

James Finlen's early years as a Chartist and single man.

1850

James Finlen, aged fourteen, was an apprentice French polisher in 1844, probably to George Hoppey (born 1820 West End, Hampstead). George Hoppey was not only a French polisher, a master of some three years standing, but also a political Chartist. Assuming that George Hoppey was James's master [they lived together, certainly from 1851 - 56, and possibly from 1844], he was only nine years older than James, a young man himself, and most likely a lenient master who might have engaged his bright pupil in conversations about his Chartist activities and ideas. After some four years working together James would not only have attended Chartist gatherings with George but seems to have become actively engaged in organising meetings and helping spread the Chartist 'gospel'. French polishing requires up to thirty layers of shellac being applied and while waiting for the layers to harden, he could possibly have had time on his hands to read books and educate himself - becoming a true autodidact. A new recruit to Chartism, he would also have stood out, not only for being rather tall with gingery hair, but because, for a working man, he was intelligent, well-read, eloquent and with a good speaking voice. From the beginning admirers noted his earnestness, youthfulness, openness and sincere motivation.

The first reference so far discovered to his activity occurs in the *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser* of June 29th 1850. Under the heading 'SOHO' [the district in which St. Patrick's church is situated - where, if I am correct, James was baptised in 1829 as a Catholic] he attended a meeting in the Temperance Hall, Little Dean Street, on the Wednesday evening [26th], under the auspices of the "Democratic Propagandist Society," for the purpose of forming a Chartist locality, and otherwise aiding the National Charter Association. It was reported that James (Mr. Finlin) acted as chairman and the object of the meeting was to move;

"That this meeting is of the opinion that every man, immediately he arrives at the age of twenty-one years, should be placed in possession of his political rights, and that the withholding of such political rights, and the want of knowledge on social rights and duties constitute the main cause of disquietude, immorality, and physical want, so profusely scattered over the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland."

James himself had just turned twenty-one, and here he is, already taking the position of chairman in an organisation that was promoting the creation of further local groups affiliated to the National Charter Association (*founded in 1840*). At this age James would have also become qualified as a master French polisher, no longer just an apprentice.

After creating this 'locality' in Soho on June 26th, James, as part of the "Democratic Propagandist Society" helped form another new locality - "The Bloomsbury Locality" of the NCA on July 1st, and joined its committee. A fortnight later he was again in the position of chairman, at a meeting held in Bloomsbury at the Charter Coffee House, 27, Newton Street, High Holborn on Sunday evening, July 14th where he was complimented on the 'able manner' in which he had presided. On July 31st back in Soho he moved a resolution calling for the publication of Chartist views and on the following Wednesday, August 7th, discussed the propositions of the coming 'National Reform League.' That month he joined the National Reform Committee working for the National Reform League (*founded by James Bronterre O'Brien in 1850*) and was also appointed to a committee looking into the activities of the Metropolitan Delegate Council.

In September he attended meetings of the National Charter Association (NCA) where he promoted the idea of a union of trades bodies for worker's strength. Such a union was attempted, and called the National Charter and Reform Union, but it fell through, partly because factionalism was beginning to rear its head - between the prominent Chartists, Feargus O'Connor, George Harney, and Ernest Jones - each faction supported by the two rival newspapers - *The Star* and *Reynold's Newspaper*. The impressionable James Finlen was taken in at this stage by the articulate lawyer Ernest Jones, and in November attended a public supper to honour him at the City Chartist Hall, Golden Lane.

Apart from general meetings and discussions, James Finlen was to become sought after for his lecturing and in December 1850 he gave a talk at the Bethnal-Green Literary and Scientific Institution on "The World's Scavengers." It was commented;

"The lecturer, in an eloquent manner, showed that our Political and Social Reformers were the great scavengers of the world, clearing away the rubbish which had been accumulating for past ages, and thus purifying the moral and political atmosphere. The lecturer was greeted with great applause, and though quite a young man, promises to be one of the most talented men amongst the Chartist ranks."

At the end of the month votes were taken by the Provisional Committee for the NCA committee in which Reynolds, Harney and Jones came first, second and third whilst Finlen was 14th and last. Though Finlen was making his mark he still had a way to go amongst the older, more experienced men. Jones wrote an article "*The Charter in Danger*" in the *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser* on December 21st condemning the Manchester Council Meeting and the Co-operative movement in particular.

In these last six months of 1850, James Finlen can be observed becoming a person of note, an organiser, and an orator of talent who could sway an audience. He still needed to continue working at his profession of French polisher in order to survive financially, but in passion and time spent, his occupation was obviously taking second place to his new 'vocation'. He was instrumental in forming 'localities' for the National Charter Association, though not yet elected to their main committee. 1850 ended with growing schism in the Chartist ranks, largely due, in Robert Gammage's opinion, to the hypocrisy and ambition of Ernest Jones, and these rivalries continued to grow in the coming year.

1851

Finlen's many lectures [*see list at the end of this year's account*] became a regular feature of his engagement in the Chartist movement. They are varied in content and indicative of his wide reading and idealistic views. His audiences were often complimentary of his erudition and style of oratory, and his growing celebrity led to his rapid promotion in the hierarchy and eventual election as a delegate to the National Convention. His views on particular subjects sometimes changed or matured over time but were always held enthusiastically when first promoted. He was initially against the Great National Exhibition because sufficient attention wasn't to the part the workers played in creating the objects exhibited or the building's construction. He adopted a belief in the nationalization of land without compensation for the owners; he called for the return of all political exiles; he demanded the abolition of taxes on newspapers, advertisements and imported foreign books; he was against the death penalty; he supported the freeing of the Hungarian nationalist Kossuth; he saw that Free Trade had some benefits but it was not truly implemented and worked to the detriment of the working class; he was against the Sunday Trading Bill.

In early June he left London for Butleigh in Somerset. The break of six months in Somerset allowed him to strengthen his finances by following his trade, while in London the National Charter Association was going through a difficult and disruptive time.

January to June 1851

James Finlen started the year rather quietly, lecturing on Sundays, attending meetings which he chaired or where he would second proposals, sometimes 'greatly applauded.' In March he was elected 'with a considerable majority' as a delegate to the National Convention, over Messrs. John Bedford Leno and John James Bezer after giving a speech calling for Political and Social Reformers to work together. However, on March 18th at a Chartist meeting at the Literary Institution he opposed a Mr. Benny of the Co-operative Association saying that workers must have their political rights before they could obtain their social rights.

The National Convention took place in the Parthenium, St. Martin's Lane in the last week of March and Finlen gave several speeches. As representative for Finsbury he said, regarding the proposals to Nationalise the Land, "if they bought the land of its present holders, would it not give

a sanction to the right they asserted to be theirs? The most just and consistent plan was to allow the rights of the present possessors to die out; not to allow them to bequeath their possessions to others, but to revert to the state, to be disposed of in a manner consistent with justice to the people. The people had been defrauded, but they were not anxious to return the injuries they had received upon those who had inflicted them." Only Finlen and Harney were for nationalizing the land without compensation to the owners, so they didn't persevere with their opposition.

It was moved that a Board of Agriculture be formed and church, common, crown and poor lands become national property. The meetings went on to discuss the separation of Church and State, compulsory education and the right of Co-operative Societies to registration and enrolment. A clause was passed asserting that the poor unemployed be given financial relief and offered work on the land. Assistance was also to be given to the aged and infirm. The Convention continued on the Friday and Saturday in which Finlen also contributed. Other resolutions concerned the undesirability of a Standing Army and rather the training of militias, opposition to the death penalty, taxing land and property and the extinction of the National Debt.

The 1851 Census of March 30th.

At this point we get a snapshot of James Finlen's situation from a National historical record;

Parish or Township of <i>St Pancras</i>		Ecclesiastical District of		City or Borough of		Town of		Village of	
House No.	Name of Street, Place, or Road, and Name or No. of House	Name and Surname of each Person who abode in the house, on the Night of the 30th March, 1851	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of		Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Whether Blind, or Deaf, and Dumb
					Male	Female			
285	15 North Street	George Hoppey	Head	Mar	37		French polisher	West End Hampstead	
286		Hannah Hoppey	Wife	Mar	28		French polisher	Canterbury Kent	
		James Finlen	Single	Mar	22		French polisher	London	
		John Finlen	Single	Mar	19		Laundress	Kingston on Thames	
287		James Laurmann	Head	Mar	24		Distiller Engineer	London Kent	
		Ann Elizabeth Laurmann	Wife	Mar	21			Manchester	
		James Laurmann	Child	Mar	7			London	
288		Abigail Glass	Widow	Mar	62			Scotland	
		John Robinson	Widow	Mar	25		Traveller	Widley	
		Elizabeth Robinson	Widow	Mar	23		Warehouse Man	Westminster	
		Wm. Buckland	Labourer	Mar	63		Lab. Porter	Wallingford	
		Edw. Vincent	Labourer	Mar	25		French polisher	Wilmington	
		John Lawrence	Labourer	Mar	18		French polisher	Gloucester	
		William Wilmet	Widow	Mar	60		Genl. & Epidemic	London	
		William Webb	Widow	Mar	24		Book Binder	Leeds	
289	1 North Street	Joseph Harris	Head	Mar	66		Carriage Repairer	Lincoln	
		Joseph Harris	Wife	Mar	38		Lab. Operative	London	
		Emma Harris	Wife	Mar	20			London	
Total of Houses	12 U B	Total of Persons		11	8				

James Finlen (aged 22) single, born London, French Polisher. Living at 15, North Street, St. Pancras [present Chitty Street] with **Catherine Finlen**, aged 19, single, laundress, born Kingston on Thames. They are living with the 'Head of the house,' **George Hoppey** born 1821 West End, Hampstead, French polisher, and wife **Hannah Hoppey** born 1825 Canterbury, Kent (*nee Maxted*)

On Wednesday April 2nd at the South London Chartist Hall, Finlen said;

"he came there to give his honest views on their position as working men. He had listened in the Convention with no common feelings to the description of the state of poverty and destitution which prevailed in the provinces. When such was the state of things, who, with the common feelings of humanity, could be other than a Chartist? The man who enunciated Democratic truths was the only real patriot, and they ought to destroy the present terrible system by all the means which their situation allowed them to employ. Reason was preferable to brute force, in dispelling error. He then alluded to the admixture of the social with the political question, and

called upon his audience to express a decided opinion upon the false policy of the past, and to decide that their social rights should not be neglected in future." The speaker was loudly cheered.

Finlen was becoming ever more active and at the National Convention on April 7th called for the House of Commons to give "a free and honourable release from all restrictions for all political prisoners and exiles." He also, on the matter of the death penalty considered that in future times murderers would be treated as madman, and confined in a similar manner. He was also called upon to give addresses on the abolition of the duty on newspapers and other printed matter.

