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The Perfectionists of Oneida and Wallingford

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From:

Charles Nordhoff, *The Communistic Societies of the United States from Personal Visit and Observation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1875), pp. 259–301.

Abstract:

The Perfectionists of Oneida, New York, and Wallingford, Connecticut, are best known for their practice of what they called “complex marriage,” a system of polygamy and polyandry devised by their founder John Humphrey Noyes (1811–1886). This account by Charles Nordhoff (1830–1901), a journalist based in New York, was drawn from his visits to the Perfectionist colonies, and includes a description of their history, organization, manners, beliefs, worship, faith-cures, and their practice of “criticism.”

THE PERFECTIONISTS

OF

ONEIDA AND WALLINGFORD.

THE PERFECTIONISTS OF ONEIDA AND WALLINGFORD.

I.-HISTORICAL.

THE Oneida and Wallingford Communists are of American origin, and their membership is almost entirely American.

Their founder, who is still their head, John Humphrey Noyes, was born in Brattleboro, Vermont, in 1811, of respectable parentage. He graduated from Dartmouth College, began the study of the law, but turned shortly to theology; and studied first at Andover, with the intention of fitting himself to become a foreign missionary, and later in the Yale theological school. At New Haven he came under the influence of a zealous revival preacher, and during his residence there he “landed in a new experience and new views of the way of salvation, which took the name of Perfectionism.”

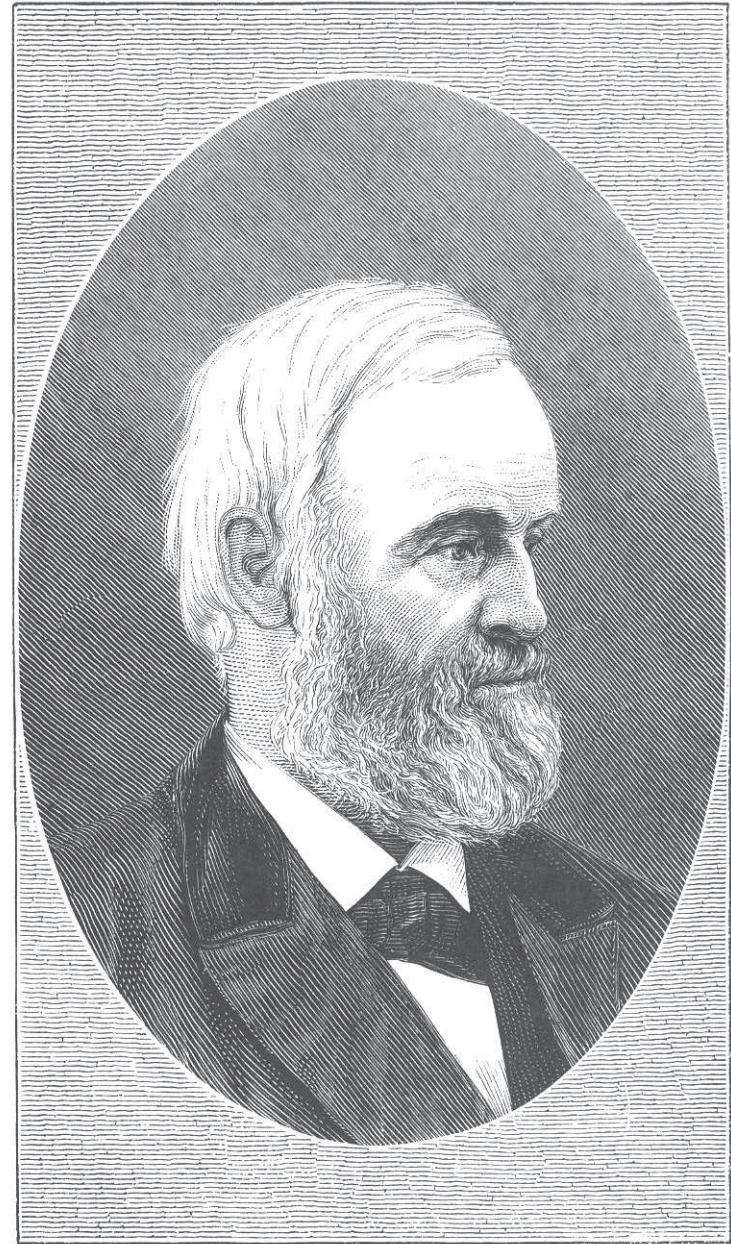
This was in 1834. He soon returned to Putney, in Vermont, where his father’s family then lived, and where his father was a banker. There he preached and printed; and in 1838 married Harriet A. Holton, the granddaughter of a member of Congress, and a convert to his doctrines.

He slowly gathered about him a small company of believers, drawn from different parts of the country, and with their help made known his new faith in various publications, with such effect that though in 1847 he had only about forty persons in his own congregation, there appear to have been small gatherings of “Perfectionists” in other states, in correspondence with Noyes, and inclined to take him as their leader.

Originally Noyes was not a Communist, but when his thoughts turned in that direction he began to prepare his followers for communal life; in 1845 he made known to them his peculiar views of the relations of the sexes, and in 1846 the society at Putney began cautiously an experiment in communal living.

Their views, which they never concealed, excited the hostility of the people to such a degree that they were mobbed and driven out of the place; and in the spring of 1848 they joined some persons of like faith and practice at Oneida, in Madison County, New York. Here they began community life anew; on forty acres of land, on which stood an unpainted frame dwelling-house, an abandoned Indian hut, and an old Indian saw-mill. They owed for this property two thousand dollars. The place was neglected, without cultivation, and the people were so poor that for some time they had to sleep on the floor in the garret which was their principal sleeping-chamber. The gathering at Oneida appears to have been the signal for several attempts by followers of Noyes to establish themselves in communes. In 1849 a small society was formed in Brooklyn, N.Y., to which later the printing for all the societies was intrusted. In 1850 another community was begun at Wallingford, in Connecticut. There were others, of which I find no account; but all regarded Oneida as their centre and leader; and in the course of time, and after various struggles, all were drawn into the common centre, except that at Wallingford, which still exists in a flourishing condition, having its property and other interests in common with Oneida.

The early followers of Noyes were chiefly New England farmers, the greater part of whom brought with them some means, though not in any single case a large amount. Noyes himself and several other members contributed several thousand dollars each, and a "Property Register" kept from the beginning of the community experiment showed that up to the first of January, 1857, the members of all the associated



J. H. NOYES, FOUNDER OF THE PERFECTIONISTS.

communes had brought in the considerable amount of one hundred and seven thousand seven hundred and six dollars. I understand, however, that this sum was not at any one time in hand, and that much of it came in several years after the settlement at Oneida in 1848; and it is certain that in the early days, while they were still seeking for some business which should be at the same time agreeable to them and profitable, they had sometimes short commons. They showed great courage and perseverance, for through all their early difficulties they maintained a printing-office and circulated a free paper. At first they looked toward agriculture and horticulture as their main-stays for income; but they began soon to unite other trades with these. Their saw-mill sawed lumber for the neighboring farmers; they set up a blacksmith shop, and here, besides other work, they began to make traps by hand, having at first no means to buy machinery, and indeed having to invent most of that which they now use in their extensive trap shop.

Like the Shakers with their garden seeds, and all other successful communities with their products, the Perfectionists got their start by the excellence of their workmanship. Their traps attracted attention because they were more uniformly well made than others; and thus they built up a trade which has become very large. They raised small fruits, made rustic furniture, raised farm crops, sold cattle, had at one time a sloop on the Hudson; and Noyes himself labored as a blacksmith, farmer, and in many other employments.

Working thus under difficulties, they had sunk, by January, 1857, over forty thousand dollars of their capital, but had gained valuable experience in the mean time. They had concentrated all their people at Oneida and Wallingford; and had set up some machinery at the former place. In January, 1857, they took their first annual inventory, and found themselves worth a little over sixty-seven thousand dollars. Their perse-

verance had conquered fortune, for in the next ten years the net profit of the two societies amounted to one hundred and eighty thousand five hundred and eighty dollars, according to this statement :

Net earnings in 1857	\$5,470 11	Net earnings in 1862.	\$9,859 78
“ “ 1858	1,763 60	“ “ 1863	44,755 30
“ “ 1859	10,278 38	“ “ 1864	61,382 62
“ “ 1860	15,611 03	“ “ 1865	12,382 81
“ “ 1861	5,877 89	“ “ 1866	13,198 74

During this time they made traps, traveling-bags and satchels, mop-holders, and various other small articles, and put up preserved fruits in glass and tin. They began at Wallingford, in 1851, making match-boxes, and the manufacture of traveling-bags was begun in Brooklyn, and later transferred to Oneida. Trap-making was begun at Oneida in 1855; fruit-preserving in 1858, and in 1866 the silk manufacture was established.

Meantime they bought land, until they have in 1874, near Oneida, six hundred and fifty-four acres, laid out in orchards, vineyards, meadows, pasture and wood land, and including several valuable water-powers; and at Wallingford two hundred and forty acres, mainly devoted to grazing and the production of small fruits. They have erected in both places commodious and substantial dwellings and shops, and carry on at this time a number of industries, of which some account will be found further on.

