

JOSEPH LANCASTER AND PHILADELPHIA

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THE narrative of Joseph Lancaster's wanderings, after the termination in 1819 of his contract with the controllers of the Philadelphia schools,¹ is a pathetic one. To New England, to Baltimore, to far-off Caracas, to Canada, he traveled, making great plans for the furtherance of education and seeing them disintegrate under his touch. Everywhere it was the same story—the high hopes, the enthusiastic beginning, the emergence of practical difficulties, the growing restiveness, and the inevitable decision to seek "better conditions" elsewhere.

If in the course of this journeying in the Americas there was any place which Joseph Lancaster considered even vaguely as home, it was Philadelphia. Here he had set up his first American residence; here he had had his first, and, as it eventuated, his only opportunity in the United States to employ his teaching system under the conditions which it demanded; here, too, he had made friendships which were to serve him until death intervened. Moreover, his early experiences in Philadelphia struck deep into his consciousness. After his removal from that city, he could not get it out of his mind. For years his letters carried a bitter regret that his efforts there had gone to dust. Twice at least, he returned to the Quaker City; once when he was in abject need of help, and again, near the close of his life, when he settled there for a period of years and carried on what proved to be his last "educational experiment."

When Lancaster found himself, at the close of May, 1819, discharged from the Philadelphia public school system, he must have felt two consoling elements in his situation. One was that his method of instruction was riding on the crest of popularity throughout the country, and would therefore assure its founder of a hearing wherever he chose to speak. The second was that

¹ Cf. Joseph J. McCadden, "Joseph Lancaster and the Philadelphia Schools," *Pennsylvania History*, III (October, 1936), 225-39.

he had enlisted as his friends a few of the most disinterested philanthropists of the city, notably Robert Ralston, the benevolent merchant, and Roberts Vaux, president of the Board of Controllers of the Philadelphia public schools. Vaux, shortly after Lancaster's dismissal, declared his faith in him in these words:

As an Individual, I shall always entertain an ardent and affectionate solicitude for thy welfare, and best interests. *Human praise* cannot add to the *precious reward* which indulgent Heaven has no doubt in store for that Mind, the energies of which are devoted for the promotion of the happiness of mankind. This durable inheritance in view could not but have constituted thy "*morn- ing joy*"; may its blessed assurance be thy "*evening song*."²

Thus, when Lancaster's stock was at its lowest in Philadelphia, Vaux, who had had ample opportunity to know and understand the man, proclaimed himself one of those faithful admirers who, like William Corston of England, never lost their belief in the ultimate nobility of Lancaster's purposes.

The noted educator did not linger long in Philadelphia after his services with the schools there came to an end. Fortified with the assurance of the importance of his mission and with such letters of introduction as he could obtain,³ he headed north on a tour on which he combined lecturing and the search for a new position. But he left his family behind—his young daughter, Elizabeth, his mentally unstable wife, his brother, William, and his former pupil and future son-in-law, Richard M. Jones. To them he sent accounts of his successes, rosy plans for the future, and the financial proceeds of his labors.⁴ His lectures and negotiations took him to Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and back again to Pennsylvania, and thence south to Washington and Baltimore. At length, on February 14 [or 17], 1820, he was able to report to Roberts Vaux the prospect of a new educational enterprise in Baltimore, for which he solicited aid from his Philadelphia friends,

² Lancaster Papers, American Antiquarian Society, transcript of letter, Roberts Vaux to Joseph Lancaster, "Philadelphia 6 mo. 3. 1819."

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, J. Roberts to Abraham Shearman, Jr., "Philadelphia 6 mo. 8. 1819."

⁴ Lancaster Papers, transcripts, Lancaster to daughter Elizabeth, "Boston 7 mo. 14. 1819," "Boston 7 mo. 21. 1819," "Salem 7 mo. 24. 1819," *et al.*; Elizabeth to her father, "Philadelphia 7th mo. 18th 1819."

and to state that he and his family would soon "quit Philadelphia as an habitation for Baltimore."⁵ At the same time, he declared: "I had fondly hoped to have a home and centre of usefulness in the former but had not sufficient hope or encouragement."