With the factions competing for influence Ernest Jones and Julian Harney made an attempt to get a new newspaper off the ground entitled '*The Friend of the People*' but it failed to even begin, through lack of financial support. On May 13th at the Literary and Scientific Institution, John-street, Tottenham-court-road, Finlen moved a resolution demanding the intervention of the government in freeing the Hungarian Louis Kossuth from detention in Turkey, supporting the Hungarian refugees, and denouncing the conduct of Haynau and the Emperors of Austria and Russia. On June the 8th Finlen attended a meeting held on Monday evening at the King's Arms Tavern, Upper Holloway to take into consideration the necessity of Parliamentary Reform. Thereafter James Finlen disappears from London and no more mention occurs of James Finlen in the London Newspapers until October 26th 1851 in *Reynold's Newspaper* which simply refers to James Finlen donating 2s 6d to the National Charter Fund via his fellow French polisher George Hoppey, with whom he had been living on the 1851 census. This implies that Finlen was absent from London, and he was, in fact, in Butleigh, Somerset. The period up to this point in his life is covered in;

Finlen's Defence of Himself, 1868;

"For some twenty years I have been before my fellow-country people as a positive advocate of Democracy. In the year 1851 I was sent to the National Chartist Convention to represent the advanced Democracy of the City of London and the Borough of Finsbury. In that Convention it was my honour to co-operate harmoniously with Mr. Fergus O'Connor, M. P. for Nottingham; Mr. G. W. M. Reynolds, Mr. G. J. Holyoak, Mr. J. Julian Harney, Mr. Ernest Jones, Mr. Robert Le Blond, Mr. Thornton Hunt (*son of Leigh Hunt*), the Rev. Mr. Robertson, and a great number of other thorough-going men, some of them since dead, but happily most of them still living to work, and perhaps to suffer, for liberty. Before that time I had for some few years worked hard locally for the advancement of the selfsame principles with which I am now, and have been ever since, identified."

The missing six months is not mentioned and no reference to his whereabouts appeared in the Press in London.

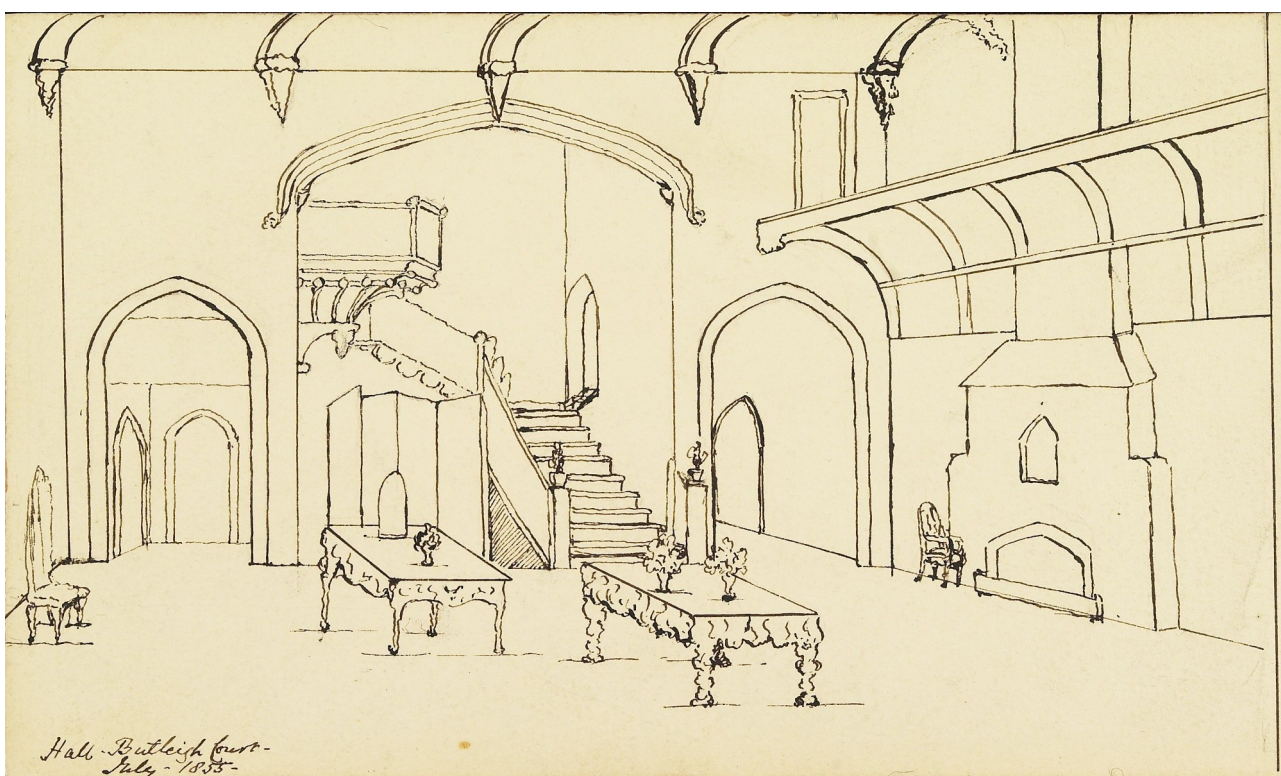
Butleigh Court



Assuming that he had been an apprentice French polisher, which is usually a term of seven years, [beginning around age 14] James Finlen would have become a 'master' or journeyman himself in 1851. Since politics had no way of providing him with an income, it must have been out of necessity, as well as an opportunity to earn a decent wage as a self-employed or journeyman artisan, that he tore himself away from London and his political interests, to live in an almost feudal backwater, Butleigh in Somerset. Besides, in London the Chartists were somewhat in disarray with its leaders falling out with each other and this move allowed James Finlen to escape the turmoil.

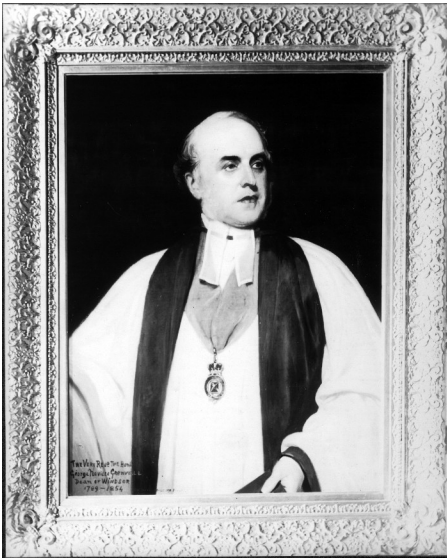
Despite having a full-time occupation as French polisher to pursue at Butleigh Court during this period, he still took the initiative to engage in public lecturing locally in his spare time, honing his speaking skills and was soon noticed as a remarkable and impressive person for a 21 year old, with his erudition and oratory! To the Somerset men with their Saxon drawl, Finlen must have seemed quite exotic with his quicker London accent and new, exciting ideas.

Some professions, where you have a man working on his own for long periods, doing repetitive work, allowing a man's mind to contemplate freely, lend themselves to 'thinkers'. Shoemaking was such a profession and in this part of Somerset it was becoming a major industry. Increasing numbers of such men were open to new ideas, possibly influenced by Quaker egalitarianism prevalent in the area and increasing stresses caused by the industrial methods being introduced locally. French polishing was also such a profession, where the process is a slow one requiring much preparation, and many man-hours and skill involved in covering wood with up to thirty layers of shellac, including many periods of inactivity as the shellac hardens. This free time James might have spent in discussing politics with his workmates or preparing talks. At the new Butleigh Court there were doors, stairs, skirting boards and a lot of panelling that would have required James Finlen's expertise. The house was in the finishing phase but it would be several years before being completed and fully inhabited.



Sketch by Louisa Susan Anne Fortescue, aged 21, of the Entrance Hall in 1855, subsequently altered

The above sketch shows the entrance hall of Butleigh Court as James Finlen would have seen it, but it was later completely re-designed. There were many panelled bedrooms in the top two floors and several grand rooms below that would have kept him extremely busy.



Butleigh Court, was a new neo-Gothic building, designed by John Chessell Buckler, and built to replace the old Butleigh manor house which had been demolished in 1845. The new Court took over 10 years to fully complete, though it was already in part habitation by the family some years before the death of its owner, the Dean of Windsor, George Neville-Grenville (*Left*), in 1854.

Brief History

The old Butleigh manor house had been first acquired by John Webb (1611-1672) in 1653. He was the disciple and partner of architect Inigo Jones and had married Jones' 'cousin-german' (probably his illegitimate daughter). Inigo Jones left his entire library and drawings to Webb. The last of Webb's line was Catherine Webb who died in 1738 and her executor and lawyer James Grenville [1715-1783] paid off her brother's interest and

acquired the estate for himself.

Grenville passed the estate on to his son, also called James [1742-1825] who considerably extended it. The younger James Grenville was a politician, a member of both houses of Parliament during his career and a first cousin of George Nugent-Temple-Grenville, 1st Marquess of Buckingham. The family produced some prominent national political figures, including two Prime Ministers (George Grenville and William Wyndham Grenville, 1st Baron Grenville). They were also related to both William Pitt the Elder and Younger, and by marriage to William Ewart Gladstone. On 20th October 1797 James Grenville was created Baron Glastonbury.

As a Whig politician, we can get an impression of his politics and influence locally when, a few years earlier, in 1794, as a magistrate in Somerton, he had dealt with two men - Thomas Stone and Thomas Meakins, who he committed to prison to await trial at the assizes for making *sedition utterances* amounting to treason. He believed them to be 'missionaries' sent out by the London [Corresponding] Society. The London Corresponding Society was a federation of reading and debating groups that agitated for the democratic reform of the British Parliament. Its members were mostly working men (artisans, tradesmen, and shopkeepers) and it was organised on a formal democratic basis - precursors of the Chartists. The three London leaders of this society of reformers were tried at the Old Bailey in October 1794 and to everyone's surprise found 'not guilty'. One of them, John Thelwall (1764-1834), after his release from prison, gave a talk to 100,000 people at a meeting in London on 26th Oct 1795. He then walked from London to Somerset to visit the poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge at Nether Stowey in July 1797 and Wordsworth at nearby Alfoxden. Both men held radical views at this time. It seems there was strong support for male suffrage to be found amongst the West Country labourers even at this early date. Later, in the adjoining county of Dorset, the Tolpuddle martyrs were arrested in 1834 and transported for life, pre-dating the Chartist uprisings of 1839. The local aristocracy were strongly opposed to any reform.

On the death of James Grenville in 1825 the Butleigh estate passed to his cousin, the famous bibliophile and collector, Thomas Grenville [who left his library to the British Museum - now the core of the British Library]. Thomas had no desire to inherit the Butleigh estate and offered it, as a gift, to any of the children of his sister Catherine if they would simply take his surname. Catherine had married Richard Aldworth Neville in 1780 and her oldest son Richard Neville [1783-1858] turned the offer down. He had already inherited the Braybrooke title and Audley End house on his own father's death which took place coincidentally in the same year, 1825. (His father, born Richard Neville Aldworth in 1750 had previously changed *his* name, first to Richard Aldworth Neville then adopted the surname Griffin in order to inherit various lands and titles!). Catherine Neville's second son, the Hon. and very Reverend George Neville [1789-1854] changed *his* name to George Neville-Grenville in 1825, thus acquiring the Butleigh manor Estate, several thousand acres including Glastonbury Tor, plus Lord Glastonbury's wealth.

George Neville's father had been, since 1797, hereditary visitor of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and George obtained the mastership of that college in October 1813 and held it for forty years. He was ordained a deacon on 31st October 1813 by the Lord Bishop of Bristol and was then presented by his brother-in-law [Sir. Stephen Glynne] to the rectory of Hawarden, Flintshire, which he held from December 1813 to 1834. There he created two chapelries and substantially altered and added to the Hawarden Rectory increasing his revenues.