The two communities, whose members are interchangeable at will and whenever necessity arises, must be counted as one. At Oneida they have founded a third, on a part of their land, called Willow Place, but this too is but an offshoot of the central family. In February, 1874, they numbered two hundred and eighty-three persons, of whom two hundred and thirty-eight were at Oneida and Willow Place, and forty-five at Wallingford. Of these one hundred and thirty-one were males,

and one hundred and fifty-two females. Of the whole number, sixty-four were children and youth under twenty-one—thirty-three males and thirty-one females. Of the two hundred and nineteen adults, one hundred and five were over forty-five years of age—forty-four men and sixty-one women.

They employ in both places from twenty to thirty-five farm laborers, according to the season, and a number of fruit-pickers in the time of small fruits. Besides, at Oneida they employ constantly two hundred and one hired laborers, of whom one hundred and three are women, seventy-five of whom work in the silk factory; sixty-seven of the men being engaged in the trap works, foundry, and machine shops. At Wallingford the silk works give employment to thirty-five hired women and girls. Originally, and for many years, these Communists employed no outside labor in their houses; but with increasing prosperity they have begun to hire servants and helpers in many branches. Thus at Oneida there are in the laundry two men and five women; in the kitchen three men and seven women; in the heating or furnace room two men; in the shoemaker's shop two; and in the tailor's shop two—all hired people. At Wallingford they hire three women and one man for their laundry.

These hired people are the country neighbors of the commune; and, as with the Shakers and the Harmonists, they like their employers. These pay good wages, and treat their servants kindly; looking after their physical and intellectual well-being, building houses for such of them as have families and need to be near at hand, and in many ways showing interest in their welfare.

The members of the two societies are for the most part Americans, though there are a few English and Canadians. There are among them lawyers, clergymen, merchants, physicians, teachers; but the greater part were New England farmers and mechanics. Former Congregationalists and Presbyte-

rians, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Baptists are among the—but no Catholics.

They have a great number of applications from person desirous to become members. During 1873 they received over one hundred such by letter, besides a nearly equal number made in person. They are not willing now to accept new members; but I believe they are looking about for a place suitable for a new settlement, and would not be unwilling, if a number of persons with sufficient means for another colony should present themselves, to help them with teachers and guides.

In the year 1873 the Oneida Community produced and sold preserved fruits to the value of \$27,417; machine and sewing silk and woven goods worth \$203,784; hardware, including traps, chucks, silk-measuring machines and silk-strength testers (the last two of their own invention), gate-hinges and foundry castings, \$90,447. They raised twenty-five acres of sweet corn, six acres of tomatoes, two acres of strawberries, two of raspberries; half an acre of currants, half an acre of grapes, twenty-two acres of apples, and three and a half acres of pears.

Silk-weaving has been abandoned, as not suitable to them.

At the beginning of 1874 they were worth over half a million of dollars.

From the beginning, Noyes and his followers have made great use of the press. Up to the time of their settlement at Oneida they had published “Paul not Carnal;” two series of *The Perfectionist*; *The Way of Holiness*, the *Berean*, and *The Witness*. From Oneida they began at once to issue the *Spiritual Magazine*, and, later, the *Free Church Circular*, which was the beginning of their present journal, the *Oneida Circular*. “Bible Communism” also was published at Oneida during the first year of their settlement there. They did not aim to make money by their publications, and the *Circular* was from the first published on terms probably unlike

those of any other newspaper in the world. I take from an old number, of the year 1853, the following announcement, standing at the head of the first column :

“The *Circular* is published by Communists, and for Communists. Its main object is to help the education of several confederated associations, who are practically devoted to the Pentecost principle of community of property. Nearly all of its readers outside of those associations are communists in principle. It is supported almost entirely by the free contributions of this Communist constituency. A paper with such objects and such resources can not properly be offered for sale. Freely we receive, and we freely give. Whoever wishes to read the *Circular* can have it WITHOUT PAYING, OR PROMISING TO PAY, by applying through the mail, or at 48 Willow Place, Brooklyn. If anyone chooses to pay, he may send TWO DOLLARS for the yearly volume; but he must not require us to keep his accounts. We rely on the free gifts of the family circle for which we labor.”

This paper was published on these terms, at one time semi-weekly, and at another three times a week. For some years past it has appeared weekly, printed on extremely good paper, and an admirable specimen of typography; and it has now at the head of its columns the following notice :

“The *Circular* is sent to all applicants, whether they pay or not. It costs and is worth at least two dollars per volume. Those who want it and ought to have it are divisible into three classes, viz. : 1, those who can not afford to pay two dollars; 2, those who can afford to pay *only* two dollars; and, 3, those who can afford to pay *more* than two dollars. The first ought to have it free; the second ought to pay the cost of it; and the third ought to pay enough more than the cost to make up the deficiencies of the first. This is the law of Communism. We have no means of enforcing it, and no wish to do so, except by stating it and leaving it to the good sense of those concerned. We take the risk of offering the *Circular* to all without price; but free subscriptions will be received only from persons making application for themselves, either directly or by giving express authority to those who apply for them.

“Foreign subscribers, except those residing in Canada, must remit with their subscriptions money to prepay the postage.”

They print now about two thousand copies per week, and lost last year six hundred dollars in the enterprise, without reckoning what would have had to be paid in any other work of the kind for literary labor.

A list of the works they have issued win be found, with the titles of works issued by other communitistic societies, at the end of the volume.

Aside from its religious and communistic teachings, the Circular has a general interest, by reason of articles it often contains relating to natural history and natural scenery, which, from different pens, show that there are in the society some close observers of nature, who have also the ability to relate their observations and experiences in excellent English. In general, the style of the paper is uncommonly good, and shows that there is a degree of culture among the Oneida people which preserves them from the too common newspaper vice of fine English.

Their publications deal with the utmost frankness with their own religious and social theories and practices, and I suppose it may be said that they aim to keep themselves and their doctrines before the public. In this respect they differ from all the other Communitistic societies now existing in this country. That they are not without a sense of humor in these efforts, the following, printed as advertisements in the Circular, will show:

GRAND FIRE ANNIHILATOR !—AN INVENTION for overcoming Evil with Good.

MEEK & LOWLY.

TO JEWELERS.—A SINGLE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE ! This inestimable Jewel may be obtained by application to Jesus Christ, at the extremely low price of “all that a man hath !”

TO BROKERS.

WANTED.—Any amount of SHARES OF SECOND-COMING STOCK, bearing date A.D. 70, or thereabouts, will find a ready market and command a high premium at this office.

ATTENTION !

SOLDIERS who claim to have ‘I fought the fight of faith’ will find it for their advantage to have their claims investigated. All who can establish said claim are entitled to a bounty land-warrant in the kingdom of Heaven, and a pension for eternity.

ROOMS TO LET in the “Many Mansions” that Christ has prepared for those that love him.

DIRECTIONS for cultivating the fruits of the Spirit may be obtained gratis, at
MEEK & LOWLY’S,
No.1 Grace Court.

Practical Reflections on CHRIST’S SERMON ON THE MOUNT may be had also as above.

LEGAL NOTICE.—Notice is hereby given that all claims issued by the old firm of Moses and Law were canceled 1800 years ago. Any requirement, therefore, to observe as a means of righteousness legal enactments bearing date prior to A.D. 70, is pronounced by us, on the authority of the New Testament, a fraud and imposition.

THE EYES ! THE EYES ! ! — It is known that many persons with two eyes habitually “see double.” To prevent stumbling and worse liabilities in such circumstances, an ingenious contrivance has been invented by which the WHOLE BODY is filled with light. It is called the “SINGLE EYE,” and may be obtained by applying to Jesus Christ.

WATER-CURE ESTABLISHMENT.—I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.—Ezekiel xxxvi., 25, 26.

PATENT SIEVES.—The series of sieves for CRITICISM having been thoroughly tested, are now offered to the public for general use. They are warranted to sift the tares from the wheat, and in all cases to discriminate between good and evil. A person, after having passed through this series, comes out free from the incumbrances of egotism, pride, etc., etc. All persons are invited to test them gratuitously.

MAGNIFICENT RESTAURANT !—In Mount Zion will the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the race of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall be taken away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.—Isaiah xxv., 6-8.

PATENT SALAMANDER SAFES.—Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.—Matt. vi., 19, 20. This safe, having been submitted for 1800 years to the hottest fire of judgment, and having been through that time subject to constant attacks from the fiery shafts of the devil, is now offered to the public, with full confidence that it will meet with general approbation. Articles inclosed in this safe are warranted free from danger under any circumstances.

TO THE AFFLICTED !—WINE and MILK for the hungry, REST for the weary and heavy-laden, CONSOLATION and BALM for the wounded and invalids of every description—may be had gratis, on application to the storehouse of the Son of God.

The *Circular* contains each week extracts from journals kept in the two communities, and “Talks” by Noyes and others, with a variety of other matter relating to their belief and daily lives.

II.—RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND FAITH-CURES.

They call themselves “Perfectionists.”