After setting up an Institute in Baltimore, Lancaster was still unable to forget the work he might have done in Philadelphia. For example, on June 12, 1820, he wrote to Vaux from his new establishment, giving a glowing picture of its prospects and then turning off into this lament:

More of this would have been seen in Philadelphia—had not the scale been larger—attention divided between two schools—and not only the time consumed—rather wasted on those broom-sticks of teachers but my proceeding and peace broken by the bad spirit of men who were no better than a rope of sand—I am sick when I think of time lost and talents wasted at Philadelphia. . . .

I suggest thy acceptance of the pamphlet accompanying this—and shall be glad of a letter from thee—on any subject but those connected with the board—with whom and their teachers I consider myself with good will—to have done *forever*.⁶

The following year Lancaster continued to address letters to Vaux in the same vein. "Of my treatment in Philadelphia," he wrote on March 5, 1821, "I have few pleasant recollections and those chiefly associated with thyself and a few other friends. Yet I believe if I had seen any encouragement in Philadelphia I should have preferred that city."⁷

However Lancaster might complain about Philadelphia, he apparently realized, even when his work in Baltimore seemed to be succeeding, that his friends in the Quaker City were still needful to him. To Roberts Vaux, whom he described in one of his publications about this time as "a man never tired in well doing, an ornament to his city, and his country,"⁸ he made frequent appeals. He asked Vaux to dispose of some copies of the aforementioned publication for him "among thy friends at the ensuing

⁵ Vaux Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Joseph Lancaster, *The Lancasterian System of Education, with Improvements* (Baltimore, 1821), p. xv.

yearly meeting time," and also to promote the circulation of *The Parent's Friend*, a monthly which he was contemplating.⁹ He outlined to Vaux his plan to build a new school, for which "ten persons should come forward with shares of 250 dollars each," and hinted that any assistance would be gratefully received.¹⁰ Presently we find him enlisting the interest of Vaux in an eager, persistent, and apparently unsuccessful application which he made, to the Philadelphia schools whose supervisors he had so often vilified, in the quest of a position for his prospective son-in-law, Richard M. Jones.¹¹ Yet as late as February 19, 1824, Lancaster, writing to Vaux from Baltimore, continued to deprecate the work of the Philadelphia school boards in this fashion:

I shall be very glad to receive one of your *annual reports*, though I confess my fears that the Philadelphia committees have not put out their brains at compound interest since I had the unhappy lot to consume my time and waste my talent in their service, nor do I believe they ever will do better, while the representative system continues to be misapplied to the election of members of charities and scholastic Institutions.¹²

During 1824 this restless educational experimenter found himself face to face with a new opportunity to spread his ideas. Bolivar, of Venezuela, sought his services in dispelling the ignorance of the masses in that young country. Lancaster's port of departure on this occasion was Philadelphia; but he does not seem to have been in the city long enough to polish up any old acquaintanceships.¹³

The South American venture, begun under the most encouraging auspices, soon struck the rocks. A mutual distrust sprang up between Joseph Lancaster and the authorities of Caracas, with resultant financial disagreements. Again Lancaster turned his thoughts to Philadelphia and to his friends there. On February 25, 1825, he wrote to Vaux from Caracas. His "son and daughter,"

⁹ Vaux Papers, Lancaster to Vaux, April 9, 1821. Vaux, in reply, gave assistance and advice for the disposal of both works.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, June 30, 1821.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, January 17, 22, and 27, 1822; also Lancaster Papers, transcripts, Vaux to Lancaster, "Philadelphia 1 mo. 21. 1822," and John Markoe to Lancaster, "Philadelphia January 23. 1822."

¹² Vaux Papers.

¹³ Lancaster Papers, John Myers to Joseph Lancaster, "Philada. 12 April 1824."

who seem to have accompanied him on this venture, were traveling via Philadelphia to Mexico, where they had been invited to set up a school.¹⁴ They were in straitened circumstances, and Lancaster requested that a subscription be opened to supply them with \$200 or \$300. That both Mr. and Mrs. Roberts Vaux, and also Robert Ralston and his family, extended hospitality to Lancaster's kin at this time is evident from letters sent by Elizabeth Lancaster Jones and her husband to Joseph Lancaster during April, 1825.¹⁵ We cannot say definitely whether any financial assistance was rendered; however, the two young people in question did find the wherewithal to travel to Mexico, where they spent many professionally satisfactory years.