From 1825 he rented out his newly inherited manor house in Butleigh. George was appointed as Chaplain to King William IV in 1833 and to Queen Victoria from 1837. In May 1846 he was created Dean of Windsor by Sir Robert Peel's nomination and he was also registrar of the Order of the Garter. As master of Magdalene College George was expected to reside there for part of the year and as Dean was also expected to spend up to eight months in Windsor – which led to a question in Parliament on 22nd June 1846 when Mr. Rich queried of Sir R. Peel how the Dean could possibly fulfil *both* appointments satisfactorily. In 1851 there were further questions from Sir Benjamin Hall about corruption in the Church of England, its income and fees charged – at the time George Neville-Grenville, as Dean, [*Left*] was paid £1,200 p.a. besides what he received as Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, chaplain to Queen Victoria, and Registrar of the Order of the Garter. So, this was James Finlen's employer, who was mostly an absentee landlord to his tenants and employees, and the

following gives a flavour of what life was like for the local peasantry;

"An account of the state of the peasantry in Somerset" describing the condition of labourers on the estate of an Honourable and Reverend Aristocrat, taken from the *Leeds Times* [10th January 1846]

Two cases taken at random; 'Charles Vincent works for the Hon. and Rev. George Neville-Grenville; has a wife and four small children, has 8 shillings per week, has but one bed and scarcely any furniture in the house; a steady and industrious man. 'James Oldis works for the above G. N. Grenville; has an unhealthy wife and family; his labour is getting done, has 7s per week, a steady and industrious man. The Hon. and Rev. George Neville Grenville, a country magistrate, and rector of the village of Butleigh, is owner of nearly all the property in the village, except land owned and occupied by Richard Holman, Esq., who is a violent opponent to the repeal of the Corn Laws. G. N. Grenville has very extensive game preserves in the parish and sells by far the greater part of it to the dealers in Bath &c - consequently two of his farms are in hand, and another of his largest tenants is leaving in the spring because, as they say, they cannot afford to pay him the rent of land which he stocks with game.'

In the following year, the *London Standard* of 25th May 1847 reported that;

"the Dean and his son were unable to attend the celebrations of the Queen's birthday due to an expected *outbreak of violence by the local population* due to the high price of bread. [His son] Ralph commanded a troop of yeomanry from Chard who were to be used to quell the outbreak on the morning of 25th May 1847. The Dean remained at Butleigh because he expected a disturbance on the estate.

Coming from a poor area of London Finlen must have been surprised to see similar poverty and exploitation amongst the Somerset poor, and his ideas about men's rights and reform must have met a ready audience. Though country folk were generally suspicious of townsfolk, in nearby Street and Glastonbury, there were the beginnings of industrialization - the Quaker Clark/Clothier family were revolutionising the shoe and sheepskin industries. Street in 1841 had just 29 shoe

workers but 261 by 1851, out of a total population of around 1,500 and the population was steadily increasing.

In 1834 George Neville-Grenville had been awarded (as trustee) £6630 5s 6d for the emancipation of 379 slaves on Hope Estate, St. Andrew, Jamaica and in 1845, together with funds received from the sale of Grenville estates elsewhere, he was able to afford to demolish the old manor house and build the new Butleigh Court [it cost over £80,000]. He also bought the Holman estate for £12,000 on 19th April 1849. At his death in 1854 he still managed to leave £70,000 in his will [multiply these figures by 123 to get an idea at today's value!].

If James Finlen had walked from Street, or Glastonbury, in a line southwards, he would first come to Butleigh Wootton (3 miles), the estate of the Hood family of Royal Navy fame, then a mile further on to Butleigh and its Court, under George Neville-Grenville, and then Kingweston just two miles up the hill from Butleigh. Kingweston was acquired in 1741 by the Dickinson family whose extensive slave plantations in Jamaica had brought them great wealth. These three villages were still agricultural, almost feudal, backwaters in 1851, run by the aristocracy.

According to the census, in March 1851 George Neville Grenville was living at 'Adelaide House', St. Mary Magdalen, St. Leonards, Hastings, Sussex with his wife Charlotte and daughters Georgiana, Cicely, Harriet and his married daughter Frances Peel. Fourteen servants were in attendance! Butleigh Court as previously mentioned, was still being finished and furnished. A notice in the *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* of Thursday 12th June 1851 notes;

“The Dean of Windsor has invited the whole of his tenantry and the principal tradespeople of Butleigh to the deanery of Windsor, in sections, that they may have an opportunity of availing themselves of day tickets for seeing the 'Exhibition of Industry of All Nations', returning to Windsor in the evening.”

It was at this time that James Finlen would have arrived in the village. From London he could have travelled by coach over three days, taking the turnpikes, and once there he, like the other artisans working on Butleigh Court would have been lodged in the village or nearby villages for the duration of their employment. In Butleigh, many stonemasons and carpenters working on the Court lodged at Parsonage House [*the present 'Old Farm' on Compton Street*] as well as other houses in the village and possibly the local public house - the 'New Inn'. His days off would have been spent in the locality, socialising with workmates and the locals. Change was in the air and travel was about to get easier, quicker and cheaper, via the railways. Isambard Kingdom Brunel's GWR had opened Bath Spa station in 1840 and Bridgwater in 1841, then the Bristol & Exeter Railway opened Taunton in 1842. James Finlen may have travelled part of his journey to Butleigh along one of these routes in 1851. Some years later new stations opened: Yeovil Hendford in 1853, Glastonbury in 1854, Yeovil Pen Mill in 1856, Castle Cary in 1856/7 and Wells in 1859 as the railway boom and different companies branched outwards. It was the railways that made it possible for James Finlen to make his several tours of the whole country spreading the message of reform, in the following years, including his returning to Street and Glastonbury on three occasions.

The *Western Gazette* of 1867 reported that he had previously given talks at '*several meetings in Street*'. The phrase may have included all his visits there, but so far, for 1851, I have found only two reported: one meeting in Street and another at the small village of Kingweston;

November 8 1851 Wells Journal – KINGWESTON – a lecture was delivered at Kingweston Inn on Monday evening last, by Mr. James Finlen, of London, on "FREE TRADE, as it is, and as it ought to be," to a very numerous and respectable audience. The lecturer, in entering upon the consideration of so important a question, said it was necessary to do so irrespective of party feeling or party influence, for Free Trade was one of those great topics which concerned society at large, and which never should become the idol of a sect, for it was one that should have free scope, to give full development to its qualities, destined as it is to achieve and to maintain dignity and importance for our country, therefore all partisanship should be ignored – (Cheers) – and the question should be considered as one belonging to humanity at large. The lecturer then proceeded to show how inefficient the workings of Free Trade has been – how millions, great in hope, had been disappointed, that had confided in the influential champions of the system; but he would not pause on the highway of progress, to rail at men – measures were things to be considered; it was necessary to know why Free Trade had not realised so

much as had been anticipated by the labour interest of the country. A principle which is introduced into a nation should be calculated to benefit the majority of the people before it becomes ratified: – (Cheers) – its propounders should be certain that existing laws and institutions are compatible with its adoption, which was not the case with respect to Free Trade. He then entered largely upon the restrictions with which Free Trade had to contend, which rendered it a thing in name, being completely destitute of reality, or to look at it in the most liberal manner possible, it cannot be considered anything more or less than Free Trade in fetters. – (Cheers) – It is a moral impossibility for Englishmen to compete with Foreigners upon the principle of economy: they can do it in genius, in stability of workmanship, and in their industry. They have competed with them, history will tell us how successfully, in war, bloody and unnatural as it is; they can also compete with them in their love of peace – they can hold up to the world a catalogue of literary gods, before which it is ever ready to prostrate itself with reverence; they can spread civilization by their mechanism, but they cannot do it cheaply and live properly – an Englishman must be fed. An Englishman can live on bread, beef, and hope, a long time, and if he fails to procure these by his industry, the degrading badge of pauperism haunts his mind, and he stands still, undecided as to whether he shall choose the dread alternative of the workhouse, the prison, or the grave. – (Emotion, and loud Cheers) - The policy of the Manchester men, viz., that of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest will not suit the requirements of English labour; taxation upon produce is too great to enable them to sell cheap enough to compete with the Foreigner, who is comparatively free of the same, and who has not eight hundred millions in the shape of National Debt, to stand as a barrier to the career of his enterprising spirit. Financial reformation is needed to aid Free Trade in its struggle, and to relieve and improve the condition of those depending upon labour for an existence.

The Lecturer, who devoted two hours to the consideration of the subject, then concluded, amidst enthusiastic cheering from the large assemblage.

NOTE: The proprietor of the Kingweston Inn was William Jolliffe Gregory [1797 - 1860] a non-conformist (baptised at Mr. Hardman's Chapel, South Petherton) He is recorded as the Inn-keeper [the present Lower Farmhouse] on the 1841 census, and also ran an extensive farm there. The Inn closed when he died. In 1851 the population of Kingweston was 149. Butleigh had 1,035 in 1851 and virtually the same in 1861, its largest ever, then it began a century of decline.

A fortnight later, and a more antagonistic reporter covered his next lecture;

November 22 1851 Wells Journal STREET. - FREE TRADE —A lecture was delivered on Monday evening in the Temperance Hall [*opened 1847*], on the principles of Free Trade, by Mr. James Finlen, of London. Mr. J. Holmes presided on the occasion, and gave an admirable address. The lecturer commenced in a flowery prosaic speech; his arguments were far from being sound, he cast an odium upon the political characters of Messrs. Cobden and Bright, as men who had injured the working classes, to some extent, by their parliamentary proceedings, the former for advocating the Monetary Bill, brought into Parliament by the late Sir. R. Peel, the latter by opposing the Ten Hours Bill. He declared that what is now called free trade was not the free trade boon the working classes expected, they had received no benefit from its workings. It was constituted for the master tradesman, it benefited not the farmer nor the labourer; if it was the means of giving the labourer a cheap loaf, it was also the means of reducing his weekly wages. He (Mr. Finlen) condemned the Great Exhibition of Art and Industry as a thing of mockery and derision to the working classes, and that the Crystal Palace stands as a monument of English folly, but for what reason the lecturer did not mention. He likewise condemned all machinery as being blasphemous in the sight of God, being the means of depriving the working man of labour, and driving him out of the country by starvation to foreign climes of more hospitable abodes. The lecture was concluded by a discussion; the Chairman wished to know if any person in the Hall had anything to say in reply to what the lecturer had said, when Cyrus Clark, Esq., stepped forward, and after refuting several assertions made by the lecturer in the course of his remarks, he brought forward the first resolution, "That in the judgment of this meeting Free Trade has tended to the commercial prosperity of this country, that cheap food has been a great blessing to the industrial classes, and, that for the maintenance of public credit, it is desirable to extend the system to its utmost limits." Seconded by Mr. J. Clough, with a few remarks on the necessity for free trade; it was carried. The second resolution was put by Mr. Ralls, and seconded by Mr. J. L. Bulleid, "That as high taxation is the consequence of *war*, it is the opinion of this meeting that free trade will tend to cement the nations in peace, to make war unpopular, and thereby enable us further to reduce taxation." The third resolution was put by Mr. A. B. Gregory, and seconded by Mr. J. A. Clark, "That while this meeting regrets the existence of some distress among the farmers, it hopes that the landed interests may be further relieved from taxation."

There are strong parallels with today - It was Free Trade then and Globalisation today, plus most recently the false promises of Brexit - all supposed to bring great wealth and progress but the outcome for the lowest earners is as ever, more poverty. The competition brought about by Free Trade might have made bread cheaper but led to the wages of the working classes being cut.