They hold to the Bible as the “text-book of the Spirit of truth;” to “Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God.” to “the apostles and Primitive Church as the exponents of the everlasting Gospel.” They believe that “the second advent of Christ took place at the period of the destruction of Jerusalem;” that “at that time there was a primary resurrection and judgment in the spirit world;” and “that the final kingdom of God then began in the heavens; that the manifestation of that kingdom in the visible world is now approaching; that its approach is ushering in the second and final resurrection and judgment; that a Church on earth is now rising to meet the approaching kingdom in the heavens, and to become its duplicate and representative; that inspiration, or open communication with God and the heavens, involving perfect holiness, is the element of connection between the Church on earth

and the Church in the heavens, and the power by which the kingdom of God is to be established and reign in the world.”*

They assert, further, that “the Gospel provides for complete salvation from sin”—hence the name they assume of “Perfectionists.” “Salvation from sin,” they say, “is the foundation needed by all other reforms.”

“Do you, then, claim to live sinless lives? I asked; and received this answer :

“We consider the community to be a Church, and our theory of a Christian Church, as constituted in the apostolic age, is that it is a school, consisting of many classes, from those who are in the lowest degree of faith to those who have attained the condition of certain and eternal salvation from sin. The only direct answer, therefore, that we can give to your question is that some of us claim to live sinless lives, and some do not. A sinless life is the *standard* of the community, which all believe to be practicable, and to which all are taught to aspire. Yet we recognize the two general classes, which were characterized by Paul as the “*nepiou*” and the “*teleioi*.” Our belief is that a Christian Church can exist only when the “*teleioi*” are in the ascendant and have control.”

In compliance with my request, the following definition of “Perfectionism” was written out for me as authoritative:

“The bare doctrine of Perfectionism might be presented in a single sentence thus :

“As the doctrine of temperance is total abstinence from alcoholic drinks, and the doctrine of anti-slavery is immediate abolition of human bondage, so the doctrine of Perfectionism is immediate and total cessation from sin.

“But the analogy thus suggested between Perfectionism and two popular reforms is by no means to be regarded as defining the character and methods of Perfectionism. Salvation from

* Statement in the *Circular*.

sin, as we understand it, is not a system of duty-doing under a code of dry laws, Scriptural or natural; but is a special phase of *religious experience*, having for its basis spiritual intercourse with God. All religionists of the positive sort believe in a personal God, and assume that he is a sociable being. This faith leads them to seek intercourse with him, to approach him by prayer, to give him their hearts, to live in communion with him. These exercises and the various states and changes of the inner life connected with them constitute the staple of what is commonly called *religious experience*. Such experience, of course, has more or less effect on the character and external conduct. We can not live in familiar intercourse with human beings without becoming better or worse under their influence; and certainly fellowship with God must affect still more powerfully all the springs of action. Perfectionists hold that intercourse with God may proceed so far as to destroy selfishness in the heart, and so make an end of sin. This is the special phase of religious experience which we profess, and for which we are called Perfectionists.”

Among other matters, they hold that “the Jews are, by God’s perpetual covenant, the royal nation;” that the obligation to observe the Sabbath passed away with the Jewish dispensation, and is “adverse to the advance of man into new and true arrangements;” that “the original organization instituted by Christ [the Primitive Church] is accessible to us, and that our main business as reformers is to open communication with that heavenly body;” and they “refer all their experience to the invisible hosts who are contending over them.”

I must add, to explain the last sentence, that they are not Spiritualists in the sense in which that word is nowadays usually employed, and in which the Shakers are Spiritualists; but they hold that they are in a peculiar and direct manner under the guidance of God and good spirits. “Saving faith, according to the Bible, places man in such a relation to God that he

is authorized to ask favors of him as a child asks favors of his father. Prayer without expectation of an answer is a performance not sanctioned by Scripture nor by common-sense. But prayer with expectation of an answer (that is, the prayer of faith) is impossible, on the supposition that ‘the age of miracles is past,’ and that God no longer interferes with the regular routine of nature.” Hence their belief in what they call “Faith-cures,” of which I shall speak further on.

Community of goods and of persons they hold to have been taught and commanded by Jesus: “Jesus Christ offers to save men from all evil—from sin and death itself; but he always states it as a necessary condition of their accepting his help that they shall forsake all other; and particularly that they shall get rid of their private property.” Communism they hold therefore to be “the social state of the resurrection.” “The account on the sides of life and death arranges itself thus:

APOSTASY,	RESTORATION,
UNBELIEF,	FAITH,
Obedience to	Obedience to
<i>Mammon,</i>	<i>Christ,</i>
PRIVATE PROPERTY,	COMMUNISM,
DEATH.	IMMORTALITY.”

“The community system, which they thus hold to have been divinely commanded, they extend beyond property—to persons; and thus they justify their extraordinary social system, in which there is no marriage; or, as they put it, “complex marriage takes the place of simple.” They surround this singular and, so far as I know, unprecedented combination of polygamy and polyandry with certain religious and social restraints; but affirm that there is “no intrinsic difference between property in persons and property in things; and that the same spirit which abolished exclusiveness in regard to money would

abolish, if circumstances allowed full scope to it, exclusiveness in regard to women and children.”*

It is an extraordinary evidence of the capacity of mankind for various and extreme religious beliefs, that many men have brought their wives and young daughters into the Oneida Community.

They have no preaching; do not use Baptism nor the Lord’s Supper; do not observe Sunday, because they hold that with them every day is a Sabbath; do not pray aloud; and avoid with considerable care all set forms. They read the Bible and quote it much.

They believe that the exercise of sufficient faith in prayer to God is capable of restoring the sick to health; and assert that there have been in their experience and among their membership a number of such cures. In a “Free-Church Tract,” dated “Oneida Reserve, 1850,” there is an account of such a cure of Mrs. M. A. Hall, ill of consumption, and given up by her physicians. In this case J. H. Noyes and Mrs. Cragin were those whose “power of faith” was supposed to have acted; and Mrs. Hall herself wrote, two years later: “From a helpless, bed-ridden state in which I was unable to move, or even to be moved without excruciating pain, I was *instantly* raised to a consciousness of perfect health. I was constrained to declare again and again that I was perfectly well, My eyes, which before could not bear the light, were opened to the blaze of day and became strong. My appetite was restored, and all pain removed.” This is said to have taken place in June, 1847. The following case is reported in the *Circular* for February 9th of the present year (1874), and the description of the injury, which immediately follows, is given by Dr. Cragin—a member of the Oneida Community—whom I understand to be a regularly educated physician. The sufferer was a woman, Mrs. M.

* “History of American Socialisms,” by J. H. Noyes, p. 625.

“Her hand was passed between the rubber rollers of a wringing-machine. The machine was new, and the rollers were screwed down so that it brought a very heavy pressure on her hand, evidently crowding the bones all out of place and stretching the ligaments, besides seriously injuring the nerves of her hand and arm. When she came here from Wallingford Community, several weeks after the accident, not only the nerves of her hand were essentially paralyzed, but the trunk nerve of her arm was paralyzed and caused her a great deal of suffering. It was as helpless as though completely paralyzed: she had not sufficient control over her hand to bend her fingers.

“That was her condition up to the time of the cure. I could not see from the time she came here to the time of the cure that there was any change for the better. I told her the first time I examined her hand that, according to the ordinary course of such things, she must not expect to get the use of it under twelve months, if she did then. At the same time I told her I would not limit the power of God.

“Her general health improved, but her hand caused her the acutest suffering. It would awaken her in the night, and oblige her to get up and spend hours in rubbing it and trying to allay the pain. If anyone has had a jumping toothache, he can imagine something what her suffering was, only the pain extended over the whole hand and arm, instead of being confined to one small place like a tooth. I have known of strong men who had the nervous system of an arm similarly affected, who begged that their arms might be taken off, and have indeed suffered amputation rather than endure the pain.

“For some time before her cure there had been considerable talk in the family about faith-cures, and persons had talked with her on the subject, and encouraged her to expect to have such a cure as Harriet Hall did. Finally Mr. Noyes’s interest was aroused, and he invoked a committee for her—not so much to criticise as to comfort her, and bring to bear on her the concentrated attention and faith of the family. She was stimulated by this criticism to cheerfulness and hope, and to put herself into the social current, keeping around as much as she could where there was the most life and faith. A private criticism soon after penetrated her spirit, and separated her from a brooding influence of evil that she had come under in a heart affair.

“Still she suffered with her hand as much as ever, up to the time of her sudden cure. A few evenings after this private criticism we had a very interesting meeting, and she was present in the gallery. The sub-

ject was the power of prayer, and there was a good deal of faith experience related, and she appeared the next morning shaking hands with every body she met. Now you see her washing dishes and making beds.

“Mrs. A.—The morning she was cured I was at work in the hall, when she came running toward me, saying, ‘I’m cured ! I’m cured !’ Then she shook hands with me, using the hand that had been so bad, and giving a hearty pressure with it.

“Dr. C.—To show that the case is not one of imagination, I will say, that the day before the cure she could not have it *touched* without suffering pain. She had not been dressed for a week, but that morning she bathed and dressed herself and made her bed, and then went to Joppa.

“Mr. N.—She came down to Joppa with her hands all free, and went out on the ice; I don’t know that she caught any fish, but she attended the ‘tip-ups.’

“Mrs. C.—She said to me that she had attended to dieting and all the prescriptions that were given her, and got no help from them; and she had made up her mind that if there was any thing done for her, the community must take hold and do it.

“W. A. H.—Let us be united about this case; and if it be imagination, let us have more of it; and if it be the power of faith, let us have more faith.

“C. W. U.—Was Mrs. M. conscious of any precise moment when the pain left her in the night ?