Lancaster himself managed to hold out in Caracas for two years after his daughter left. But in 1827 he and his second wife fled back to the United States. The place in which they sought and found a temporary haven was none other than Philadelphia.

To say that Lancaster was in dire straits at this juncture in his career is to indulge in understatement. Ill, physically frightened, discouraged, and poverty-stricken, he and his wife returned by separate routes to the scene of his first teaching efforts in this country. Of his wife, he says that she "came to Philadelphia, after much ill-usage in Colombia, and was treated like a father and a friend, by that honor to the name of man and Christian, ROBERT RALSTON, Esq., the father of a family of generous hearts"; while he himself had "to take a more circuitous route by St. Thomas, St. Croix, and thence to New-Haven, where again every friend of learning and man, rallied around him, and made him feel that he again breathed the atmosphere of freemen."¹⁶ That Lancaster, on his homeward journey, had intentions of staying in Philadelphia until he found a new foothold in North America is attested by a letter of introduction which Samuel Abbott, Jr., of St. Croix, gave him, addressed to Dr. Robert Abbot, of Philadelphia, and reading, in part:

¹⁴ Vaux Papers. Lancaster evidently referred here to his daughter Elizabeth and her husband, Richard M. Jones.

¹⁵ Lancaster Papers, R. M. Jones to Lancaster, "Filadelfiæ April 5th. 1825," and E. Jones to Lancaster, "Philadelphia April 7th 1825."

¹⁶ Joseph Lancaster, *Epitome of Some of the Chief Events and Transactions in the Life of Joseph Lancaster* (New Haven, 1833), pp. 11-12.

Mr. Lancaster is likely to sojourn some time in Philadelphia, and should it lay in your power to be of any service to him, I beg you will exert your influence to promote Mr. Lancaster's views.¹⁷

Lancaster seems to have remained in and about Philadelphia some six months on this occasion, using the city as a center from which to go forth on lecture tours to the neighboring regions. His old friendship with Roberts Vaux now stood him in good stead. A letter from Vaux to Lancaster, "Mulberry St. 7 mo. 12—1827," shows the veteran president of the board of controllers "lending" him forty dollars, seeking help for him from Harrisburg, and advising him as to suitable locations in which to lecture.¹⁸ Letters from Lancaster to Vaux in the latter half of 1827 show Lancaster soliciting financial help, detailing his hopes and plans, maligning the Hicksites (Vaux was an Orthodox Quaker himself), praising the long-continued generosity of Robert Ralston, acknowledging a previous loan from Vaux, and asking for another one.¹⁹ A hint regarding Lancaster's character, as to the reason why adults found him hard to get along with, may be gleaned from his manner of asking for contributions to his family's support:

Perhaps no act of my life is so painful as being compelled after the services I have rendered to mankind,—to ask favors in this manner. I only hope it will be overruled among the *all* things which work together for good—to contribute to the further reduction of self and the exaltation of the Divine will in and by me.²⁰

The year 1827 was drawing to a close when Joseph Lancaster again found a teaching opportunity—this time in Trenton, New Jersey. Except for some correspondence from Robert C. Gordon and Mathew Carey,²¹ both of whom performed minor friendly services for Lancaster in Philadelphia after he left the city, this study has revealed no connection between the much-tried educator and the Quaker City for about six years after 1827. During that

¹⁷ Lancaster Papers, transcript, "St. Croix, 26th. May 1827."

¹⁸ Lancaster Papers.

¹⁹ Vaux Papers, "Phila. 14th of 7 mo. 1827," "Bristol, 26 of 9th mo. 1827," and "Phila. 2d of 10th mo. 1827."

²⁰ *Ibid.*, "Phila. 2d of 10th mo. 1827."

²¹ Lancaster Papers.

period he was involved in a serious dispute in Trenton; he followed his star to Montreal, where ill-fortune and financial troubles broke up what had started as a promising educational experiment; he journeyed to New Haven, where his former pupil, John E. Lovell, was enjoying a brilliant career as a Lancasterian teacher; he stopped off in New York; and finally he completed the circle by turning his steps again toward Philadelphia.