Perhaps his earlier lectures had now brought out the largest employer (Cyrus Clark) and other gentry, worried about the influence that Finlen was having on the local workers and at this latter meeting, when their resolutions against Finlen's ideas were carried, the workers were, perhaps

keeping their heads down! It may be that his work was completed at Butleigh Court, or he missed London, or maybe the gentry had had a word with the Dean of Windsor but whatever the reason James Finlen returned to London, probably just before Christmas. During his sojourn in Butleigh he had probably enjoyed the clean air, fresh food, the countryside and making several good friends and contacts as well as earning his first full wages. It probably explains why he was so keen to return there in the following years.

Finlen's religious beliefs at this time were possibly in flux. In Somerset he would have met many Quakers [Street and Glastonbury being a centre for them] as well as Moravians, Methodists and others. He may have listened to the 'tub-thumping-orators' of some of these sects and later in the decade, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne he eventually meets and marries the granddaughter of a Wesleyan preacher. His language certainly seems to take on a biblical tone at times and he even referred to his political motives as being apostolic!

Back in London we hear from him again at the very year's end taking up a new cause. On December 2nd Napoleon III carried out a *coup d' état* against the Republicans of France and meetings were immediately held in London. At the National Hall a meeting was held in protest against the *coup* and a resolution passed which was seconded by George Hoppey, Finlen's landlord and friend. It might have been this important development that drew Finlen back to London. He is reported as seconding a resolution at the Literary Institution, Ray-street, Clerkenwell on December 27th and he made a speech condemning Napoleon's despotism and supporting the Republicans. He called for a 'universal compact among the people's of Europe against tyrants.'

Titles and some of the dates of James Finlen's lectures [incomplete] in 1851

Sunday 3 December 1850 "The World's Scavengers." [repeated 26th January 1851]

Sunday 19 January 1851 "The Struggle of Parties and the Position of Principles."

Sunday 9 February 1851 "Labour's Living Poets and their Labour."

Sunday 2 March 1851 "The Downfall of Ancient Greatness"

Sunday 16 March 1851 "England's Scavengers."

Sunday 23 March 1851 "The Charter and something more."

Sunday 30 March 1851 "Thomas Cooper's Purgatory of suicides, Cursory glance at the life of the author." - an anti-death-penalty lecture.

Other lectures were given in April and May, but their titles were not given or they were repeats of previous lectures.

Sunday 11 May 1851 "The present position of the Chartist Movement." "The Proceedings of the late Convention."

These lectures give a flavour of his interests and industrious activity at this early time - he continued giving such lectures throughout his career from this time onward.

1852

James Finlen is absent from the newspapers for January and almost all of February 1852. He returned to live at the same dwelling, 15, North Street, St. Pancras with George Hoppey. His sister Catherine/Kate had probably remained in North Street during his sojourn in Butleigh. Finlen's friend Feargus O' Connor meanwhile had lost control of his newspaper *The Northern Star*, and on the third of January it was bought, as a losing concern, for £100, by both his editor and printer, Fleming and McGowan. Fleming had little concern for the Chartist body and for some time had included few articles of their actions being more interested in the 'Middle-class Reformers.' The executive of the NCA fell apart and both Jones and Harney were condemned for resigning their posts and leaving a debt of £37 for which they were held partly responsible. These events probably explain Finlen's non-appearance in print. The *Star* called for the abandonment of the Charter and Jones railed against the paper (which the new owners said was because he had tried join them but been rejected). R. Gammage points out that when Jones had been imprisoned, O'Connor had paid for him to be exempted from 'oakum-picking' and it was the basest form of ingratitude for Jones to have, after his liberation, turned on, and slandered O'Connor. Jones also fell out with Harney and both proposed starting new newspapers. Harney revived his "*Friend of the People*" but then outbid Jones for the "*Star*" in April 1852, re-named it the "*Star of Freedom*" and its initial number came out on May 1st. Jones immediately issued the first number his rival publication, "*The People's*

Paper" a week later on May 8th. James Finlen had denounced Ernest Jones in the "*Star*" on February 28th [for leaving a debt behind when he abandoned the NCA] but they became reconciled and when Jones' new paper was issued, his activities again begin appear on a regularly basis.

On March 20th in the "*Star*" Finlen again took up his call for an amnesty for the political prisoners - during a long and eloquent address at the Scientific and Literary Institution, Little Saffron-hill, Finsbury, he was enthusiastically cheered. On the 23rd he attended the public dinner, *Soiree*, and Ball, to inaugurate the establishment of the Literary Institution, Leicester Place, Clerkenwell Green. He gave more speeches and attended meetings in April which were reported in the "*Star*" but most significant was the issue of May 1st which reported the "Propositions for the consideration of the delegates attending the conference convened by the Manchester Council of the Charter Association. To be held in the People's Institute, Heywood Street, on Monday, May 17th 1852." Finlen was elected to the Observation Committee of the Metropolitan Delegate Council in place of Jones who had resigned. Finlen's hero, Mr. Feargus O'Connor, was reported to have "left this country for America, to avoid the Commission of Lunacy which it was said was to be issued."

May 8th saw the first issue of Jones' *People's Paper* with which Finlen was heavily involved. At the inauguration of the paper a public tea party was to be held on May 11th *presided over* by Finlen; he is mentioned severally to do with proposing or supporting motions and wrote a letter to the editor "The Struggles of the Past and Duties of the Present" which indicates a hardening of his beliefs and bitterness against the movement's opponents with revenge being proposed. A dangerous position to take for a man just turned 23 years of age. Since we have little in the way of text, printed verbatim from James Finlen's writing, though there are many journalist's summarised accounts of his speeches, I include the letter here in full to show his language [rather religious at this time] and ideas a week before his 23rd birthday.

Sir,—Large must be the moral and intellectual worth of men before they can procure and preserve the confidence of a people; holy must be the principles that they promulgate and struggle to advance before success can be anticipated by the most sanguine yearners after, and lovers of, human freedom. The struggles of the past have been marked by self-sacrifice, by patriotic zeal and sturdy thinking; large brains have given birth to majestic sentiments; democracy has been the presiding genius over the region of intellect; but even yet, Liberty, that fair goddess of universal humanity, lays prostrate, weeping beneath the malignant wrath of cruel and bloody emperors, priests, presidents, kings, and woe reigns throughout the world; wives must weep in solitude o'er the fate of patriotic husbands doomed to exile, their sin being the detestation of tyranny and love of truth; mothers are wrapt in tribulation through the premature deaths of enthusiastic and heroic sons, and all is grief; but hope liveth—brains are brooding, thoughts are germinating, and honourable revenge shall, ere long, spring into being and commence effective action: then revel now, ye human butchers, while ye may, for the great tide of retribution is congregating, which in the almost immediate future shall roll throughout the world with irresistible impetuosity, and in its course it shall hurl you headlong into the depths of that oblivious hell, which is the sphere of your nativity!—never again will imprudent mercy be practised by those that have felt your envenomed sting. Democracy demands that the world be free of fiends—it must be so before it can reign and spread its glorious influence. To practise mercy to ingrates is unwise—the past attests it, millions of lacerated hearts admit its truthfulness; so we glory in the sanguine consciousness of a benignant future when humanity shall exult in the overthrow of wrong, and the supremacy of the good and true. Whilst doing this, ye must not be apathetic; it is necessary to watch events in these times of vicissitude, when political parties are fast springing into existence, with peculiar nostrums as palliatives to the effects of our mammoth evils; quacks are bidding for popular patronage again, whose frauds have been recently discovered through the tact of their darling project, Free Trade: they are again alarmed, and are endeavouring to alarm us; they demand that political power be extended to a portion only of those that have a right to it; they resort to this as clap-trap in connection with their war-cry, cheap bread, which is synonymous with cheap labour, and consequently with cheap human flesh. They must be spoken plainly to by those whose support they solicit; they must be boldly asked what they mean this time. If it is to aggrandise themselves, or to confer upon labour its natural dignity, every wise-and honest man well knows that they mean nothing good for the English toiler—that they merely desire, in the words of their chief, "to garrison our institutions." Oh! then, list all of ye that depend upon your toil for bread, learn the doom of coming generations. as dealt by those cheap-bread factory demons or slave-kings. Toil, babes and women, that ye may heap their coffers—that they may gorge, fatten, and legislate to bequeath eternal thralldom as a legacy for the coming armies in coming times of dear old England's industry. Garrison our institutions —garrison all that is wrong, vicious, corrupt, and corrupting; garrison earth—hells, ye mammon-hunters—and offer up

humanity as a sacrifice to your glittering deity, that ye may grow rich and paramount—that ye may wage war with the lords of lands and come off victoriously.

Shall it be so, working-men? Will you, in your moral might, allow such powers of tyranny to be perpetuated? Will you not be determined that no party shall have your confidence or support that will not battle for the entirety of your political liberty? Will ye not, all of you that live in the midst of social woe—that have worked—will ye not still be prepared to work in that good, old, and glorious enterprise—the advocacy of the People's Charter? If so, you must now proclaim yourselves determined to cleave with the zeal of zealots to your political virtue—to stand with antique heroism within the domain of your heart's good, to repel the incursion of enmity, and by your diligence to frustrate the machinations of your foes. James Finlen.

On May 9th the Observation Committee of the Metropolitan Delegate Council voted to choose which newspaper to support - the *Star* or *The People's Paper*. James Finlen, as a member, "rose, and after much fulsome adulation of Mr. Jones (Mr. Jones being present) proceeded to thunder his eloquence against all the writers of the "*Star of Freedom*" and denounced Mr. Harney as being "a renegade to his former convictions and unworthy of the confidence of the people."

At the *People's Paper* inauguration tea party on the 11th, presided over by Finlen, Messrs Jones and Finlen were elected to act as delegates to the National Charter Association conference in Manchester. They both arrived in Manchester on the 18th and played important roles in the resolutions and discussions, the consequence of which was to have a major influence on James Finlen's life. The conference voted on paying thirty shillings (rather Biblical!) a week, to three members of the executive who would proselytize the NCA's aims round the country. The members elected were R. G. Gammage, James Finlen and Ernest Jones and they would have their travelling expenses paid in addition to the fixed rate. They were elected for three months provisionally and then to be re-elected every six months. *The Northern Star* reported that Finlen was asked, "if he was appointed, would he, fund or no funds, go into the country?" He replied saying he knew where he had most influence, but if they could not find another man he was ready to serve them in the true *apostolic* style. It was suggested that Mr. A. Robinson be appointed to the executive and Finlen asked if it was the Robinson who represented Bradford in the last convention. It was. Finlen said he was satisfied that Mr. Robinson was a very clever man; in fact he was too clever - far too clever - for he was an Atheist, and he was too clinching a reasoner on that question. They had already received too much harm from having men holding those opinions on the Executive." Finlen's stance on religion is hard to pin down, though, as later becomes obvious, he was extremely anti-priests, but atheists fared no better. Robinson took him to task about his bigoted view.

On May 16th Finlen moved that the Metropolitan Delegate Council should support the *People's Paper* which they did. When the Chartist Convention at Manchester did the same it caused much resentment amongst the other newspapers. In the *People's Paper* of the 29th of May Finlen proposed that the Chartists prepare their people for the forthcoming General Election and nominate fit and proper men to stand - and that they stand for the Charter in its entirety. In the *Star* of the same date Robinson took Finlen to task for his bigotry and intolerance, claiming his own right to vote, to think and to express his thoughts. "Free the mind from the thralldom of superstition and its social and political freedom will follow as a matter of course. None are slaves - as a people - but those who are slaves in mind." The *Star* also turned on Finlen:

"Mr. Finlen has already taken to the road. It is a pity, for that unfortunate young man has a genius for rant which would gain him honourable distinction were he to take his fitting sphere - the boards of a penny theatre. ... This mouthing rant of Finlen's is simply nauseating, and infinitely below the eloquence of 'My name is Norval' and kindred effusions. Such is not the kind of man to rouse up and re-rally the earnest, deep thinking, experienced, working men of Lancashire and Yorkshire! True, he may do for the work of his real mission, which is *not* that of organising the Chartists, but to canvass for the '*People's Paper*' and 'cadge' for the ravenous begging-box."