“Mrs. M. [the person who was cured].—After the meeting in which we talked about faith-cures, I went to my room and prayed to God to take the pain out of my hand, and told him if he did I would glorify him with it. The pain left me, and I could stretch out my arm farther than I had been able to since it was hurt. I went to bed, and slept until four o’clock without waking; then I awoke and found I was not in pain, and that I could stretch out my arm and move my fingers. Then I thought—‘I am well.’ I got up, took a bath, and dressed myself. After this my arm ached some, but I said, ‘I am well; I am made every whit whole.’ I kept saying that to myself, and the pain left me entirely. My arm has begun to ache nearly every day since then, but I insist that I am well, and the pain ceases. That arm is not yet as strong as the other, but is improving daily.

“Mrs. C.—I have had considerable of that kind of experience during the last few years. For two years I raised blood a good deal, and thought

a great many times that I was going to die—could not get that idea out of my mind. Mrs. M. talked with me about it, and told me I must not give up to my imaginations. I was put into business two years ago, and some days my head swam so that I could hardly go about, but I did what was given me to do; and finally I came to a point in my experience where I said, ‘I don’t care if I do raise blood; I am not going to be frightened by it; I had as soon raise blood as do any thing else.’ When I got there my trouble left me.”

I have copied this account at some length, because it speaks in detail of a quite recent occurrence, and shows, in a characteristic way, their manner of dealing with disease.

They profess also to have wrought cures by what they call “Criticism,” of which I shall speak further on.

Concerning their management of the intercourse of the sexes, so much has been written, by themselves and by others, that I think I need here say only that—

1st. They regard their system as part of their religion. Noyes said, in a “Home Talk,” reported in the *Circular*, February 2, 1874: “Woe to him who abolishes the law of the apostasy before he stands in the holiness of the resurrection. The law of the apostasy is the law of marriage; and it is true that whoever undertakes to enter into the liberty of the resurrection without the holiness of the resurrection, will get woe and not happiness. It is as important for the young now as it was for their fathers then, that they should know that holiness of heart is what they must have before they get liberty in love. They must put the first thing first, as I did and as their parents did; they must be *Perfectionists* before they are *Communists*.” He seems to see, too, that “complex marriage,” as he calls it, is not without grave dangers to the community, for he added, in the same “Home Talk:” “We have got into the position of Communism, where without genuine salvation from sin our passions will overwhelm us, and nothing but confusion and misery can be expected. On the other hand, we have

got into a position where, if we do have the grace of God triumphant in our hearts and flowing through all our nature, there is an opportunity for harmony and happiness beyond all that imagination has conceived. So it is hell behind us, and heaven before us, and a necessity that we should march !”

2d. “Complex marriage” means, in their practice: that, within the limits of the community membership, any man and woman may and do freely cohabit, having first gained each other’s consent, not by private conversation or courtship, but through the intervention of some third person or persons; that they strongly discourage, as an evidence of sinful selfishness, what they call “exclusive and idolatrous attachment” of two persons for each other, and aim to break up by “criticism” and other means every thing of this kind in the community; that they teach the advisability of pairing persons of different ages, the young of one sex with the aged of the other, and as the matter is under the control and management of the more aged members it is thus arranged; that “persons are not obliged, under any circumstances, to receive the attentions of those whom they do not like;” and that the propagation of children is controlled by the society, which pretends to conduct this matter on scientific principles: “Previous to about two and a half years ago we refrained from the usual rate of child-bearing, for several reasons, financial and otherwise. Since that time we have made an attempt to produce the usual number of offspring to which people in the middle classes are able to afford judicious moral and spiritual care, with the advantage of a liberal education. In this attempt twenty-four men and twenty women have been engaged, selected from among those who have most thoroughly practiced our social theory.”*

Finally, they find in practice a strong tendency toward what they call “selfish love”—that is to say, the attachment

* “Essay on Scientific Propagation,” by John Humphrey Noyes.

of two persons to each other, and their desire to be true to each other; and there are here and there in their publications signs that there has been suffering among their young people on this account. They rebuke this propensity, however, as selfish and sinful, and break it down rigorously

III.—DAILY LIFE AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION.

The farm, or domain, as they prefer to call it, of the Oneida Community forms a part of the old Reservation of the Oneida Indians. It is a plain, the land naturally good and well watered; and it has been industriously improved by the communists. It lies four miles from Oneida on the New York Central Railroad, and the Midland Railroad passes through it. The dwelling-house, a large brick building with some architectural pretensions, but no artistic merit, stands on the middle of a pleasant lawn, near the main road. It has some extensions in the rear, the chief of which is a large wing containing the kitchen and dining-room. The interior of the house is well arranged; the whole is warmed by steam; and there are baths and other conveniences. There is on the second floor a large hall, used for the evening gatherings of the community, and furnished with a stage for musical and dramatic performances, and with a number of round tables, about which they gather in their meetings. On the ground floor is a parlor for visitors; and a library-room, containing files of newspapers, and a miscellaneous library of about four thousand volumes.

There are two large family rooms, one on each story, around which a considerable number of sleeping-chambers are built; and the upper of these large rooms has two ranges of such dormitories, one above the other, the upper range being reached by a gallery.

All the rooms are plainly furnished, there being neither any attempt at costly or elegant furnishing, nor a striving for Shaker plainness.

Above the dining-room is the printing-office, where the *Circular* is printed, and some job printing is done.

Opposite the dwelling, and across the road, are offices, a school-building, a lecture-room with a chemical laboratory, and a room for the use of the daguerreotypist of the community; farther on to the right is a large carpenter's shop, and to the left are barns, stables, the silk-dye house, and a small factory where the children of the community at odd hours make boxes for the spool silk produced here. There is also a large and conveniently arranged laundry.

Somewhat over a mile from the home place are the factories of the community—consisting of trap works, silk works, a forge, and machine shops. These are thoroughly fitted with labor-saving machinery, and are extensive enough to produce three hundred thousand traps, and the value of over two hundred thousand dollars' worth of silk-twist in a year. Near these workshops is a dwelling inhabited by thirty or forty of the communists, who are particularly employed in the shops. The farm has been put in excellent order: there are extensive orchards of large and small fruits; and plantations of ornamental trees shelter the lawn about the dwelling. This lawn is in summer a favorite resort for picnic parties from a distance. As Sunday-school picnics are also brought hither, I judge that the hostility which once existed in the neighborhood to the Oneida Communists has disappeared. Indeed, at Oneida all with whom I had occasion to speak concerning the communists praised them for honesty, fair dealing, a peaceable disposition, and great business capacity.

Their system of administration is perfect and thorough. Their book-keeping—in which women are engaged as well as men, a young woman being the chief—is so systematized that

they are able to know the profit or loss upon every branch of industry they pursue, as well as the cost of each part of their living.

They have twenty-one standing committees: on finance; amusements; patent-rights; location of tenant houses; arbitration; rents; baths, walks, roads, and lawns; fire; heating; sanitary; education; clothing; real estate and tenant houses; water-works and their supplies; painting; forest; water and steam power; photographs; hair-cutting; arcade; and Joppa—the last being an isolated spot on Oneida Lake, to which they go to bathe, fish, shoot, and otherwise ruralize.

Besides these, they divide the duties of administration among forty-eight departments: *Circular*; publication; silk manufacture; hardware; fruit-preserving; paper-box; printing; dyeing; carpentry; business office; shoe shop; library; photographs; educational; science and art; laundry; furniture; legal; subsistence; Wallingford printing; agriculture; horticulture; medical; incidentals; dentistry; real estate; musical; amusements; quarry; housekeeping; repairs; traveling; watches; clocks; tin shop; portorage; lights; livery; clothing; stationery; floral; water-works; children's; landscape; forests; heating; bedding; coal.

At first view these many committees and departments may appear cumbrous; but in practice they work well.

Every Sunday morning a meeting is held of what is called a "Business Board." This consists of the heads of all the departments, and of whoever, of the whole community, chooses to attend. At this meeting the business of the past week is discussed; and a secretary notes down briefly any action deemed advisable. At the Sunday-evening meeting the secretary's report is read to all, and thereupon discussed; and whatever receives general or unanimous approval is carried out.

Once a year, in the spring, there is a special meeting of the Business Board, at which the work of the year is laid out in some detail.

At the beginning of the year an inventory is taken of all the possessions of the community.

Once a month the heads of the departments send in their accounts to the book-keepers, and these are then posted in the ledgers.

It is a principle with them to attempt nothing without the general consent of all the people; and if there is objection made, the matter proposed is put off for further discussion. Shortly after New-Year, the Finance Committee sits and receives estimates. This means that each department sends in an estimate of the money it will require for the coming year. At the same time anyone who has a project in his head may propose it, with an estimate of its cost. Thereupon the Finance Committee makes the necessary appropriations, revising the estimates in accordance with the general total which the society can afford to spend for the year. At or before this meeting the returns for the past year have been scrutinized.

All appointments on committees are made for a year; but there is a committee composed of men and women whose duty it is to appoint different persons to their work; and these may change the employments at any time. In practice, the foremen of the manufacturing establishments are not frequently changed. In appointing the labor of the members, their tastes as well as abilities are consulted, and the aim is to make each one contented.