When Lancaster revisited Philadelphia in 1834, it was a very different place from the city which had given him so respectful a reception sixteen years before. It had expanded in population; it had felt the first clutches of the Industrial Revolution; and it had witnessed the establishment on a rock foundation of numerous charitable and educational institutions. In the early part of 1834 it was preoccupied with Jackson's removal of the bank deposits and the depression and business derangement that followed. The public school system, which in 1818 was in its infancy, was in 1834 a permanent part of the city's activities; and the citizens had been demanding a less economical, more thorough-going and more up-to-date plan of instruction than the Lancasterian for their free schools.²²

Lancaster's friends in Philadelphia had also changed. Robert Ralston had suffered from age and ill-health. Roberts Vaux, faithful to the man whom he had assisted so often and so disinterestedly,²³ had retired from the presidency of the Philadelphia schools in 1831, after fourteen years of effective, constructive service. The United States Bank controversy, in which he sided actively with President Andrew Jackson, was gaining Vaux many enemies, diminishing his prestige and spattering with bitterness his last years. He died in 1836, when not quite fifty years of age.

The most marked change had taken place in Lancaster himself. To one familiar with the egotism, the arrogance, and the assurance of his divine mission, which had characterized Joseph Lancaster during most of his life, his letters from 1834 to 1838 are rather pathetic. He was fifty-six years of age when he returned for his last protracted stay in Philadelphia. His mind was still flowing over with projects for the betterment of the race through educa-

²² The story of the first eighteen years of the Philadelphia public school system is detailed in Joseph J. McCadden, *Education in Pennsylvania, 1801-1835, and its Debt to Roberts Vaux* (Philadelphia, 1937), Chapter III.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-55, 203.

tion; but his spirit was chastened, an alien timidity had crept into his attitude toward others, and he had at last faced the fact that the world does not pour wealth at the feet of those who deem themselves its benefactors.

One cause—or was it a symptom?—of Lancaster's new attitude was his final realization that the Quakers did not and would not consider him one of them. This truth was brought home to him shortly before he started for Philadelphia in 1834. He had ventured to speak in Meeting in New York and had been waited upon the next day by a committee of elders who informed him that, since he was not a member, his appearances in Meetings were "disorderly"; he was enjoined to silence thereafter. Of his feelings on this occasion, he wrote:

I also conceived that disowned persons repentant and sensible of their faults and fully acknowledging them, were—like convinced persons not admitted to membership—under the tender care of friends and elders to watch over for good—and not cut off from the tenderness and loving kindness of friends—to whom they themselves might feel the yearnings and meltings of tender bowels or the flowings of Gospel Love.—But the treatment I have now received amounts to *proscription*, absolute and positive. . . .

I love silent worship in my own apartments—That must be my refuge. But does he who fills my heart with his love require me to put his candle under the bushel. . . .

I have acknowledged most fully every fault I ever committed to the monthly meeting to which I once belonged—not requesting membership but simply that they would accept my love and my society with their disownment. . . . Had I dwelt with the faults of friends in stating truth of them—as I have done in condemning my own—I should have moved the compassion and excited the sympathy of the Christian world. Nor can the manner in which I have been treated for the last 15 years, by many friends in this city meet the approbation of God or man.—I am sorry to write thus to thee because I have had confidence in thy love and good will.²⁴

It was less than a month after this experience with the Friends of New York that Lancaster disclosed to Roberts Vaux his inten-

²⁴Lancaster Papers, autograph letter signed, Joseph Lancaster to William Waring, "New York 31st of 3rd month 1834."