Robert George Gammage in his book "*The History of the Chartist Movement, from its commencement down to the present time. 1854*" commented on the latter;

"Before Harney had written thus, he should have reflected on his own position in former times; for certainly, in the early stages of the movement, his many antics on the platform were the sport of the more sober leaders of

the people: but like a ruined debauchee, who has indulged in pleasure to satiety, and shuts himself up in seclusion from the world, Harney was the bitterest in denunciation of those faults in which he formerly indulged. It should be stated, moreover, in justice to Mr. Finlen, that allowing Harney's assertion as to his being a mere actor to be true, he was an actor that always laboured under a considerable share of feeling—enthusiastic in all that he advanced. His enthusiasm was a reality, not a sham,—which is more than can be said for some political stagers."

Gammage began his tour of speaking on behalf of the NCA in Bristol in early June.

Finlen delayed beginning his tour and presumably still worked as a French polisher until the start of his travels and the receipt of a salary from the NCA. He continued attending meetings in London including a protest on June 8th against government efforts to prevent the right to meet in suitable places in the open air. On Monday the 14th June a public meeting was called in Banner's Fields, Victoria Park, to appoint a deputation to wait upon the Home Secretary to obtain the cancelling of the police order, forbidding public lectures, sermons, and discussions in the fields on Sundays. 'In spite of the rain, which fell heavily, a hundred or so persons were on the ground, evincing a determination to maintain their rights, which is not often displayed at the sacrifice of so much personal comfort. These adjourned to the Literary Institution, Morpeth Street where Mr. Frank Curzon took the chair...Mr. Finlin also addressed the meeting';

"he said they had not met to claim a new right but to protect an old one. When the rights of Englishmen were invaded, they would meet their opponents on the threshold. Seeing that they have to slave and toil all the week, they ought to meet on the Sunday under the broad canopy of heaven, and give expression to their sentiments in free and open discussion. Government only held its term of power from ignorance and credulity. As to the police, they were but the tools of a blood-stained despotism: and this attempt to put down open-air meetings was but a trick to take what the people now possessed to prevent them getting anything else."

The *People's Paper* concluded: "The speaker, at some length and with much energy and eloquence urged upon the meeting the necessity of strenuously adhering to the plan of out-door meeting, and bringing the question to a successful issue, and concluded his address amidst great applause."

Several localities in the North of England had requested Mr. Finlen to visit them on his tour and so he began it with a meeting at St. Mary's Hall, Coventry on the 28th June. On this and subsequent tours Finlen wrote accounts of what happened and they were published in the *People's Paper*. His first stated;

"I arrived here on Monday evening, and was well received. I found the town in a complete state of excitement, owing to the coming elections. Party spirit runs high - the mongrel Liberals are rife in promises, and the public houses filled with their adherents. We had a first-rate meeting upon Grey Friar's-green, immediately upon my arrival; the greatest unanimity prevailed, and it was decided that James Finlen was a fit and proper person to represent Coventry in the Commons' House of Parliament. This is a positive triumph, and proves, as the Coventry friends assert, that Chartism here is not on 'old dry bones.' I believe that a great amount of good will accrue from the true and unflinching policy adopted by the Chartists of Coventry. From this town I shall proceed to Leamington, to lecture, and thence northwards. James Finlen."

If only Finlen had stood and been elected, what a different story we would have told here. In fact the Whigs and Tories colluded to remove him and when faced with the expense of hustings, election fees etc. - some £70, he saw there was no reasonable prospect of being elected and withdrew. On July 10th the *People's Paper* reported that "During the last week Mr. Finlen has addressed large meetings at Foleshill, Leamington, and other places; and the brilliancy of his oratory, combined with his fearless exposure of the artful dodge practised by the Free Trade party, renders him a great acquisition to our cause, and ought to secure him engagements at the various towns in his tour. - Mr. Finlen is now at Halifax." His letter from Coventry dated the 9th in which he "explains the problems of meetings, finances, and the problem of 'enmity in Friendship' from Socialists, Communists and Republicans I have transcribed [see in 'References'] from a defective, incomplete image. He stated that he would be in Bradford on the 8th or 9th."

Only such a young and enthusiastic person like Finlen could have coped with the strenuous campaign that lay before him. After Halifax, Foleshill and Leamington, he visited Midgley,

Barnsley, Haworth, Manchester, Stockport, Bradford, Oldham, Rochdale, Stalybridge, Dukinfield, Ashton-under-Lyne, Hyde, Newton, Stalybridge again, Mossley, Mottram, Glossop and then gave two more lectures at Stalybridge, then to Bacup. He actually cut the tour short towards its final stop and returned to London by the end of August, but was already planning a return to the North which he accomplished on September 15th when he arrived at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He also visited South Shields. Apart from smaller venues he visited Birmingham, Coventry and Barnsley and a constant theme that recurs is the financial straights he and the other two lecturers were working under. The NCA was in debt and the travelling, accommodation and venue costs were proving expensive for their lecturers. Back in London in early October he then went on to lecture in Deptford and Greenwich as well as central London, whilst preparing for his tour of the West Country and Wales in the New Year. Most of his lectures were well attended, sometimes by thousands, and as a result many new members were enrolled in the NCA. His speeches were greatly approved and requests were made for his quick return by appreciative audiences.

Though the three lecturers Gammage, Finlen and Jones enthused audiences of many thousands, their unfranchised supporters had no vote. Jones, who stood in Halifax at the General Election, despite huge success in his nomination speeches failed miserably when it came to the actual election vote, gaining just 38 - though his actual supporters had outnumbered the winning candidate by some 40 to 1. The *People's Paper* was operating at a loss and on the 18th September the price was raised from 3d to 4d which led to many of its most prominent committee members resigning and accusing Ernest Jones of impropriety and financial mismanagement.

Finlen summed up this period thus:

"Shortly after 1851, I, at the request of Mr. Ernest Jones, associated myself with that gentleman upon the *Peoples' Paper*, and also upon the Executive Committee of the National Charter Association. That connection imposed much work upon me, at once contributing Democratic literature and lecturing throughout England, Scotland, and Wales. Many conventions were held in behalf of Chartism—the best form of political faith ever expounded in England."

To appreciate how Finlen was feeling during his tour in July and August, here are a few more of his reports published in the *People's Paper*; Barnsley, July 21st 1852;

Brother Chartists,—The work goes bravely on; new friends are coming to aid, old prejudices are fast passing away; the rugged front of opposition is being softened down by the potent power of gentle, never-erring reason; old faces that recently looked sour and sullen are being lit up and beautified by the sweet genius of conciliation. The Dead Black Sea of political apathy is fast disappearing beneath the pure streams of returning Democracy.

Upon Wednesday last, the factory workers of Halifax met in the Odd-Fellows' Hall, to consider the best plan to be adopted for the purpose of getting an efficient Ten-Hours' Bill Act passed by the Legislature; they decided upon agitating the districts through the medium of an active, honest, and consistent committee. I was invited by the conveners of the meeting to deliver an address upon the "short-time question," and agreed to do so. The meeting was addressed also by Rushton, Elisset, Stradling, Wood, and Snowden, who seem to be confided in by the people of Halifax.

The next morning I started off by rail for Pudsey, which, is a promising place for Chartism; there are some active and intelligent members there that have had to fight through those difficulties that have been common to all active Chartists throughout the country, but their zeal is unimpaired, and they mean to "go ahead." I lectured to a Cornish audience in the Temperance Hall upon the Thursday night, that promised collectively and individually to exert themselves on behalf of Chartism. Upon the Friday night I addressed a second audience upon Weaver's Green, that rallied in its hundreds at the name of Chartism. Upon the Saturday night I delivered a third address in the Temperance Hall. The audience was more numerous than upon the previous occasion, and equally as determined to organise. I trespassed upon sacred ground that night; I exposed the fallacies of Free Trade; there were middle class men in the meeting. It did not please them (I never speak to please them), they dissented, they said why; their reasons were as fallacious as their system; so they could not make an impression upon the audience. A motion was made by Mr. Benfield, and seconded by Mr. Clayton, to the effect, "That as the people are destitute of political power, it is their duty to forthwith combine with the Chartists to assist them in their struggle for the attainment of their political rights," which was carried unanimously.

The next morning, Sunday, I started off soon after six o'clock, for Midgley, in company with Messrs. Mitchell, Clayton, and Benfield. I called at Halifax on my way, and some of the "good men and true" of that

place bore me company to the "camp meeting" upon Midgley Moor. Upon arriving there, there was a large audience assembled, over which Mr. Clayton was elected to preside, who, after commenting upon the past and present in appropriate terms, introduced to the meeting Mr. J. Elissett, of Halifax, a venerable Chartist, and an energetic worker in the movement, who spoke upon the Charter with excellent effect. He was followed by another patriarch of Chartism, Mr. B. Rushton, of Ovenden, a staunch Chartist, and an influential advocate. I was pleased that day to see such men, men far advanced in years, men whose silver locks glistened in the noontide sun, pouring forth the sweet truths of Democracy upon the attentive ears of that large assembly. It cheers us upon our march, and makes us that are young feel that we are right when such men's faith and constancy have remained unshaken. I also addressed the meeting. A resolution was passed pledging it to assist in the reorganisation of Chartism. The meeting then dispersed, and in a short time afterwards the Chartists' Meeting Room in the town was filled by friends anxious to get to business immediately. Mr. Smith was elected to preside over the meeting. It was addressed by Messrs. Naylor, Clayton, Rushton, Elissett, and myself.

The Midgley Chartists are well organised; they muster strong. Their locality has been in existence fifteen years; their meeting rooms they use of an evening for the education of the young upon the secular principle; they have a circulating library, and are in an excellent and promising position.

I left for Bradford the next day, and addressed a second meeting in the Odd-Fellows' Hall; it was a glorious one, such unanimity and enthusiasm, such an apparent determination to arouse the dormant glory of Chartism as may give us full hope and reliance upon Bradford. I had some opponents there, which are things I have and expect everywhere I go; their spokesman was a middle class man, and had been telling the meeting not to expect aid from the middle classes; that if the working people wanted to be free they must work out their own manumission by making themselves numerically strong in organisation. This the meeting appeared determined to do. It is this that the middle class dread; so their representatives were there to check it if possible; their attempt will be futile, and they will, I doubt not, be scouted upon all occasions, as they were in this instance.

The next morning I started off for Barnsley, the town from which I date this letter. There was a party of friends at the station to meet me, and we proceeded to one of their own homes and talked over political matters until the time arrived for our public meeting; it was an open air one, held upon May Day Green, a green situated in the centre of the town. The audience was very large, very attentive, and very unanimous in its resolve to resuscitate Chartism in Barnsley. I addressed it until it got dark, when a great number adjourned to a neighbouring room for the purpose of enrolling their names as members of the Association, and likewise giving pecuniary aid. A great acquisition of strength to the locality here has taken place, and the feeling is good.

I am now about to start for Haworth, where I am to lecture this night. To-morrow night I am to lecture in the Odd-Fellows' Hall; afterwards I shall be off for Lancashire. My route from that quarter, I expect, will be published with this report. I am yours, fraternally, James Finlen.

