

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF
DISTINGUISHED MECHANICS: COMPILED
FROM AUTHENTIC SOURCES.
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE
DELAWARE STATE JOURNAL, UNDER THE
SIGNATURE OF "RITTENHOUSE"**

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Biographical Sketches of Distinguished Mechanics: Compiled from Authentic Sources. Originally published in the delaware state journal, under the signature of "Rittenhouse" by John Connell

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JOHN CONNELL

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BY JOHN CONNELL,
A citizen of Delaware.

Peace has her victories, no less renowned than war.

MILTON.

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PORTER & ROCKEL, PRINTERS, DELAWARE STATE JOURNAL OFFICE.

1852.

P R E F A C E .

The author of these sketches, had no other object in view, in writing or publishing them, than to hold up to youth, examples of men, who, by industry and integrity, rose from subordinate situations in life, to eminence and distinction,—from poverty to wealth—from obscurity to fame—men, who, with but little or no education, without friends and without funds, became benefactors of mankind. The only individual of distinction *in early life*, in these sketches, is that of Peter the Great, one of the most remarkable men, whose names are recorded in human history—son of a monarch of Russia—born when his country was just emerging from barbarism—a semi-Barbarian himself, but with a natural mechanical genius, he did more to civilize his subjects, and to introduce amongst them, the arts and sciences, than any one of his successors.

The author of these sketches, passed the morning and meridian of his life, amidst the busy bustle of commerce. He, therefore, has but little pretensions to Science or Literature. He, however, considers, that man was not born for himself, alone; but that he owes duties to his God—to his fellow man—to society and to his country. He therefore, considers that it is the duty of every man, to endeavor to do something, however humble, towards elevating his fellow man to his proper dignity in creation; or to alleviate the fallen condition of his race. Nothing tends more to excite in the human mind, a laudable ambition, than by holding up, for example and imitation, the lives of men, who have been the architects of their own fortune—men, who by industry, integrity and sobriety, and by *indomitable energy of character*, surmounted all obstacles to advancement in life—acquired for themselves an honorable independence, and bequeathed to their posterity, an imperishable fame.

For the facts stated in these sketches, the author is indebted to Howe's valuable Memoirs; to the Encyclopedia Americana; to the Encyclopedia Britannica; Professor Olmstead's Memoir of Whitney; White's Memoir of Slater; Memoir of Bowditch, by his Son; Barton's Memoir of Rittenhouse and other authentic sources.

As the author desires no pecuniary compensation for preparing these sketches, they will be sold at price, merely sufficient to defray the expenses of publishing them.

THE AUTHOR.

Traculum, near Wilmington, Delaware, November 30th, 1852.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES
OF
DISTINGUISHED MECHANICS.

NO. I.

The great mass of mankind have so long been led captive by military glory, and the world has so long been filled with the renown of heroes and conquerors, that the benefactors of mankind occupy but a small space, in the pages of history. Far be it from us, by these remarks, to wish to detract, in the smallest degree, from the merits of the war-worn soldier, who has periled his life in the service of his country; but we allude to that military mania, which, in all ages, has dazzled the world. It is however gratifying to reflect, that of late years they, whose labors have contributed so much, to multiply and diffuse the blessings and comforts of life, and to make even the elements tributary to the welfare of man, begin to be properly appreciated.

We consider, that the World's Exhibition, now in progress in London, is a signal triumph of the Arts of Peace, and that it will open a new era in the history of mankind. If we were amongst Queen Victoria's Privy Counsellors, we would recommend to her, to have inscribed over the entrance into Hyde Parke, this beautiful sentence of Milton:—

“Peace has her victories, no less renowned than War.”

We purpose preparing some brief biographical sketches of distinguished Mechanics whose labors have benefitted the world. We lay but little claim to originality, as our sketches will be principally compilations, derived from authentic sources.

No description of writing, is better calculated to rouse the latent energies of youth, and to excite them to emulation, than biographies of men, who have been the architects of their own fortunes, and who have risen to fame and distinction in the world, by the vigor of their own intellects, and the commanding power of their own native genius. No one however, can expect to secure an honora-

ble and enduring renown, who does not make Virtue his polar star, and sobriety, industry, integrity, the standard rule of his conduct through life. With these prefatory remarks, we shall commence with

SIR RICHARD ARKWRIGHT,

whose skill and invention, added more to the wealth of his native country, than any other man, born in the British Dominions. Howe, in his valuable Memoirs, says: "This illustrious individual, persecuted and calumniated, as nearly all the signal benefactors of corrupt humanity, have ever been, raised up, by Providence, from an obscure rank in life, to vindicate the natural equality of man."—Arkwright, who was the thirteenth child of poor parents, was born at Preston, in Lancashire, in the year 1732. He received but little or no education, and, early in life was put apprentice to a barber, which profession he continued to follow, until he was nearly thirty years of age. About this period, he commenced travelling about the country, collecting hair, which he converted into wigs, and having obtained possession of a secret for dying hair, he devoted his attention to those two objects.

His active mind, however, was soon turned to the Mechanic Arts. His first efforts were to endeavor to discover perpetual motion, and for this purpose, he applied to a Clockmaker of the name of Kay, at Warrington, to make him machinery.

He remained for some time connected with Kay, wholly absorbed with the subject of Mechanics.

For a long time after the introduction of the Cotton manufacture into England, it was only the *wefl* that was made of cotton. The *warp* or longitudinal threads, made of flax, as it was thought impossible to spin the cotton hard enough for the latter purpose. For years Arkwright turned his attention, entirely to improvements in the manufacture of cotton: and without going into tedious details of the improvement of others, suffice it to say that he succeeded in constructing, what is called the spinning Frame, which brought about a total revolution in the manufacture of Cotton goods, and laid the foundation of his own fame and fortune. It is totally different from the Spinning Jenny, invented by Hargrave. The Spinning Frame of Arkwright, consists of two pairs of rollers turned by machinery. It was entirely an original idea, suggested to Ark-

wright's mind, by seeing a red hot bar elongated, by passing between two rollers. For this improvement and various others, he took out patents; but he was for years engaged in law suits, defending his rights. The manufacture of cotton goods, constitutes an important item, in the wealth of Great Britain, and equally important, in furnishing her inhabitants with cheap clothing.

The individual therefore, who contributed so much, to accomplish both these objects. soon became the subject of honor and of envy. Whilst on the one hand, the great mass of the community, hailed him, as a public benefactor, on the other, all whose interests were injured by his improvements, denounced him, as an imposter, who had appropriated to himself the discoveries of others:

The magnitude of his services, and the popularity which he so justly acquired, induced the King to confer upon him, the honor of knighthood.

Arkwright was one of the very few individuals, who reaped a rich harvest, from his own labors, and justly did he deserve it, for he most liberally contributed to promote the welfare and happiness of all around him.

He built up, in a great manner, the town of Cromford.

He died at Cromford, in the sixtieth year of his age, leaving a princely fortune.

His death was considered a great public calamity; and as evidence of the respect in which he was held, his funeral was numerously attended by persons of all ranks, classes and conditions. We cannot better close this brief sketch, than in the language of the Encyclopedia Britannica, which thus speaks of Arkwright.

"No man ever better deserved his good fortune, or has a stronger claim on the respect and gratitude of posterity. His inventions have opened a new and boundless field of employment: and they have conferred infinitely more real benefit, on his native country, than she could have derived, from the absolute dominion of Mexico and Peru.