The appointment of so many committees makes some one responsible for each department, and when any thing is needed, or any fault is to be found, the requisition can be directed to a particular person. Women, equally with men, serve on the committees.

They rise in the morning between five and half-past seven; this depending somewhat upon the business each is engaged in. The children sleep as long as they like. Breakfast is from eight to nine, and dinner from three to four; and they

retire from half-past eight to half-past ten. The members do not now work very hard, as will appear from these hours; but they are steadily industrious; and as most of them superintend some department, and all of them work cheerfully, the necessary amount of labor is accomplished. Mere drudgery they nowadays put upon their hired people.

A square board, placed in a gallery near the library, tells at a glance where every body is. It contains the names of the men and women at the side, and the places where they can be found at the head; and a peg, which each one sticks in opposite his name, tells his whereabouts for the day. There is no bell or other signal for proceeding to work ; but each one is expected to attend faithfully to that which is given him or her to do; and here, as in other communities, no difficulty is found about idlers. Those who have disagreeable tasks are more frequently changed than others. Thus the women who superintend in the kitchen usually serve but a month, but sometimes two months at a time.

Children are left to the care of their mothers until they are weaned; then they are put into a general nursery: under the care of special nurses or care-takers, who are both men and women. There are two of these nurseries, one for the smaller children, the other for those above three or four years of age, and able somewhat to help themselves. These eat at the same time with the older people, and are seated at tables by themselves in the general dining-room. The children I saw were plump, and looked sound; but they seemed to me a little subdued and desolate, as though they missed the exclusive love and care of a father and mother. This, however, may have been only fancy; though I should grieve to see in the eyes of my own little ones an expression which I thought I saw in the Oneida children, difficult to describe—perhaps I might say a lack of buoyancy, or confidence and gladness. A man or woman may not find it disagreeable to be part of a great

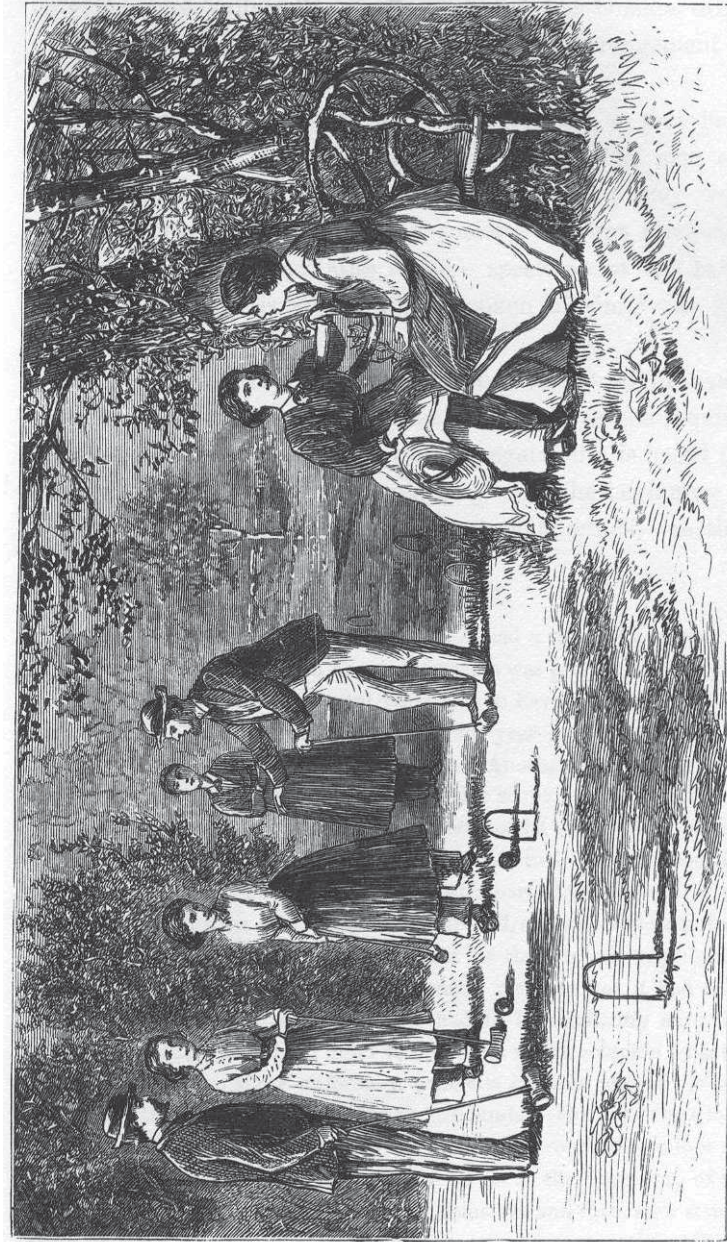
machine, but I suspect it is harder for a little child. However, I will not insist on this, for I may have been mistaken. I have seen, with similar misgivings, a lot of little chickens raised in an egg-hatching machine, and having a blanket for shelter instead of the wing of a mother: I thought they missed the cluck and the vigilant if sometimes severe care of the old hen. But after all they grew up to be hearty chickens, as zealous and greedy, and in the end as useful as their more particularly nurtured fellows.

In the dining-hall I noticed an ingenious contrivance to save trouble to those who wait on the table. The tables are round, and accommodate ten or twelve people each. There is a stationary rim, having space for the plates, cups, and saucers; and within this is a revolving disk, on which the food is placed, and by turning this about each can help himself.

They do not eat much meat, having it served not more than twice a week. Fruits and vegetables make up the greater part of their diet. They use tea, and coffee mixed with malt, which makes an excellent beverage. They use no tobacco, nor spirituous liquors.

The older people have separate sleeping-chambers; the younger usually room two together.

The men dress as people in the world do, but plainly, each one following his own fancy. The women wear a dress consisting of a bodice, loose trousers, and a short skirt falling to just above the knee. Their hair is cut just below the ears, and I noticed that the younger women usually gave it a curl. The dress is no doubt extremely convenient: it admits of walking in mud or snow, and allows freedom of exercise; and it is entirely modest. But it was to my unaccustomed eyes totally and fatally lacking in grace and beauty. The present dress of women, prescribed by fashion, and particularly the abominable false hair and the preposterously



COSTUMES AT ONEIDA.

ugly hats, are sufficiently barbarous; but the Oneida dress, which is so scant that it forbids any graceful arrangement of drapery, seemed to me no improvement.

As they have no sermons nor public prayers, so they have no peculiar mode of addressing each other. The men are called Mr., and the women Miss, except when they were married before they entered the society. It was somewhat startling to me to hear Miss —— speak about her baby. Even the founder is addressed or spoken of simply as Mr. Noyes.

At the end of every year each person gives into the Finance Board a detailed statement of what clothing he or she requires for the coming year, and upon the aggregate sum is based the estimate for the next year for clothing. At the beginning of 1874, the women proposed a different plan, which was thus described in the Circular :

“In our last woman’s meeting, Mrs. C—— had a report to present for discussion and acceptance. A change of system was proposed. The plan that had been pursued for several years was to have a certain sum appropriated for clothing in the beginning of the year—so much for men, so much for women, and so much for children. Another sum was set apart for ‘incidentals,’ a word of very comprehensive scope. A woman of good judgment and great patience was appointed to the office of keeper and distributor of goods, and another of like qualifications was associated with a man of experience in doing the greater part of the buying. Each woman made out a list of the articles she needed, and selected them from the goods we had on hand, or sent or went for them to our neighboring merchants. This plan worked well in many respects, but it had some disadvantages. The women in charge had to be constantly adjusting and deciding little matters in order to make the wants coincide with the appropriated sum. Many unforeseen demands came in, and at the end of the year they inevitably exceeded their bounds. This year the Clothing Committee, in consultation with the financiers, proposed to adopt another plan. It was this: To appropriate a sum in the beginning of the year large enough to cover all reasonable demands, and then, after setting aside special funds for children’s clothing, traveling wardrobes, infants’

wardrobes and incidentals, to divide the remainder into as many equal portions as there were women in the family. Each woman then assumes for herself the responsibility of making the two ends meet at the close of the year. It was thought it would be a great advantage to each woman, and particularly to every young girl, to know what her clothing, from her hat to her shoes, costs. She would learn economy and foresight, and feel a new interest in the question of cost and payment. The plan, too, allows of great variations in the way of making presents and helping one another when there is a surplus, or, when there is no need, leaving it untouched in the treasury. After due explanations and discussions, the women voted unanimously to try the new plan."

It may interest some readers to know that the sum thus set aside for each woman's dress during the year, including shoes and hats, was thirty-three dollars. A member writes in explanation :

"Minus the superfluities and waste of fashion, we find thirty-three dollars a year plenty enough to keep us in good dresses, two or three for each season, summer, winter, fall, and spring (the fabrics are not velvets and satins, of course—they are flannels and merinos, the lighter kinds of worsted, various kinds of prints, and Japanese silk) ; to fill our drawers with the best of under-linen, to furnish us with hoods and sun-bonnets, beaver and broadcloth sacks, and a variety of shawls and shoulder-gear, lighter and pleasanter to wear, if not so ingrained with the degradation of toil as the costly Cashmere."

When a man needs a suit of clothes, he goes to the tailor and is measured, choosing at the same time the stuff and the style or cut.

