

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF  
DANIEL FRASER OF THE SHAKER  
COMMUNITY OF MT. LEBANON,  
COLUMBIA COUNTY, N. Y.**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649014736

Biographical Sketch of Daniel Fraser of the Shaker Community of Mt. Lebanon, Columbia County, N. Y. by Catherine Allen

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**CATHERINE ALLEN**

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OF  
DANIEL FRASER  
OF THE  
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MT. LEBANON, COLUMBIA COUNTY, N. Y.

BY  
CATHARINE ALLEN.

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding." Prov. III, xlii.

ALBANY, N. Y.  
WEED, PARSONS & COMPANY, PRINTERS,  
1890.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH  
OF  
BROTHER DANIEL FRASER.

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The subject of this memoir was born in Paisley, Scotland, May 1, 1804. He was of humble parentage, his father being a weaver of silk and other fabrics, in which the art of pattern-weaving was employed.

Being of a thoughtful and studious mind, Daniel, although early introduced to factory service, through great assiduity, acquired far more than the average education of those similarly situated, and, among other interesting studies, gave special attention to that of chemistry, of which he obtained a general knowledge, although continuing his employment in the factory. His parents were distinguished among their associates by a stronger mentality and by high moral sentiments, and in their son was early implanted a disposition to kindly consider the less fortunate, by their placing at his disposal small sums

of money, from time to time, to use for benevolent purposes, as his judgment should dictate. This he did with discretion and delicacy, deriving therefrom the highest satisfaction.

With his parents he attended the Presbyterian church, but, even in boyhood, questioned the soundness of many of the doctrines taught, and, as no one was expected to partake of the sacrament until having been born again, he felt himself excluded therefrom; for, using his own expression: "I knew that the same old boy was in me, for I felt the same liabilities to the emotions and impulses of an unregenerate nature." As he approached manhood, his mind was seriously exercised as to his mission in life as a responsible human being, and he became the subject of some marked visitations of the Spirit, among which was a vision of "the interior man," which he clearly saw, as in a cavity in the center of his being. This little man appeared in every respect like "a new creature"—a spiritual being stripped of every thing of an earthly nature; a being in whom were centralized those divine forces which held under perfect control all that was inferior.

This vision so deeply impressed his mind as to bear a potent influence upon all his future actions, and was an ideal which, during his life labors, he kept ever before him. He received, also, other visions, which were very significant of the spiritual work in his own soul, to which he has ever proved faithful.

At the age of twenty-five, his services were called for

IN ENGLAND,

by manufacturers there, to introduce to them a mode of preparing warps, in regard to which the Scotch were in advance. This brought him into a district where he beheld multitudes of children of abject appearance, with their toil-worn parents, in heavy clogs, clattering upon the dirty pavements, as they wended their way to and from the mills of Huddersfield. This so keenly pained his feelings as to quicken him to vigorous action in searching for the causes of the great inequalities which produced prince and pauper — palace and hut — and made it possible for idlers to destroy themselves with luxuries which had been created by those who were suffering for want of the necessities of existence. These causes he believed to be in the framing and administration of unjust measures in political affairs; and, communicating his views to some of the more intelligent of his co-laborers, he at once enlisted their interest, with promise of aid in doing something for the amelioration of the oppressed. But meeting with that opposition which any advanced movement always encounters, his associates published a card to the effect that "the times were not then auspicious for the accomplishment of such measures;" supposing thereby to put a damper upon any further efforts in that direction.



In Daniel this only aroused a strong impulse to immediate action, and the issuing of their card was speedily followed by one from his pen, declaring emphatically that "the times *were then auspicious.*" This bold assertion brought things to a turning point, and came like a thunderbolt, awakening many, and clearing away the clouds of doubt and fear from those whose courage had been unequal to the strife. Realizing deeply the necessities of the hour, and feeling inspired to labor for his fellow-men, he devoted the energies of his soul to devise some plan of action which should result to the benefit of the laboring classes, and in the early phases of the movement was its central actor.

Perceiving that the oppressed could not lift themselves, he communicated his sentiments to an acquaintance of the middle class, a man conspicuous for his humane and generous deportment; in him he found a ready sympathizer and able helper. With disinterested benevolence, their souls were aglow, and the flying sparks, quickly ignited prepared matter in others. A meeting was called, and largely attended, which proved eminently successful. Committees were formed — centers of agitation and action — for the purpose of reducing the hours of labor in factories and stipulating the age at which children should enter service therein.

MICHAEL THOMAS SADLER, M. P.

of Leeds, a man of high sentiment and great soul,

became interested in the work, and carried the question into the House of Commons, where he introduced a bill for the purpose above stated. Naturally supposing that this movement would work directly against their moneyed interests, employers, of course, were not favorable thereto, and, owing to the strong grounds which Daniel maintained therein, threw him out of their service. Very soon afterward, by those engaged in the cause, he was summoned to London, where he could better aid in the work. The result of several years' continuous labor was the passing of a bill through Parliament which curtailed the number of hours in a week in which minors should labor, and connected therewith was a provision for better opportunities of education. This movement spread rapidly to other countries, and, in modern civilization, there are few factories or mines but have felt the benefits of the measures brought forth by those earnest, devoted souls, who had no reward, and sought none, save that which came through fulfilling their hearts' desires.

Fifteen years prior to this, Robert Owen had made an effort to the same end, which proved fruitless, the time not being ripe. That period was distinguished by other reforms, showing that the people had progressed to a condition in which their higher sentiments were allowed, in some degree, to hold in check their love of greed; for, immediately following that, was issued the great Emancipation Act of

1833, which liberated all the slaves in the West Indian colonies under British rule. But, although some advance had been made, and it was evident that currents of thought were in motion which were being helped onward by an overruling Providence, for further releasement from tyranny and oppression ; so thoroughly had Daniel's penetrating mind analyzed the structure of civil and social organizations, that, at that early period, he perceived that an

#### INALIENABLE INHERITANCE IN THE LAND

by every human being, must eventually be the basis upon which all other reforms would rest. He was much impressed that society, from center to circumference, was antagonistic to itself ; and that, to obtain an equal distribution of the blessings of existence, the community system would be the most favorable. Imbued with these ideas, and hoping to be instrumental in organizing a community, for this purpose, in March, 1834, he

#### EMBARKED FOR AMERICA,

having no knowledge that any communities there existed. His voyage was an unusually short and agreeable one, being accomplished on a sailing-vessel in less than five weeks. During the last week of April, he arrived in Baltimore, where, in conversation with guests at the hotel, he incidentally learned that some communities had already been established in several of the States, and he immediately started for the