Bacup, August 4th 1852.

"Brother Chartists,—Upon Wednesday night last, the adjourned public meeting was held at the Temperance Hall, Manchester. The attendance was good, and the feeling the same. Some new names were added to the list of members, and our good old Charter was hailed with genuine gladness by all present. I judge that the public mind is settled upon it; inasmuch as it is always preferred to endorse it in its fullness. The social questions now have to be established upon the opinion of the masses as firmly as the political one has been. It is in advocating that that we touch monopoly to the quick, and arouse it to action as its positive antagonist. The cry of Social Reform is the trumpet-blast that hastens plethoric wealth from its slumber of ease.

Upon Thursday night, I had the pleasure of addressing another Manchester audience in the People's Institute, with the same success as before. The next day (Friday) I started off for Stockport, and addressed a large open-air meeting there upon Waterloo Ground. Our friends in Stockport are not so high in spirits as the generality of the Chartist body; they have had many difficulties to cope with, arising out of the recent election in their town. There are a few there that cling to the good cause in the midst of all adversity, that are determined to gather up its strength again, and give to it that dignity which it was its wont to possess in Stockport previous to the reign of apostasy. I have no doubt that such men as Benfold and Williams, who have been disgusted, in connection with the other good men of the town, with the prominent humbug of prominent men, will co-operate with such friends as Clews, Wright, Middleton, and Mather, to assist them in the good work they have on hand.

I started by rail for Manchester, for the purpose of addressing another open-air meeting there, which was convened for two o'clock in the afternoon; there were a great number of policemen present. The meeting was a good one. Mr. Wright was selected to preside over it. It was spoken to by Mr. Cropper and myself. The disposition of all present appeared thoroughly favourable to all that was advanced. Things passed off quietly, after a numerous vote of thanks being given to the Executive, which I had the pleasure to acknowledge. There is a hard working party in Manchester, calculated to do much good to our cause by their perseverance.

I had to start off soon from Manchester to address a meeting that was convened for six o'clock at Stockport. Upon arriving there, there was a good audience. It was imagined that some of the "Mongrel Reformers" would get up an opposition; they are rather strong in Stockport. Some of them were present at the

meeting. Although I earnestly invited them to defend their policy, they were mute; not a murmur of opposition was audible; Chartism was ratified by the manifested approbation of the audience.

Upon the Monday morning I started off for this place (Bacup). A large number of people congregated on an open space in the centre of the town, to hear an address from me upon the People's Charter, I spoke to them until it got dark, when some friends retired to the meeting room to enrol members, and make arrangements for future meetings in the district. They decided that another meeting should be held upon the following night—an open air one—at the same place. It was held accordingly. The attendance was larger than upon the previous night, and the interest taken in the topics considered was great; at the conclusion it was announced that we were about to retire to the Chartist meeting room to enrol members. A party accompanied us, and another enrolment took place. I am to deliver a third lecture for them upon Thursday night in the Mechanic's Institution.

Next week I shall be engaged in and about Staleybridge. My work for that quarter will be made known, I expect, in Saturday's paper. All letters for me must be directed care of Mr. Hill, Winterbottom's Houses, Cross Leech-street, Staleybridge. I am yours fraternally, James Finlen.

August 18th 1852

"Brother Chartists - the last week of my tour I spent in and around Staleybridge with, I believe, some advantage to the movement. I spoke to six audiences there, and it was gratifying to see the favour that each of them afforded to our cause. It was the intention of the Staleybridge locality (which by the way is formed of good and noble men) to convene several more meetings for the purpose of making perfect the organisation in their district. Their plan was a first-rate and economical one, but they could not carry it out entirely, because I had to leave them somewhat abruptly in consequence of important business having to be attended to by me here in London. I explained the nature of affairs to them, and they readily agreed that it was necessary for me to leave them as I did. I wish it to be understood that it is *private* business that hastened me here, having nothing whatever to do with Chartism. I know, from what I have heard that gossips will fain assert that I have been mistaken and deceived in my undertaking, therefore I am anxious to abandon it. It is nothing of the kind. I have been pleased and gratified by all things during the last three months. I have nothing to deplore, but much to prompt me to more energetic actions, for I have discovered that there is health and glory in Chartism which the Chartists themselves can be hardly sensible of. I came here suddenly, and in consequence, suspended a public duty that I might perform a private one. A series of public meetings will, I doubt not, ere long, be convened in and about London, for the purpose of adding to the strength of the London organisation, which I shall be able to attend for the purpose of affording what little assistance my humble abilities will allow me to confer. *

We must not relax in our efforts now that we have won good vantage ground. All those districts that have been visited of late must be revisited as soon as possible; the interest that there is in them now must be made prolific of gigantic good. Its vitality must be made permanent. It must be nurtured by sense, eloquence, and unsullied patriotism, of which there is an abundance in all quarters. It must be gathered up and applied to the cause of the many. It is my aim to aid in such good work in the future more industriously, if possible, than I have in the past. I remain, yours Fraternally, James Finlen. 15, North-Street, Fitzroy Square, London.

* Votes for the executive were; Gammage 922, Finlen 839, Jones 739 [the highest 3 from 6 candidates] and therefore Finlen would continue be paid to carry on his missionary work.

On his return to Newcastle-upon-Tyne in September, he stayed with Mr. James Watson, Green Market, a prominent Chartist there and the witness at Finlen's wedding in 1858. It might have been Watson who introduced Finlen to the Vickers-Magee family and thus his future bride. Finlen continued with reports of his Tour.

Newcastle-on-Tyne, Sept. 15th

"Brother Chartists!—Upon Saturday, the 14th of the present month I left London for this town, in compliance with a request made by the Chartist Locality here. A meeting was convened for the following Monday evening in the Lecture Room, one of the finest buildings for the purpose of public meetings that I have seen. The muster upon this occasion I may say was respectable. The chair was occupied by A. F. Bain, an uncompromising democrat. A resolution condemnatory of the recent Militia Bill, and in favour of political rights was moved and seconded by Messrs. Robert Allen and James Watson, and passed unanimously. Before the meeting was dissolved some few gentlemen that "had been Chartists," indulged in a little speech-making, apparently with the desire to create division, whilst they were most solemnly deploring that such a thing existed. Some good arose out of their folly, for it gave genuine friends to freedom an opportunity of exposing their malicious policy. Many wrong impressions which they had made gave way to wholesome truths. They spoke

and spoke, and persisted in speaking until the meeting got out of patience. It could not get cross, for their antics were comical—so it laughed them down at last.

Upon the following Tuesday I reached South Shields and addressed a large and attentive audience upon the Cross-stairs in the market-place, Mr. Robinson presided.

Mr. R. Allens, of Newcastle, spoke upon ultra measures in a very impressive manner. Mr. Dennie, one of the hard-working Chartists of Newcastle, also took part in the proceedings, and the highest enthusiasm prevailed throughout. The next night I spoke to another out-door meeting in South Shields, in the library. It was a good meeting, and an enrolment of members took place.

On Thursday I addressed a second meeting in South Shields which consisted principally of sailors. It was a thin meeting room. Those hardy men, the “jolly-tars” of the North, are sturdy democrats in heart. They in connexion with “landsmen” suffer manifold wrongs under the capitalists sway, and proved themselves that night to be as anxious for thorough reform as any body of men that I have had the pleasure of talking to. They should be attended to and enlisted into the democratic ranks.

Upon the following night, I revisited North Shields and spoke to a large indoor meeting upon political and social rights. William Dennie presided. The Chartists of that place are truly earnest and active, pushing along through much prejudice undauntedly, strong of heart and full of faith.

On Sunday morning a concourse of people met upon the "Quay," to hear addresses from Mr. James Watson and myself. On Monday night I delivered a second lecture in the Lecture Room, in Newcastle—Mr. Watson was in the chair. Several members were enrolled, although the same opposition was practised by the same “parties” as upon the night before. I write of them “more in sorrow than in anger,” and say, that it is lamentable to find professed “Red Republicans” entertaining such high notions of middle-classism, paying homage to their natural foes, and acting as obstructives to their friends. Let us hope that they may live to learn better. I should think that the high feeling of the meeting in favour of uncompromising Chartist policy will have convinced them of their error, and prevent them making such displays again.

Such, friends, is an epitome of the last eight or nine days work. To-day I leave this town, where I have experienced the greatest kindness that it is possible for men to bestow; where I have learned that the cause has good, intelligent, and disinterested defenders, where our sacred rights will be guarded from local disease and national disgrace.

I am going, as I have already stated, to South Shields. I leave there in the morning for Macclesfield, where I am to spend two days. I have also been invited to Stalybridge, which I shall visit if possible. I have to be at Shelton, in the Potteries to address two meetings on Sunday. Then I proceed to Barnsley, where I have to lecture in the theatre on Monday and Tuesday evening. I must start from there upon the Wednesday morning, as I have to lecture at Birmingham in the evening, leaving there the next morning for Foleshill, where I have been invited to deliver two lectures. The Coventry men have likewise intimated that they desire a visit from me. I ask them to make arrangements as soon as possible. Some friends at Leamington likewise express a wish to have me there; perhaps they will make arrangements also. Friends desirous of corresponding with me will please direct (up to Tuesday next) to the care of Mr. Garbutt, Taylor-row, Barnsley, Yorkshire. After that time, to the care of Mr. Hastopp Grey, Friar-lane, near the hospital, Coventry. I am, yours in the Cause, James Finlen.

The *People's Paper* of September 18th reported “On Thursday evening Mr. Finlen returned to South Shields, and delivered an address to the Seamen, in their large room at the Rose and Crown Inn, on the subject of ‘Labour v. Capital.’” The room was crowded to suffocation, and the audience was completely electrified by the powerful eloquence of Mr. Finlen; so much so, that at the conclusion three hearty cheers were given for the lecturer and a liberal collection made at the door as people retired. I may add, as a further proof of the high opinion the Seamen of South Shields entertained of Mr. Finlen, that they voted that gentleman’s own private use the sum of 10s and what is still better, several have come and applied to me for certificates of membership....;

Coventry, September 29th 1852

"Brother Chartists, Whenever Chartist principles are proclaimed they win esteem. It matter not how great have been the efforts in opposing powers to misrepresent and belie them, the heavy weight of truth strikes down the barriers of fiction, and opens a highway to the hearts and minds of men.

Steady and unerring as the progress of righteousness, its troubles and vicissitudes may be manifold, but its ultimatum is success. So it behoves the present to prepare for the future, it is incumbent on us to set about the work in thorough earnestness. Each man in the movement has a part to play. It is not for him to decide how prominent it shall be, but no one has a right to be idle whilst there is work to be done. Too often the work of the Association falls upon the few in each district, and it is generally the case, that those who do most work have to pay most money; and, under such circumstances, men are obliged to give way sometimes. If each man was to do

his share of the labour, it would be comparatively light, and more advantage would accrue to the cause. The mechanism of the organisation would be more complete, and harmony would be prevalent throughout.

Mr. Robinson, of South Shields, has had much uphill work; it was principally owing to his exertions that I had an opportunity of speaking to the men of his town; he stood nearly or quite alone in making the arrangements, but since then he has got some good associates, about twenty in number, to resume the Chartist organisation.

In South Shields I spoke to a meeting there upon the 15th, which was the third I had in that town. On the morning of the 16th, at five o'clock, I left for Stalybridge. My visit there was sudden, and sooner than the friends expected. There was no time for convening a public meeting, so with the members I spent a pleasant evening. They informed me that they were getting on well, having started an evening school and opened a library. They were likewise preparing for the reception of Messrs. Jones and Gammage.