There is a person called familiarly "Incidentals." To him is intrusted a fund for incidental and unforeseen expenses; and when a young woman wants a breast-pin—the only ornament worn—she applies to "Incidentals." When anyone needs a watch, he makes his need known to the committee on watches.

For the children they have a sufficiently good school, in which the Bible takes a prominent part as a text-book. The

young people are encouraged to continue their studies, and they have two or three classes in history, one in grammar, and several in French, Latin, geology, etc. These study and recite at odd times; and it is their policy not to permit the young men and women to labor too constantly. The Educational Committee superintends the evening classes.

They also cultivate vocal and instrumental music; and have several times sent one or two of their young women to New York to receive special musical instruction. Also for some years they have kept several of their young men in the Yale scientific school, and in other departments of that university. Thus they have educated two of their members to be physicians; two in the law; one in mechanical engineering; one in architecture; and others in other pursuits. Usually these have been young men from twenty-two to twenty-five years of age, who had prepared themselves practically beforehand.

It is their habit to change their young people from one employment to another, and thus make each master of several trades. The young women are not excluded from this variety; and they have now several girls learning the machinists' trade, in a building appropriated to this purpose; and their instructor told me they were especially valuable for the finer and more delicate kinds of lathe-work. A young man whom they sent to the Sheffield scientific school to study mechanical engineering had been for a year or two in the machine shop before he went to Yale; he is now at the head of the silk works. Their student in architecture had in the same way prepared himself in their carpenter's shop.

No one who visits a communitistic society which has been for some time in existence can fail to be struck with the amount of ingenuity, inventive skill, and business talent developed among men from whom, in the outer world, one would not expect such qualities. This is true, too, of the Oneida

Communists. They contrived all the machinery they use for making traps—one very ingenious piece making the links for the chains. They had no sooner begun to work in silk than they invented a little toy which measures the silk thread as it is wound on spools, and accurately gauges the number of yards; and another which tests the strength of silk; and these have come into such general use that they already make them for sale.

So, too, when they determined to begin the silk manufacture, they sent one of their young men and two women to work as hands in a well-managed factory. In six months these returned, having sufficiently mastered the business to undertake the employment and instruction of hired operatives. Of the machinery they use, they bought one set and made all the remainder upon its pattern, in their own foundry and shops. A young man who had studied chemistry was sent out to a dye-house, and in a few months made himself a competent dyer. In all this complicated enterprise they made so few mistakes that in six months after they began to produce silk-twist their factory had a secure reputation in the market.

It is their custom to employ their people, where they have responsible places, in couples. Thus there are two house stewards, two foremen in a factory, etc.; both having equal knowledge, and one always ready to take the other's place if he finds the work wearing upon him.

They seemed to me to have an almost fanatical horror of forms. Thus they change their avocations frequently; they remove from Oneida to Willow Place, or to Wallingford, on slight excuses; they change the order of their evening meetings and amusements with much care; and have changed even their meal hours. One said to me, "We used to eat three meals a day—now we eat but two; but we may be eating five six months from now."

Very few of their young people have left them; and some

who have gone out have sought to return. They have expelled but one person since the community was organized. While they received members, they exacted no probationary period, but used great care before admission. Mr. Noyes said on this subject:

"There has been a very great amount of discrimination and vigilance exercised by the Oneida Community from first to last in regard to our fellowships, and yet it seems to me it is one of the greatest miracles that this community has succeeded as it has. Notwithstanding our discrimination and determination to wait on God in regard to those we receive, we scarcely have been saved."

New members sign a paper containing the creed, and also an agreement to claim no wages or other reward for their labor while in the community.

III.—SUNDAY AT THE ONEIDA COMMUNITY, WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF "CRITICISM."

I was permitted to spend several days at the Oneida Community, among which was a Sunday.

The people are kind, polite to each other and to strangers, cheerful, and industrious. There is no confusion, and for so large a number very little noise. Where two hundred people live together in one house, order, system, and punctuality are necessary; and loud voices would soon become a nuisance.

I was shown the house, the kitchen and heating arrangements, the barns with their fine stock, the various manufacturing operations; and in the evening was taken to their daily gathering, at which instrumental music, singing, and conversation engage them for an hour, after which they disperse to the private parlors to amuse themselves with dominoes or dancing,

or to the library to read or write letters. Cards are prohibited. The questions I asked were freely answered; and all the people in one way or another came under my eye.

Some of them have the hard features of toil-worn New England farmers; others look like the average business-men of our country towns or inland cities; others are students, and there are a number of college-bred men in the community. A fine collection of birds in a cabinet, skillfully stuffed and mounted, showed me that there is in the society a lively love of natural history. The collection is, I should think, almost complete for the birds of the region about Oneida.

The people seem contented, and pleased with their success, as well they may be, for it is remarkable. They use good language, and the standard of education among them is considerably above the average. No doubt the training they get in their evening discussions, and in the habit of writing for a paper whose English is pretty carefully watched, has benefited them. They struck me as matter-of-fact, with no nonsense or romance about them, by no means overworked, and with a certain, perhaps for their place in life high average of culture. I should say that the women are inferior to the men: examining the faces at an evening meeting, this was the impression I carried away.

If I should add that the predominant impression made upon me was that it was a common-place company, I might give offense; but, after all, what else but this could be the expression of people whose lives are removed from need, and narrowly bounded by their community; whose religious theory calls for no internal struggles, and, once within the community, very little self-denial; who are well-fed and sufficiently amused, and not overworked, and have no future to fear? The greater passions are not stirred in such a life. If these are once thoroughly awakened, the individual leaves the community.

On Sunday the first work is to sort and send away to the

laundry the soiled clothing of the week. After this comes the regular weekly meeting of the Business Board; and thereafter meetings for criticism, conducted in rooms apart.

The institution of Criticism, a description of which I have reserved for this place, is a most important and ingenious device, which Noyes and his followers rightly regard as the corner-stone of their practical community life. It is in fact their main instrument of government; and it is useful as a means of eliminating uncongenial elements, and also to train those who remain into harmony with the general system and order.

I am told that it was first used by Mr. Noyes while he was a divinity student at Andover, where certain members of his class were accustomed to meet together to criticise each other. The person to suffer criticism sits in silence, while the rest of the company, each in turn, tell him his faults, with, I judge, an astonishing and often exasperating plainness of speech. Here is the account given by Mr. Noyes himself:

“The measures relied upon for good government in these community families are, first, *daily evening meetings*, which all are expected to attend. In these meetings, religious, social, and business matters are freely discussed, and opportunity given for exhortation and reproof: Secondly, *the system of mutual criticism*. This system takes the place of backbiting in ordinary society, and is regarded as one of the greatest means of improvement and fellowship. All of the members are accustomed to voluntarily invite the benefit of this ordinance from time to time. Sometimes persons are criticised by the entire family; at other times by a committee of six, eight, twelve, or more, selected by themselves from among those best acquainted with them, and best able to do justice to their character. In these criticisms the most perfect sincerity is expected; and in practical experience it is found best for the subject to receive his criticism without replying. There is little danger that the general verdict in respect to his character will be unjust. This ordinance is far from agreeable to those whose egotism and vanity are stronger than their love of truth. It is an ordeal which reveals insincerity and selfishness; but it also often takes the form of commendation, and reveals hidden virtues as well as secret faults. It is always acceptable to those who wish to see themselves as others see them.

“These two agencies—daily evening meetings and criticism—are found quite adequate to the maintenance of good order and government in the communities. Those who join the communities understanding their principles, and afterward prove refractory and inharmonic, and also those who come into the communities in childhood, and afterward develop characters antagonistic to the general spirit, and refuse to yield to the governmental agencies mentioned, either voluntarily withdraw or are expelled. Only one case of expulsion is, however, recorded.”

They depend upon criticism to cure whatever they regard as faults in the character of a member; for instance, idleness, disorderly habits, impoliteness, selfishness, a love of novel-reading, “selfish love,” conceit, pride, stubbornness, a grumbling spirit—for every vice, petty or great, criticism is held to be a remedy. They have even a “criticism-cure,” and hold that this is almost as effective as their “prayer-cure.”

On Sunday afternoon, by the kindness of a young man who had offered himself for criticism, I was permitted to be present. Fifteen persons besides myself, about half women, and about half young people under thirty, were seated in a room, mostly on benches placed against the wall. Among them was Mr. Noyes himself, who sat in a large rocking-chair. The young man to be criticised, whom I will call Charles, sat inconspicuously in the midst of the company. When the doors were closed, he was asked by the leader (not Mr. Noyes) whether he desired to say any thing. Retaining his seat, he said that he had suffered for some time past from certain intellectual difficulties and doubts—a leaning especially toward positivism, and lack of faith; being drawn away from God; a tendency to think religion of small moment. But that he was combating the evil spirit within him, and hoped he had gained somewhat; and so on.

Hereupon a man being called on to speak, remarked that he thought Charles had been somewhat hardened by too great good-fortune; that his success in certain enterprises had somewhat spoiled him; if he had not succeeded so well, he would

have been a better man; that he was somewhat wise in his own esteem; not given to consult with others, or to seek or take advice. One or two other men agreed generally with the previous remarks, had noticed these faults in Charles, and that they made him disagreeable; and gave examples to show his faults. Another concurred in the general testimony, but added that he thought Charles had lately made efforts to correct some of his faults, though there was still much room for improvement.

