 (6 Aug. 1846): 159.

blame William Pare, the superintendent-registrar of births, marriages, and deaths in the town, and the local socialist vice-president, who had officiated in Congress debates on the Bible as "a tissue of lies". It was enough to have the bishop declare him unfit to hold public office, and Pare was forced to resign. "Was this Christianity"? asked Saull speaking in Pare's defence "doing as they would be done by?"[44] Of course, worse could have befallen them. The clergy, magistracy, and manufacturers were a formidable foe. It was not unknown for the bigger bosses to employ drunken gangs to storm socialist meetings, and, in one terrible instance, to try to kill the lecturer.[45]

Saull seems fairly unique in standing at the intersection of all three of these Birmingham congresses: Socialist, Chartist, and British Association for the Advancement of Science. But it is not actually known whether he attended any of them.[46] He *might* have been at the BAAS meeting, for the reason that the comparative anatomist Richard Owen was reading the first part of his "Report on British Fossil Reptiles",[47] to prepare which he had visited Saull's museum. And Saull *did* take a steam vessel over to Boulogne that September with a BAAS delegation. There they had a week-long joint meeting with the Société Géologique de France, of which Saull was also a member. At one of the sessions, Saull acted as liaison officer, and inducted a new member into the French Société.[48]

It is questionable whether Saull had much to do with the Chartist Convention, though, save the odd pound put into its collection, or donations to Frost's defence fund.[49] But having his feet in the Owenite camp did not prevent some sympathy or stop him lecturing the Chartists at their Hall in the Old Bailey. The first talk was on 16 September 1841, when he delivered "a very excellent and instructive lecture" on the

44 *NMW* 7 (20 June 1840): 1322; (8 Feb. 1840): 1093–94.
45 *NMW* 7 (9 Feb. 1840): 1176; Buchanan 1840b, 407.
46 His whereabouts can only be pinpointed for one summer day: he was in London, at a Numismatic Society meeting, on 18 July, a week after the violent Bull Ring meetings, which he was unlikely to have attended anyway (*Proceedings of the Numismatic Society*, 1838–39, 351). His absence is indicated by the *Northern Star*'s lament, commenting on Lovett's arrest: "Where were George Rogers and Mr. Saul [*sic*], that they did not immediately repair to Birmingham, to give bail for the glorious Lovett"? (*NS*, 13 July 1839).
47 Richard Owen 1840, 43–44.
48 *MC*, 14 Sept. 1839; *Bulletin de la Société Géologique de France* 10 (1839): 385–86, 431.
49 *Charter*, 24 Mar. 1839; *Operative*, 24 Mar. 1839; *NS*, 13 July 1839.

"social and political condition of the country." Local Chartism was now in uproar—a fracture in the movement had led physical-force Chartists to condemn the moderate "Lovettites" for setting up a broader coalition, a "National Association".[50] Being a moral-force Owenite, Saull had feared he was stepping into a lion's den. Saull's lecture referenced an ugly incident a few nights earlier, on 7 September, when, at his Mechanics' Hall of Science, Watson had excoriated a physical-force extremist who had called for Saull's long-time friend Lovett to be assassinated.[51] It cast a pall over the Old Bailey lecture, and Saull had "expected to meet with much opposition". In the event, the talk went off well, probably because the physical-force activists were off listening to their "patriotic champion" Feargus O'Connor, fresh out of prison and in town that night. So Saull set up a quarterly series of lectures in their hall, beginning on geology, and, naturally, he invited the Old Bailey Chartists to his museum.[52]

Of all the Chartists, Saull's heart was closest to Lovett, Watson, Hetherington, and the other "traitors, assassins, and spies", as they were branded by the wilder insurgents.[53] 'Knowledge Chartists' was a kinder appellation for Lovett's activists. But even that was supposed to be a slur on their talk of self-improvement and rational education, and on their demands for a penny subscription to set up schools and libraries. These ideals, though, remained dear to Saull's heart. The Knowledge Chartists took over a hall capable of holding 1,000 people in High Holborn, which was to become the National Association headquarters, and Saull personally assured Lovett he would attend the opening in July 1842.[54] Here they planned to house libraries and schools, with children taught by day, and adults receiving lectures at night on "physical, moral, and political science".[55]

Lovett's goal was to ready the populace for power, as was Saull's. But the differences in temper and intent between Owenism and Chartism

50 Stack 1999, 1028.
51 Goodway 1982, 42; *NS*, 11 Sept. 1841; Lovett 1920, 2: 254–64; Wiener 1989, 87.
52 *NS*, 18 Sept. 1841; 9 Oct. 1841.
53 Goodway 1982, 42; *NS*, 11 Sept. 1841; Wiener 1989, 86.
54 W. D. Saull to W. Lovett, 13 July 1842, British Library MSS Catalogue Add. 78161, f. 162.
55 *Nonconformist*, 27 July 1842, 515; *National Association Gazette* 1 (30 July 1842): 243–44.

generally were immense. As J. F. C. Harrison once put it, Owen's propaganda machine was unequalled. "In the peak years 1839-41 two and a half million tracts were distributed: 1450 lectures were delivered in a year, and Sunday lectures were attended by up to 50,000 weekly."[56] This was a literary onslaught, whereas Chartists went for vast open-air rallies demanding industrial action to gain their demands: suffrage, private ballot, annual parliaments, and so on. Owenism at times looked to be devolving into an educational movement, and such would Saull have it. Despite his odd lecture to Chartists on "just government", support for Lovett, or treasurer's role holding funds for the families of Chartists who had died in jail from cholera,[57] there was little apparent contact.

All of this makes it strange what that left-wing insurrectionist, "the 'Marat' of 1839",[58] George Julian Harney, learned in Scotland. Harney was one of the youngest members of the 1839 Chartist National Convention (just twenty-two, but he already had form: as Hetherington's shop-boy he had been imprisoned twice for hawking the *Poor Man's Guardian* while still in his teens). After the Convention, he made a confidence-boosting tour of Chartist communities in the North and Scotland. He reached Kinross, twenty-five miles north of Edinburgh in February 1841. Here, the small band of local Chartists had taken steps towards building a meeting hall, which "will enable them to laugh at the petty tyranny of the idiotic, knavish 'respectables.'" Further, Harney heard, they were planning to ask Saull to stand as their Radical MP "in opposition to the Whig tool and placeman Admiral Adam. A resolution was passed at the meeting, inviting Mr. Saull to explain his views and principles upon public subjects, particularly as to the People's Charter."[59] If the offer did reach Saull, he never stood. He was never a Chartist, even if he supported Lovett. We do not even know how he viewed the "Charter-Socialists", who advocated a republic based on the Charter's democratic principles but with socialist institutions. In truth, he was more the suit

56 J. F. C. Harrison 1969, 31.
57 *NS*, 3 Dec. 1842; 28 Jan. 1843, 8; 27 Oct. 1849. He was joined as treasurer by George Rogers.
58 Epstein 1994, 19–20; Claeys 1987, 160. There was no love lost between Lovett and Harney: Lovett (1920, 1: 207) deplored the dagger-brandishing Harney's "insane and foolish conduct".
59 *NS*, 13 Feb. 1841; 26 June 1841.

behind the scenes, the financier and organizer, his 'rigmarole' speeches lacking Wakley's fiery lustre. It was just as well. Chartism was vilified in the press and candidates were guaranteed a bad reception, as Harney himself found out on standing at Tiverton later. With few ten-pound householders daring to publicly declare for a Chartist (there being no secret ballot), he did not pick up a single vote.[60]

60 W. E. Adams 1903, 1: 223.