tions of revisiting Philadelphia. He had previously renewed his acquaintance with Vaux by sending him two copies of his *Epitome* and an advance notice of an educational work which he was projecting. Vaux had thereupon shown evidence of continued interest by subscribing for ten copies of the forthcoming book and recommending that the procuring of subscriptions be placed in the hands of some reputable Philadelphia bookseller.²⁵ Lancaster now countered with a long letter in which he indicated that his friends in England were trying to obtain for him a subsidy from Parliament. He asked whether his friend Robert Ralston was "yet living and well"—a question which suggests that he had been completely out of contact with Philadelphia for some time. He mentioned that he would leave New York for Philadelphia in a few weeks, although he seemed to be contemplating rather a brief visit than the protracted stay which destiny had in store for him in that city. Certain parts of this letter deserve to be quoted, as showing Lancaster's plans and his "new" spirit of humility and inquiry:

It may please my friend to know that without desiring membership every Christian step a friend can take to satisfy his friends has been taken in the spirit of candour, love and peace.—

When I come to Philadelphia (perhaps my last visit) I shall be glad of an Introduction to the Librarian's Reading Rooms &c.

And if any Lectures on practical sciences—as Chemistry, Experimental Philosophy—Astronomy and Mechanics &c. are in course of delivery by any of the professors—I shall be much obliged by thy obtaining permission for me to attend—such as may be in my way living far away from seats of sciences as I have done in Columbia and do in Montreal—I know their value and wish to lose no time that I can improve.²⁶

How soon after the writing of this message Lancaster fulfilled his intentions of visiting the Quaker City, we are not prepared to state. But we may definitely place him there in the closing months of 1834. On October 5 of that year, we find him writing to Vaux from Philadelphia.²⁷ He was then conducting an experimental class in the city, and had so completely swallowed his pride

²⁵ *Ibid.*, transcript, Vaux to Lancaster, "Philadelphia, 1 mo. 20—1834."

²⁶ Vaux Papers, Lancaster to Vaux, "N. Y., 24th of 4th month, 1834."

²⁷ *Ibid.*

and resentment as to petition the controllers of the public schools to give him opportunities for further educational experiments. He asked that Vaux obtain for him, for lecture purposes, the use of the court room in the State House, and also urge the controllers to a speedy decision on the proposition he had made to them. On the latter matter, he said :

Whether the Controllers do anything or not—I cannot lose time—but must persevere and improve every moment. I have not been able to see T. Hollingsworth—Geo. M. Justin pleads multiplied engagements and I have called on Thomas Dunlap and missed him or found him engaged till my heart is sick—and I am afraid of intrusion. Did I not feel that I have benefits to confer on any community much greater than I can ask or expect in return I should be quite discouraged, for really teaching in the assiduous cool and soul absorbing manner in which I teach—often leaves me at the close of the day too much worn down, to pursue the active duties of calling on persons and making an interest to add promptitude and sufficient aid to my experiments. . . .

While waiting for the answer of the controllers, Lancaster continued to labor diligently with his little class. His long letters to Vaux during October, 1834, detailing with enthusiasm the progress of his pupils, show him at his best as schoolmaster, and make the biographer wish that Lancaster had held to classroom work instead of trying to remake the world. He was probably not exaggerating when he wrote thus :

Time is the only commodity I can use enough of—School is my element ; the society of children my delight, and therefore I do all [I] do among them in a spirit that makes labour an enjoyment and industry a pleasure.—The souls of the people in the United States are not more absorbed in their political contests than I am in my education interests.²⁸

On October 21, 1834, Lancaster held a public exhibition of his pupils ; and Roberts Vaux, then on grand jury duty, regretted his inability to attend.²⁹

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Lancaster to Vaux, "Phila. 10th of 10th mo. 1834."

²⁹ Lancaster Papers, transcript, Vaux to Lancaster, "Arch St. Philada. 10 mo. 21—1834."

When the controllers finally took action on Lancaster's petition, they adopted the following motion: "Resolved that the Secretary inform Mr. J. Lancaster that it is not deemed expedient by the Controllers to comply with his request."³⁰ Undoubtedly, this long-delayed resolution did not come as a surprise, for it found Lancaster busily engaged in plans for the enlargement of his teaching "experiment," and for various educational publications which he had in mind.³¹ It found him in receipt of permission, through the exertions of the ever-helpful Roberts Vaux, to use the court room for lectures.³² Presently, Lancaster was advertising lectures on his system of education in the Philadelphia press.³³ Various letters transcribed in the Lancaster Papers show that during this time he was also renewing acquaintances with such men as Henry Clay, B. F. Butler of Albany, and James H. McCulloch of Baltimore, and enlisting them as subscribers to his proposed work on education.