A young woman next remarked that Charles was haughty and supercilious, and thought himself better than others with whom he was brought into contact; that he was needlessly curt sometimes to those with whom he had to speak.

Another young woman added that Charles was a respecter of persons; that he showed his liking for certain individuals too plainly by calling them pet names before people; that he seemed to forget that such things were disagreeable and wrong.

Another woman said that Charles was often careless in his language; sometimes used slang words, and was apt to give a bad impression to strangers. Also that he did not always conduct himself at table, especially before visitors, with careful politeness and good manners.

A man concurred in this, and remarked that he had heard Charles condemn the beefsteak on a certain occasion as tough; and had made other unnecessary remarks about the food on the table while he was eating.

A woman remarked that she had on several occasions found Charles a respecter of persons.

Another said that Charles, though industrious and faithful in all temporalities, and a very able man, was not religious at all.

A man remarked that Charles was, as others had said, somewhat spoiled by his own success, but that it was a mistake for him to be so, for he was certain that Charles’s success came

mainly from the wisdom and care with which the society had surrounded him with good advisers, who had guided him; and that Charles ought therefore to be humble, instead of proud and haughty, as one who ought to look outside of himself for the real sources of his success.

Finally, two or three remarked that he had been in a certain transaction insincere toward another young man, saying one thing to his face and another to others; and in this one or two women concurred.

Amid all this very plain speaking, which I have considerably condensed, giving only the general charges, Charles sat speechless, looking before him; but as the accusations multiplied, his face grew paler, and drops of perspiration began to stand on his forehead. The remarks I have reported took up about half an hour; and now, each one in the circle having spoken, Mr. Noyes summed up.

He said that Charles had some serious faults; that he had watched him with some care; and that he thought the young man was earnestly trying to cure himself. He spoke in general praise of his ability, his good character, and of certain temptations he had resisted in the course of his life. He thought he saw signs that Charles was making a real and earnest attempt to conquer his faults; and as one evidence of this he remarked that Charles had lately come to him to consult him upon a difficult case in which he had had a severe struggle, but had in the end succeeded in doing right. "In the course of what we call stirpiculture," said Noyes, "Charles, as you know, is in the situation of one who is by and by to become a father. Under these circumstances, he has fallen under the too common temptation of selfish love, and a desire to wait upon and cultivate an exclusive intimacy with the woman who was to bear a child through him. This is an insidious temptation, very apt to attack people under such circumstances; but it must nevertheless be struggled against." Charles, he went

on to say, had come to him for advice in this case, and he (Noyes) had at first refused to tell him any thing, but had asked him what he thought he ought to do; that after some conversation, Charles had determined, and he agreed with him, that he ought to isolate himself entirely from the woman, and let another man take his place at her side; and this Charles had accordingly done, with a most praiseworthy spirit of self-sacrifice. Charles had indeed still further taken up his cross, as he had noticed with pleasure, by going to sleep with the smaller children, to take charge of them during the night. Taking all this in view, he thought Charles was in a fair way to become a better man, and had manifested a sincere desire to improve, and to rid himself of all selfish faults.

Thereupon the meeting was dismissed.

All that I have recited was said by practiced tongues. The people knew very well how to express themselves. There was no vagueness, no uncertainty. Every point was made; every sentence was a hit—a stab I was going to say, but as the sufferer was a volunteer, I suppose this would be too strong a word. I could see, however, that while Charles might be benefited by the "criticism," those who spoke of him would perhaps also be the better for their speech; for if there had been bitterness in any of their hearts before, this was likely to be dissipated by the free utterance. Concerning the closing remarks of Noyes, which disclose so strange and horrible a view of morals and duty, I need say nothing.

Here are a few specimens of criticisms which have been printed in the *Circular*. The first concerns a young woman:

"What God has done for U. is wonderful; her natural gifts and attractions are uncommon; but she has added very little to them. She is spoiling them by indolence and vanity. The gifts we have by nature do not belong to us. We shall have to give account for them to God as his property. All that we can expect any reward for is what we add to that which he gives us."

The next seems to point at troubles of a kind to which the community is, I suppose, more or less subject :

“I wish I could entirely change public opinion among us in regard to the matter of keeping secrets. The fact that a person is of such a character that others associated with him are afraid that he will finally expose their wrong-doing is the highest credit to him. I would earnestly exhort all lovers of every degree, young and old, and especially the young, to consider the absolute impossibility of permanently keeping secrets. It is not for us to say whether we will keep other folks’ secrets or not. It is for God to say. We are in his hands, and he will make us tell the truth even though we say we won’t. He has certainly made it his programme and eternal purpose that every secret thing shall come to light. What is done in darkness shall be published on the house-top. This is sure to come, because it is God’s policy, and it is vain for us to seek to evade and thwart it. Two persons get together with shameful secrets, and promise and protest and pledge themselves never to turn on each other. What is the use ? It is not for them to say what they will do. They *will* finally turn on one another. It is a mercy to them that they must. The best thing to be said of them is that they are likely to turn on one another and betray their secrets. They will, if there is any honesty or true purpose in them. This keeping secrets that are dishonest, profane, and infernal, and regarding them as sacred, is all wrong. It is the rule of friendship and honor in the world, but to let the daylight in on every thing is the rule for those who want to please God.”

What follows relates to a man who was cast down because of criticism, and whose fault Noyes says is excessive sensitiveness:

“Excessive sensitiveness is a great fault. Everyone should strive to get where he can judge himself, look at himself truthfully by the grace of God, and cultivate what may be called the superior consciousness, looking at his own fault as he would at another person’s, and feeling no more pain in dissecting his own character than he would that of anyone else. This superior consciousness takes us into fellowship with God and his judgment; and in that condition it is possible to rejoice in pulling to pieces our own works. Paul says: ‘Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man’s work shall be made manifest—for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work, of what sort

it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.’ There is a great amount of poor building upon that good foundation; a great number of structures that are wood, hay, and stubble, and which in the day of fire will be burned up. The main point to be gained by those who have thus built is to get into such sympathy with God that they can stand by when the day of fire comes, and help on the destruction—poke the wood, hay, and stubble into the flame, rejoicing that they have a good foundation, and are to be saved not only from the fire, but by the fire.”

Finally, they use criticism as a remedy for diseases. I take this example from the Circular for *June 4, 1853* :

“S. P., having a bad cold and symptoms of a run of fever, tried the criticism-cure, and was immediately relieved. She was on the bed in a state of pain and restlessness, when a friend mentioned to her the above remedy as having been successfully applied in similar cases. Having some faith in it, she arose immediately and made her wishes known to the family physician, that is, to the *family*, who kindly administered the remedy without delay. The operation was not particularly agreeable—there is no method of cure that is; but it was short and speedily efficacious. One secret of its efficacy is, it stops the flow of thought toward the seat of difficulty, and so tends directly to reduce inflammation. At the same time it has a very bracing, invigorating effect. In the present case, it went right to the cause of the disease, which was discovered to be a spirit of fear, throwing open the pores and predisposing the subject to the attack. S. P. had been brought up in a bad habit in this respect, expecting with every exposure to take cold—and then expecting to have it go on to a serious cough, and so on—fear realizing itself. Criticism stopped this false action, and not only made her well in the first instance, but by breaking up this fear it has given her comparative security against future attacks. It requires some fortitude and self-denial in the patient, when he thinks he needs sympathy and nursing, to take criticism instead; but it is well known that to rouse the will to strong exertion is more than half a cure. The criticism remedy professes to be universal, and is recommended for trial to all the afflicted.”

The *Circular* for December, 1863, reports :

“It is a common custom here for every one who may be attacked with any disorder to apply this remedy by sending for a committee of six or

eight persons, in whose faith and spiritual judgment he has confidence, to come and criticise him. The result, when administered sincerely, is almost universally to throw the patient into a sweat, or to bring on a reaction of his life against disease, breaking it up, and restoring him soon to usual health. We have seen this result produced without any other agency except the use of ice, in perhaps twenty cases of sore throat within a few weeks. We have seen it take effect at an advanced stage of chronic disease, and raise a person up apparently from death's door. It seems a somewhat heroic method of treatment when a person is suffering in body to apply a castigation to the character through the spiritual or moral part; but this is precisely the thing needed to cleanse and purify the system from disease. We have tried it, and found it to be invaluable. To all who have faith in Christ as a physician we can commend this prescription as a medium for conveying his healing life. If you are sick, seek for some one to tell you your faults, to find out your weakest spot in character or conduct; let them put their finger on the very sore that you would best like to keep hid. Depend upon it, there is the avenue through which disease gets access to you. And if the sincerity which points this out and opens it to the light hurts, and is mortifying for the time being, it is only a sign that the remedy is applied at the right place and is taking effect."

In a recent number of the *Circular* (1874) a "criticism of a sick man" is reported in full. It is too long to give here; but I quote a few of the remarks, to show the style of attack in such cases. The report opens with this statement:

"[L. has been quite prostrate for months with some kind of spinal affection, complicated with chills and fever. In presenting himself for criticism, he was invited, as the subject generally is, to open his own case. He said he was under a spirit of depression and discouragement, particularly about his health. He thought he should be better off if he did not know so much about his disease. Dr. Pope had pronounced it incurable.]"