I visited Shelton and Hanley on Sunday, and addressed a meeting in each place; one in the open-air in the afternoon, the other in the "People's Hall," in the evening. Members were enrolled. I reached Barnsley in the afternoon, and addressed a pretty good meeting in the evening in the Theatre.

Upon the Wednesday I reached Birmingham, and spoke to an excellent meeting in the Temperance Hall, Ann Street. The meeting was about one of the best I have seen for some time.

The next day I visited Coventry, and on Monday night at St. Mary's Hall, I addressed an encouraging meeting, over which Mr. Richard Histopp presided. The Hall had been granted to the Chartists by the Mayor of the Town. It is a rich specimen on antiquity hung with armour and portraits of "royal rogues," with superb oak carvings in abundance. I like the character of the meeting - it was thoughtful.

Mr. Gammage entered the town yesterday. I was glad to see him, we spent the afternoon together, and in the evening proceeded to Foleshill. We addressed a little meeting there, upon "Free Trade." I had the honour of being chairman upon the occasion. Another meeting is to be held this night in St. Mary's Hall, and another one tomorrow night at Foleshill. I shall be in London on Friday next. Friends wishing to correspond with me must direct to 15, North-street, Fitzroy-square, London. I am, yours Fraternaly, James Finlen.

Back in London Finlen returned to lecturing and mostly his topics concerned the Press. In December a lecture on the 'Press as it is, as it was, and as it ought to be.' which lasted one hour and a half was described as one of the most eloquent and able that he had given (see *People's Paper* December 18th in 'References' for a transcript of the speech).

1853

In London Finlen continued with his lecturing while receiving a lot of support for his re-election to the executive. At a meeting of the Metropolitan Delegate Council in January he proposed the idea that the Chartists should have their own Hall in a central meeting place in London, and was tasked with drawing up plans for one. At a *Soiree* for the *People's Paper* at the Eclectic Institute 18a, Denmark St., in January Finlen demonstrated his other accomplishments when he gave a recitation "Jacobins of Paris." and he also played *Brutus* in a scene from "*Julius Caesar*," and *Pierre* in a scene from "*Venice Preserved*." In the January 22nd issue of the paper a letter from James Finlen was printed that explained his views regarding the need for a Central Hall;

A CENTRAL INSTITUTE FOR THE LONDON CHARTISTS. (To the Editor of The "*People's Paper*.")

Dear Sir,—The Chartists of London have for a long time been labouring under a great disadvantage, through not having a hall, or assembly room at their command, which they might use as the Central Institute and Office of their Association. About two years ago I introduced this matter to the notice of that Convention which assembled in St. Martin's-lane. It was approved of, and, to the best of my knowledge, entrusted to the discretion of the then existing Executive. From that time up to the present, no more notice has been taken of the matter. It is too important to be thoroughly shirked, and I am persuaded that there is sufficient energy now in the Chartist body to carry out the project.

I believe that very few arguments are necessary to prove its desirability. In the first place, a society is deficient in dignity if it is without a home—if it has no rallying point for its members—a place in which they can gather together in times of turmoil—where they can deliberate upon and propound measures respecting the interests of their undertaking—where they can mingle often with one another, and create in consequence that intimacy which possesses so useful an influence in associated bodies. At the present time the members of the various Chartist localities are almost strangers to one another. They are pretty intimate with each other's political sentiment through the instrumentality of the Metropolitan Delegate Council. But that is not enough. Men engaged as we are, outside of conventional society and warring with its many abuses, should know one another personally. It would be better if such were the case. A goodly social feeling might be created by frequent gatherings; boundless benefit would accrue to our association through Sunday evening lectures being delivered

in the Hall of the Institute, which must be capable of holding at least 500 people, to be delivered by men who have been tested by the past, and who are known to possess that intellectual greatness which must be the prevalent characteristic of all those who are engaged in a crusade against the instituted power of craft. Nights during the week could be reserved for public meetings to advance all questions of interest to the people. Classes of various kinds could be held throughout the week in the anterooms, and the large hall might be used as a school room in the day time, which would, I have no doubt, be very properly supported by the members and their friends. The advantages which would thus arise need not be noticed further here than by saying that the trash which is common in most schools would not be tolerated there. It would be the care of the directory to procure proper preceptors for the young. The Executive Committee of the Association could hold its meetings there, and then its secretary could be seen at given hours during the day, which would be very convenient for the metropolitan Chartists, and I may here state that it would be quite as convenient to the Chartists of the provinces — for many of them visiting London are anxious to meet with the London members, and likewise; with the secretary, upon society business.

The position that we are in at the present time, positively demands that we make an energetic move in this affair, for, before long, it will be incumbent upon us to have numerous meetings in the Metropolis. Political measures are to be submitted to the "house;" the people must urge their views. To do this they will have to meet often; and, when such is done, the money that is spent in the hiring of halls for a few nights during the year, amounts to nearly as much as would be required to pay the rent of a place which we then might call our own.

Who is there that will work with me—that will guarantee their services to work out this Proposition. A dozen men that are determined will be enough to make a beginning. Let those that are prepared to do so correspond, with me.

It is for the London Chartists—the most advanced political sect in existence—to pronounce immediately upon this question, Anxiously awaiting a reply (to be forwarded here),
I remain, yours fraternally, James Finlen, 15, North-street, Fitzroy-square.

Finlen's activist role was growing, though his speaking still elicited much praise, such as on January 31st when he gave a lecture on the present state of Europe "which was listened to with breathless attention, and elicited much applause," and in February when he spoke "for a long time with exciting and masterly eloquence." In addition to acting as chairman at some meetings Finlen was also appointed treasurer occasionally, indicating his ability in other official positions, and, when other colleagues were absent, given the task of managing the association's correspondence. In March Finlen opposed a move, in a public meeting, which wanted to prevent the opening of the Crystal Palace on Sundays, and in the same month he formed a "Free Press Union" to agitate for the repeal of the newspaper stamp. This latter was in response to the Stamp-Office prosecuting a vendor for selling an unstamped cheap newspaper, despite some high value papers, printed more exclusively for the middle and upper classes, being exempt. As the movement to remove the stamp tax on newspapers gets stronger he writes a history of 'the English Press' in four parts, beginning on April 9th in the *People's Paper* which is, naturally, coloured by his call for a Free Press.

He continued with his interest in arranging tea parties and *Soirées* and on May 3rd at one of the latter celebrating the anniversary of the *People's Paper* he sang three songs: "Seven Ages of Man," (comic), "Ben Bolt," and the "Song of the Poor." In the second week of May he set off on his tour of the West Country starting at Exeter and then went on to Torquay and Cheltenham, followed by his familiar haunts from 1851:- Somerton, Street, Glastonbury and Keinton Mandeville, and finally on to Worcester.

Finlen started his tour in Exeter, where he gave two lectures - on "Kossuth, the Hungarian Hero; Palmerston, the Chief Constable of England's Police," followed the next day by "The Relation of Employed to Employer, and their separate interests." A good, but antagonistic, report of the former appears in the *Exeter Flying Post* of the 12th of May and a positive report of the latter talk in the *People's Paper* of the 14th. There was a difference in the audiences (though similar in size - 3-400 people) with the latter being attended mostly by farmers and labourers. One gets a good feel from the above, as well as later lectures, for what Finlen experienced in regard to both how his enquiring audiences reacted, and how his message was interpreted by positive and negative journalists. There *was* only one newspaper aimed at the working-class - the *People's Paper*, most other newspapers were antagonistic, being intended for the middle-classes, and such papers either didn't bother to report his tour and lectures, or took a derogatory point of view.

I include here a letter [*People's Paper* May 28th] that Finlen wrote from Somerton on May 18th covering some of his talks. The mentioned towns and villages of Somerton, Keinton, Street and Glastonbury form a circle, all being three miles or less from Butleigh at the centre. Butleigh isn't actually mentioned but one can imagine that he would have paid his old friends and workmates there a visit and even called at Butleigh Court where work was still being completed.

"Friends,—I left London on Monday, the 13th of May, for Exeter, addressed two meetings there upon the nights of Monday and Tuesday. They were very well attended; there was a brief discussion at one of them relative to the social question. It was opened by a gentleman of the name of Vicory—a person of a liberal disposition, and favourable, or professedly so to Chartism. It all passed off well, after the little difference of opinion was made known and adjusted. I left Exeter for Torquay. On the following Thursday, the meetings there were also of the most cheering character. A great spirit of inquiry is in existence there. There are a few individuals very fond of controversy, and upon each night I was there, they engaged in it to a great extent. Messrs. Pepprell, Stantford, Prowse, Harvey, and others, were my opponents. Mr. Prowse is a brewer. He is in love with the Whigs, and championed their cause on the occasion to which I allude. The whole of the gentleman's objections were of such a hackneyed character that they had no effect whatever upon the audiences. Messrs. Raby, Rice, Tope, Hockin, etc. etc., made some remarks in reference to mistakes occurring out of former meetings. The utmost goodwill and enthusiasm prevailed throughout the whole of the proceedings.

Chartism in the above towns is gaining ground in a sure and healthy way—thanks to the good men of each place. Those of Exeter have no common difficulties to meet. You may understand pretty well how unfashionable Chartism is likely to be in a place where a bishop—a servant to God, and a curse to the people—has influence; how stiffly starched every saint-like looking sinner must appear; how contemptuously he looks upon all that fail to comply with the morning summons issued from the sullen towers of St. Peter's—which, by the way, is a magnificent cathedral, and by far too good for sinners; yet, notwithstanding this, and the coldness which is even common to such towns, there are many warm-hearted men, active in the Chartist movement. S. Rumson has a noble feature in his character—he is full of energy and action, ever on the alert; and being well assisted by Messrs. Johns, Lameson, Oldridge, Brooks, Cambridge, Corry, and many others, whose names I have forgotten, a good organisation is kept in existence. Torquay being what is called a fashionable watering-place, is not a place where one could expect to find much Democracy—yet it is one of the most advanced that I have visited. This is owing, perhaps, to the sense and perseverance of the members of our association. The middle class men, who spoke there, avowed themselves, one and all, favourable to Chartism. Too much thanks cannot be given to our friends Tope, M'Cullough, Hockin, March, Wood, Patterson, Mortimer, Stocks, Raby, and the rest that have adhered so constantly to our cause. The last-named friend, Mr. J. Raby, I am sorry to inform you, is about leaving the country for America. English Democracy will lose a noble friend, and the Torquay men an intelligent and useful worker. Not wishing to deal in eulogy to too great an extent, I will merely join with those who know him, in sincere assurances of goodwill and friendship, and thanks for the services he has rendered Democracy by his espousal of our principles and by his pen as a poet.

The beauties of the scenery surrounding the above places have been so well described by my good colleagues, that it is quite unnecessary for me to attempt a description of them here. I reluctantly departed from them and friends, for this place. On my way I called at Bridgnorth, and spent a few hours with C. J. Poole. I spoke to a good audience here last night upon Chartism. It was the first time such a thing was mooted in **Somerton**. The audience was well disposed towards it, and I fully expect to have a good locality formed before I leave the neighbourhood tonight. I shall have another meeting here tomorrow night. I shall have one at **Street** the next night, one at **Glastonbury**, and one upon Saturday night at **Keinton**. I shall make an effort to organise this neighbourhood by forming a locality in each of the above places – so that the other places in the west may be assisted in their work by the means of general co-operation. I am engaged the whole of next week in Cheltenham and Worcester, three nights in each place. Letters for me, up to Wednesday next must be directed to the care of Mr. Brown, Raby House, Charlton Rings, Cheltenham. After that time to the care of Mr. Pegg, Victoria Place, London Road, Worcester." - James Finlen

The *People's Paper* also gave an account of his lectures in Cheltenham, dated May 25th.