Having thus ambitiously begun life anew in Philadelphia, Joseph Lancaster managed to get along in comparative peace and harmony. The "visit" begun in 1834 stretched into a four years' residence in the city, marred, so far as we can learn, by no such serious entanglements as usually enmeshed him wherever he settled. To be sure, his restlessness and his sense of being inadequately appreciated by the community did not permit him to be contented. In 1835 he negotiated for a position in Pottsville and was ready to terminate his activities in Philadelphia on a fortnight's notice.³⁴ Nothing, however, came of this proposition. The Quaker City continued to offer the best prospects; his family came down from Canada to join him; and things seemed to run fairly smoothly.

Lancaster's main interest during much of this time was in the actual business of teaching, at which his abilities showed to the best advantage. His "experiment" grew from a few pupils to a fair-sized class, and he was several times forced to move it to larger or more suitable quarters. He put his heart into his work, invited

³⁰ Minutes of the Board of Control, 1832-1836 (November 11, 1834), p. 119.

³¹ Society Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, autograph letter signed, Lancaster to Thomas Stewardson, "Philadelphia 3d of 11th mo. 1834"; also Vaux Papers, Lancaster to Vaux, "Phila. 10th of 11th mo. 1834."

³² Lancaster Papers, transcript, Vaux to Lancaster, "Philadelphia 11 mo. 7. 1834."

³³ Cf. *National Gazette*, afternoon edition (November 25, 1834), page 2, column 6.

³⁴ Vaux Papers, Lancaster to Vaux, "Phila. 9th of 2d mo. 1835."

his friends and the acquaintances of his friends to visit his classroom and his public exhibitions, and really, if his own accounts are to be credited, accomplished wonders with his pupils, especially in the teaching of reading. In 1837, when his friend Roberts Vaux had been dead for over a year, Lancaster communicated with the son, Richard Vaux, in regard to petitioning the legislature at Harrisburg to help him set up a school for the training of teachers. He wrote, at that time, cheerfully about his prospects:

The School continues the same, that is in a flourishing state—and there is *now* no doubt that if other resources cannot easily be found that it will finally create a sufficient small capital for all purposes of efficient demonstrations within the restricted space of its own walls and the more ample room of parental hearts.³⁵

Lancaster supplemented his income to an undetermined extent during these years by lecturing. In 1835 he made unsuccessful application to the directors of the public schools for the free use of their buildings for his lectures.³⁶ When these gentlemen refused his request, he apparently found other locations. In 1838, he was still lecturing.

Exactly what became of the educational publication for which so many of Lancaster's acquaintances had subscribed and sent advance payment in 1834 and 1835, we cannot state, since no extended work of his seems to have been published after the *Epitome*, which made its appearance in 1833. We do know, however, that he was taking subscriptions as late as December, 1836.³⁷ We also know that he was interested, at the time of his death in 1838, in two dissimilar works which must have had publication as their ultimate purpose. Therefore it was the hand of fate rather than want of good faith which prevented Lancaster from fulfilling the obligations he had incurred in this direction.

One of these two works was his own autobiography. He had begun it in Baltimore in 1822, and had taken it up again in July or

³⁵ Vaux Papers, Lancaster to Richard Vaux, "Phila., 4 of 4th mo., 1837."

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Lancaster to Roberts Vaux, "Haines St., 2nd of 4 mo. 1835."

³⁷ Lancaster Papers, transcript, Mr. Beckett to Lancaster, "Chestnut Street Decr. 5—1836."

August, 1838.³⁸ He was still reading and revising the twenty-six chapters, written years earlier, when he died.

The other work in which Lancaster was engaged at that time was a survey of the schools of Philadelphia and New York. He was making this, it appears, entirely on his own initiative. The only cognizance which the Philadelphia controllers seem to have taken of it was an entry in their Minutes under date of June 12, 1838:

A communication from Joseph Lancaster was received, in which he informs this board that he has visited a number of our Schools, in the different sections, and expressing a wish to visit the Primary Schools and to have a personal interview with the directors of the different sections.