W. said :

"I think that L. is troubled with false imaginations, and that he has inherited this tendency. His father was subject to the hypo—always a prey to imaginations. I question whether the root of L.'s whole difficulty does not lie in his imagination. I don't doubt but that he feels what he

thinks he does, but imagination has terrible power to make us feel. Christ can cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God."

J. said:

"He talks a great deal about his symptoms. If he would talk on the side of faith, I think he would be a well man right off. He is as well as any body when he *is* well, and there is no reason why he should not be well all the time. He is a very valuable member of the community, and I don't like to see him lie on his back so much.

"M.—I have thought that his knowledge of physiology, as he uses it, is really a hinderance to him: he knows too much about his case.

"C.—I thought I had the heart disease when I was about nineteen years of age. My heart would beat so when I went up stairs that I had to sit down at the top. I remember that I said to my aunt one day I was sure that I had got that disease, because my heart had such times of beating. 'O la !' she answered, 'I guess you would not live long if it did not beat.'

"N. [probably Mr. Noyes]—I have good reason to believe that a great many diseases which doctors pronounce incurable are so so far as their powers are concerned, and yet can be cured by exorcism. Doctors do not believe in possession by the devil, and of course have no means of curing diseases of that nature. They accordingly pronounce some diseases incurable. Yet these diseases are not incurable by persons who understand the nature of them, and that they are spiritual obsessions. I do not care what the doctors say about L.'s back. It is very likely incurable so far as they know, and yet it may be very easily curable to any body who knows about the doctrine of the possession of the devil. There is a range of science beyond the routine of the doctors which we must take into the account in all this dealing with disease. Just look at the case of Harriet Hall, and see what incurable diseases she had. Two doctors certified that she ought to be dead twenty years ago, and here she is alive and waiting on her father. Those doctors are dead, and she is trotting around.

"E.—I have been associated a good deal with L. in business and now in this sickness. I have studied his case some. His attitude toward disease is very much like his attitude in business. When he has been well and able to do his best, he has been in the past an autocrat in our businesses. If he said a thing would not go, or would go, his dictum was always accepted. He has a good deal of pride in having what he predicts turn out to be true. I have sometimes thought that he was willing to

have things break down in order to demonstrate his infallibility as an oracle. He shows the same trait in regard to disease. If he has a symptom, and makes up his mind that he is going to have a certain disease, he notifies his friends of it, and seems bound to have his prophecy come true any way.

“N.—He would rather have a good chill, I suppose, than have his prediction prove false.

“E.—I think he really knows but very little about his case. He lost his health, and took up the study of medicine to find out what ailed him. It may seem paradoxical, but I think that he is suffering for want of work; his brain is suffering for want of some healthy action. If he would use his brain about something for only half an hour a day, he would find himself improving right along.

“A.—I remember L. had the reputation of being an ingenious boy; but he used to seem old even then—he had the rheumatism or some such complaint. In thinking about him, it seems to me that the instinct of his life is to find a soft place in the world: he is hunting up cushions and soft things to surround himself with. His bent is rather scientific than religious. A man that is an oracle surrounds himself with something soft in having people defer to him. I must say I think he is too oracular about disease, considering the amount of study he has given to the science of medicine. He went into the study of medicine in a sort of self-coddling way, to find out what the matter was with himself. I have realized that it is not good for a man in this world to hunt for a soft spot.”

And so on. Mr. Noyes closed the session with this remark :

“N.—Christ’s words, ‘Because I live ye shall live also,’ may be thrust in the face of all incurable diseases. There is no answer to that. No incurable disease can stand against it.”

I do not know whether L. recovered or not.

On Sunday evening, about half-past six o’clock, there was a gathering in the large hall to hear some pieces of music from the orchestra. After half an hour’s intermission, the people again assembled, this time for a longer session. A considerable number of round tables were scattered about the large hall; on these were lamps; and around them sat most of the women, old and young, with sewing or knitting, with which they busied

themselves during the meeting. Others sat on benches and chairs, irregularly ranged about,

After the singing of a hymn, a man rose and read the report of the business meeting held that morning, the appointment of some committees, and so on; and this was then put to vote and accepted, having elicited no discussion, and very little interest apparently. Next a man, who sat near Mr. Noyes in the middle of the room, read some extracts from newspapers, which had been marked and sent in to him by different members for that purpose. Some of these were mere drolleries, and raised laughter. Others concerned practical matters.

To this reading, which was brief, followed a discussion of the power of healing disease by prayer. It was asserted to be “necessary to regard Christ as powerful to-day over diseases of the body as well as of the spirit.” When several had spoken very briefly upon this subject, and the conversation was evidently closed, a considerable number of the people concurred in what had been said by short ejaculations, as “I confess the power of Christ in my heart;” “I confess the power of healing;” “I confess to a tender conscience;” “I confess Christ;” “I confess a love for all good people,” and so on.

Next a hymn was sung relating to community life, which I copy here as a curiosity:

“Let us sing, brothers, sing,
 In the Eden of heart-love—
 Where the fruits of life spring,
 And no death e’er can part love ;
 Where the pure currents flow
 From all gushing hearts together,
 And the wedding of the Lamb
 Is the feast of joy forever,
 Let us sing, brothers, sing,

“We have built us a dome
 On our beautiful plantation,
 And we all have one home,
 And one family relation;

We have battled with the wiles
 Of the dark world of Mammon,
 And returned with its spoils
 To the home of our dear ones.
 Let us sing, brothers, sing.

“When the rude winds of wrath
 Idly rave round our dwelling,
 And the slanderer’s breath
 Like a simoon was swelling,
 Then so merrily we sung,
 As the storm blustered o’er us,
 Till the very heavens rung
 With our hearts’ joyful chorus.
 Let us go, brothers, go.

“So love’s sunshine begun :
 Now the spirit-flowers are blooming,
 And the feeling that we’re one
 All our hearts is perfuming;
 Toward one home we have all
 Set our faces together,
 Where true love doth dwell
 In peace and joy forever.
 Let us sing, brothers, sing.”

This was presently followed by another song peculiar to the Oneida people. A man sang, looking at a woman near him:

“I love you, O my sister,
 But the love of God is better;
 Yes, the love of God is better—
 O the love of God is best.”

To this she replied :

“I love you, O my brother,
 But the love of God is better;
 Yes, the love of God is better—
 O the love of God is best.”

Then came the chorus, in which a number of voices joined :

“Yes, the love of God is better,
 O the love of God is better;
 Hallelujah, Hallelujah—
 Yes, the love of God is best.”

Soon after the meeting broke up; but there was more singing, later, in the private parlors, which I did not attend. Thus ended Sunday at the Oneida Community; and with this picture of their daily life I may conclude my account of these people.



Nordhoff's book contains the following bibliography of works relating to the Oneida and Wallingford Perfectionists:

1. History of American Socialisms. By John Humphrey Noyes. Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1870, pp. 678.
2. Oneida Community Cooking, or a Dinner without Meat. By Harriet H. Skinner. Oneida, N. Y., 1873, pp. 51.
3. Essay on Scientific Propagation. By John Humphrey Noyes, with an Appendix containing a Health Report of the Oneida Community. By Theodore R. Noyes, M.D. Published by the Oneida Community, Oneida, N. Y. (No date—about 1873), pp. 32.
4. Male Continence. By John Humphrey Noyes. Published by the Oneida Community, Office of the *Circular*, Oneida, N. Y., 1872, pp. 24.
5. Hand-book of the Oneida Community, containing a Brief Sketch of its Present Condition, Internal Economy, and Leading Principles. Published by the Oneida Community, N. Y., 1871, pp. 64.
6. Salvation from Sin the End of Christian Faith. By J. H. Noyes. Published by the Oneida Community, Mount Tom Printing-house, Wallingford Community, Conn., 1869, pp. 48.
7. Dixon and his Copyists: A Criticism of the Accounts of the Oneida Community in "New America," "Spiritual Wives," and kindred Publications. By John Humphrey Noyes. Published by the Oneida Community, 1871, pp. 40.
8. Faith Facts; or a Confession of the Kingdom of God and the Age of Miracles. Edited by George Cragin. Oneida Reserve, N. Y., 1850, pp. 40.
9. Favorite Hymns for Community Singing, 1855, pp. 32. (Oneida Communists.)
10. The Way of Holiness ; a Series of Papers published in the *Perfectionist*, New Haven. By J. H. Noyes. Printed by J. H. Noyes & Co., 1838. [The company consisted of himself, his wife, brother, and two sisters.]
11. Paul not Carnal. New Haven, 1834.
12. The Perfectionist. New Haven, 1834.
13. The Way of Holiness. Putney, Vt., 1838.
14. The Witness. Ithaca, N. Y., and Putney, Vt., 1838–43.
15. The Perfectionist. Putney, Vt., 1843–46.
16. The Spiritual Magazine. Oneida, 1848–50.
17. The Free Church Circular. Oneida, 1850–51.
18. The Circular. Oneida, 1854–74.
19. First Annual Report of the Oneida Association. Oneida, 1849.
20. Faith Facts. Oneida, 1850.
21. Second Annual Report of the Oneida Association. Oneida, 1850.
22. Third Annual Report of the Oneida Association. Oneida, 1851.
23. Bible Communism. Brooklyn, 1803.
24. The Trapper's Guide. Wallingford, 1867.