On motion, Resolved that it be respectfully requested of the different boards of Directors to aid him in the prosecution of his wishes as far as they may find it useful and convenient to themselves, to promote the object he has in view.

Resolved that a copy of this resolution be forwarded by our Secretary to Joseph Lancaster.³⁹

Though not vitally helpful in Lancaster's task, this resolution was significant. Time, and Lancaster's own conversion to humility, had dispelled at last the twenty-year-old bitterness which the sternly practical controllers of the Philadelphia public schools felt toward the erratic reformer who had once failed to live up to his contract with them.

Lancaster has left us copious notes of his visits to the educational establishments in the two great cities that had been the first to use his system on this continent.⁴⁰ They show his investigation in Philadelphia to have been an extensive one, covering a period of five months and including First Day or Sunday Schools, a large number of public schools, infant schools, and various educational institutions. His comments are for the most part constructive. In marked contrast to the bitter strictures which he had for years voiced upon the efforts of the Philadelphia controllers, in his let-

³⁸ Lancaster Papers. This information is gleaned from several letters of Joseph Lancaster to his wife, written from New York during 1838 and transcribed in part, with notes and comments, by Joseph Burlingham.

³⁹ Minutes of the Board of Control, 1836-1839, pp. 284-285.

⁴⁰ Lancaster Papers.

ters to Vaux, were the mellow phrases in which he now expressed his delight at the "steady pace" and the "atmosphere of happiness" found in the classrooms.

It was in the autumn of 1838 that Joseph Lancaster transferred his survey to New York. He did not live to complete his work there. On October 25, the Philadelphia press carried an account of a street accident which had occurred in downtown New York three days before. Joseph Lancaster, from Philadelphia, had been struck down by a runaway horse and carriage.⁴¹ On October 26 came the announcement of his death, two days before.⁴² The following day there was a long paean of praise, reprinted from the *New York Star*, which read in part :

Joseph Lancaster was a man of extraordinary comprehension of mind and rare genius. His name will go down to the latest generation, as a benefactor of the human race. For though his genius does not associate itself with any grand mechanic invention, which has augmented the dominion of mind over matter, it will have a wider sweep, because it has struck at the root of all science and art, by devising an entire new and rapidly efficient system of culture for those mental faculties, from which emanate every human power, and every useful object to which mind may be applied. . . .

There were some incidents connected with his private history, in this country and in South America, of an unpleasant nature, and which we would fain forget, or in charity draw a veil over as the fortuitous result of circumstances, or of pecuniary embarrassment and domestic griefs. But whatever they may be, they will, in the long and bright renown which his fame is destined to enjoy, be but as spots on the sun of his memory.⁴³

This prophecy has not been borne out by the events of history. Lancaster's renown has been but slight, and he has had more notoriety than fame. The arrogance, ungratefulness, and irresponsibility of his childlike nature have been remembered better than his generosity, his idealism, and his genuine desire to improve society by the reformation and the wide extension of educational facilities.

⁴¹ *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), October 25, 1838, page 3, column 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, October 26, 1838, page 3, column 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, October 27, 1838, page 2, column 6.

The British biographer of Joseph Lancaster has said of his death that, although it was premature, it none the less came many years too late for Lancaster's own good.⁴⁴ To this statement, when it is viewed in the light of the recently uncovered documents concerning Lancaster's stay in America, we can subscribe only with reservations. It took Lancaster a long time to find himself in the United States; he made many enemies, and many mistakes. But he did work ceaselessly, in Philadelphia and elsewhere, for the spread and improvement of education by lecturing, by experiments, and through the medium of published propaganda. He did attach to himself and he did win to a faith in the sincerity of his ideals, such noble friends as Robert Ralston and Roberts Vaux of Philadelphia. In the evening of his life, he settled in the Quaker City and there, surrounded by trusting and respectful acquaintances, he entered upon educational tasks which, if death had not intervened, might have restored to his reputation some share of its former luster.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ David Salmon, *Joseph Lancaster* (London, etc., 1904).

⁴⁵ An extended biographical study of Joseph Lancaster is in process by the author of this paper. (*Ed.*)