On Monday evening, according to announcement, Mr. Finlen, of the Executive, delivered a lecture on "The Heroes of Hungary and Italy" to a very attentive and delighted audience; demonstrating in an eloquent and manly style the patriotism of Kossuth and Mazzini, and likewise their determination to free their respective countries from the iron heel of despotism under which she is now crushed, and also showing the impartial hospitality shown by the English nation towards tyrants as well as patriots of every other nation. He did not agree with war, but maintained that it was justified when Tyranny became unbearable, which made it a dire necessity, historical lessons having taught the people that physical force demands almost invariably prove futile, for, what said he, is gained by blood, must be by blood maintained, as, for instance, witness the position of our

aristocracy; but to win European freedom blood must be shed, or Cossackism will reign triumphant. On Tuesday evening he delivered an open air meeting on the People's Charter, and the right of Englishmen to the Vote, which took place in the promenade in the centre of fashionable Cheltenham, to an eager and intelligent assembly, but during the delivery of which a policeman interfered and endeavoured to stop the meeting, but in vain, for when asked for his authority for so doing, he could not answer, but said the meeting obstructed the pathway, which was not the case, as it was held in an open space alongside of it. Such conduct on the part of the official, the meeting loudly protested against, and he withdrew. Mr. Finlen then resumed and explained every point of the Charter in earnest and dignified style. On Wednesday evening he will address the Cheltenham people again on the same spot. He will then take his leave of the Cheltenham friends on his route for Worcester, where he will address several meetings. John Doward.

After two lectures in Worcester, his tour ended on June 1st in Cheltenham, and he then returned to London. Meetings attended by Gammage, Jones and Finlen took place in Fitzroy-square, Greenwich and Deptford. From June to October more meetings took place but the biggest obsession was finding funding to support the *People's Paper* and to run the Chartist Association. Finlen was invited to the Midlands for a tour but it was constantly put off. The following has some relevance here;

Gammage reported [*History of the Chartist Movement* - 1894 ed. pp 399/400] "The National Charter Association had ceased to exist, for it was without an elected head. After Jones, Finlen, and Shaw were declared elected on the Executive, the latter only attended two or three meetings, not through any fault of his own, but because there were no funds to enable him to lecture; but though without funds, the London Chartists had the liberality to reprimand him for not performing his duties as a member of the Executive, and they got reprimanded in turn by Jones, for not furnishing the means of agitation, a rather bitter reproach, coming from such a quarter; for such was the never-ending drain upon the resources of the body for the support of his paper, (*PP*) that it was next to impossible to find funds for anything else. As that paper showed, not much short of eight hundred pounds had been subscribed up to that time to keep it in existence, exclusive of all the gifts which Jones dignified by the name of loans. Among the latter was sixty-one pounds ten shillings lent by the Chartists of Newcastle, who had some difficulty in getting a receipt from that gentleman, acknowledging the debt. The paper was a mystery, which puzzled even some of Jones's friends. For instance, when the affairs of the paper were under discussion, in alluding to Watson's offer, Jones said that Gammage might have known that the paper was printed nearly at cost price by McGowan; yet, after McGowan's death, the paper being twice removed, a reduction of two pounds in the cost of printing was effected on each occasion; so that if McGowan printed it nearly at cost price, it must have been printed for under cost price afterwards.

For nearly three years that paper existed, and it was nearly always at paying point. Jones once announced that it actually paid its way, still the cry was "money to clear off arrears; and unless money is speedily found, the circulation will fall once more." Nothing more probable than this! Ernest Jones was not the man to lead a great movement; he had intellect and energy, but he was ambitious and mercenary. He must command the movement, or he would reduce it to nothing. He might have got up a little ephemeral excitement, but a substantial movement, never. If, perchance, he temporarily rallied a power, it would only be to inflict the same misfortunes as were suffered under the reign of O'Connor, of whom he was a ridiculous imitator. Excitement, persecution, imprisonment, transportation—and then another relapse into apathy. Surely we ought to work for better results than these, after all our years of agitation. **Finlen** had been in the country lecturing, but with no great results in the large towns, where the stillness of apathy reigned among the people. He was the only lecturer who was actively working with Jones. Thomas Cooper joined the body in the beginning of 1853, a difference, however, on the question of social rights, expressed by Gammage in respectful terms, and by Jones in very strong language, caused him to leave the Association. While the National Reform League existed in the metropolis O'Brien lectured twice a week at the Eclectic Institute. A Democratic Association, for the establishment of political and social justice, was formed in Newcastle, of which R. G. Gammage was the secretary. Julian Harney was secretary of the Republican Brotherhood, which was started in the same town. There was then no Chartist Executive. [*my underlining* - RS]

The *People's Paper* was reduced to threepence in September, but remained still in debt. More requests were made for Finlen to visit Northampton (Mr. Starmer), Ripponden and Leicester (but there was the need to pay off old debts before incurring new ones). In November the Preston "Lock-out" became the cause célèbre and the locked-out Preston mill workers were strongly supported by Finlen who joined the call for the creation of a Labour Parliament. He refers to the latter in his 'Defence' of 1868;

"Going beyond the ordinary phases of conventions, a great assembly called the Labour Parliament was convened and assembled in the Peoples' Institute, Heyrod-street, Manchester. Mr. Ernest Jones was the originator of that Parliament. I was one of four men representing London in that Parliament, the other three being Mr. Ernest Jones, Mr. James Bligh, and Mr. Jeffries. The work of those assemblies had a most salutary effect upon the public mind, inasmuch as they not only indoctrinated the people with a profound love of the abstract principles of Democracy, but went far to prepare the people for the triumph of such social questions as must receive Parliamentary recognition before the peoples' homes can be made happy and independent. That such a consolidation of sympathy, of faith, and of hope, has tended greatly to the recent realization of a certain sort of political triumph, must be admitted upon all hands."

In fact, at two separate meetings Finlen moved the following resolutions;

On the 30th November:

"That this meeting, after witnessing the numerous failures that have been too consequent upon sectional and isolated struggles of the people to maintain a proper scale of wages, and to achieve the emancipation of labour, is of the opinion that the time is now arrived when a united mass movement of the working classes, based upon a national organisation, and guided by one directing body, can alone assure adequate support to the men now locked out of employment and on strike, and enable working men, for the future, to free labour from the thralldom of capital." Mr. J. B. O'Brien seconded the resolution, observing, however, that, if fully carried out, it could not do justice to the working classes. Even the masters themselves, under the present competitive system, however well inclined, could not do anything like justice to the working classes. (Hear, hear.) Still, he would like to see a labour parliament tried, as a great deal of good might be the result. The resolution was then agreed to, as was also a resolution in support of a labour parliament, similar to that recently resolved upon by a Manchester meeting.

A Mr. Cowell then gave an outline of the causes that lead to the lock-out at Preston, including the three times when their wages had been reduced by 10% each time.

[see also *PP* p. 1 - *Mass Movement of the People - National Organisation and a Labour Parliament - public meeting held at the People's Institute, Manchester on the 20th November*]

On the 20th December:

THE LANCASHIRE STRIKES AND THE "LABOUR PARLIAMENT."

Last night a public meeting of the operatives of London was held in the Literary Institution, John-street, Tottenham-court-road, to consider the subject of the strikes in Lancashire, and "the labour parliament." The Chairman (Mr. J. Finlen) said the object of the present meeting was to afford substantial and impartial assistance to the men now on strike in Lancashire, where there were 70,000 persons out of employment and on the brink of starvation. Of the 25,000 men out of work in Preston, 15,000 only had been assisted by the parties making what they called a national appeal, whilst the remaining 10,000 received nothing whatever out of the national fund. (Shame.) The committee sitting at the Old Bailey intended mainly to assist the men at Preston, but this was not in accordance with the requirements or the wishes of the people. If the men at Wigan turned out to the extent of 5,000, they would require similar assistance, as would also the men of Bury; and for these reasons the amalgamated committee of the Lancashire operatives had determined to afford equal assistance to all engaged in the struggle for the rights of labour. There must be a great want of duty on the part of those engaged in the appeal to the working classes of London, in thus supporting one class of men to the detriment of another — (Hear, hear) and he considered it his duty to bring this fact before the public. He considered that, in order to give efficacy to strikes, it would be necessary to have a "labour parliament," and a national representation of all trades, and from every town, which would obviate the necessity and expense of sending delegates from one part of the country to another, appealing for support. (Cheers.) By this means, assistance would be fairly and equitably afforded to all engaged in the common cause. (Hear, hear.) Capital would soon have less power than it possesses at present, and labour would meet with its just reward. (Cheers.)

—Mr. C. Murray moved a resolution expressing sympathy with the operatives of Lancashire, who were on strike and locked out of employment, and pledging the meeting to sustain them during their present struggle to ameliorate their social condition. —Mr. Bligh seconded the resolution; which was carried. Mr. Ellis moved a resolution in favour of the projected "labour parliament." - The resolution having been seconded, was carried. A vote of thanks to the chairman terminated the proceedings.

These meetings were widely reported in the mainstream press and were bringing some notoriety to Finlen's name outside the Chartist community. On the 28th December 1853 Finlen addressed an audience at a Soirée in honour of the *Peoples Paper* on the subject of "The Martyrs of all times and all ages." Having mentioned the names of the patriots of ancient and modern history,

and describing their labours in the cause of human redemption, he alluded to the spread of Chartism in this country. No other party had progressed like the Chartist body. It was true progress to work upon the mind and conviction of a country. They did not mount a revolutionary Pegasus, and lead the people to the barricades, but they taught them their political and social rights, how to obtain them, and how to keep them when obtained. He sat down amid loud cheers.

1854

The year began with mounting support for the Lancashire-lockout workers and the creation of a Labour Parliament but the Chartist core was becoming further split into two camps. There were mutterings against Ernest Jones which he rebutted in a letter asking for financial support - 'as an unpaid editor for two years.' An attempt failed to get a joint editor for the *People's Paper* appointed. Jones tried to woo Finlen to his side as he denigrated other Chartists. In an article on January 28th he comments "I fear the feeling of jealousy exists elsewhere – all the more so, as equally disparaging remarks have been made in the country by Mr. G. (Gammage) of Mr. Finlen, whose great talents and sterling democracy merit the admiration of every democrat. *I should not mention this, were it not known to Mr. Finlen already* – and as the vilest charge that can be made against any man as the most despicable feeling – is the pitiful one of jealousy of the talent and popularity of others, no warning can be too strong to check and repress such a tendency in any quarter. ...Ernest Jones." Gammage, in fact only made positive remarks about Finlen and the last phrase in his article reflects the character of Jones more than it does anyone else.

On the 1st February 1854 a meeting was held at the National Hall, Holborn about the "Mass Movement of the People, A National Organisation and Labour Parliament". Finlen said;

"that nothing would ever satisfy him but the entire annihilation of capitalists apart from the rights of labour, and that was the object the Labour Parliament was destined to effect. The aristocracy and the capitalists were the allied foes of the working people on whom, however, they depended for support (Cheers). It has been stated that the working men were driving the capitalists out of the country; let them go, and when they are gone we'll have a jubilee. (Cheers) They cannot take the raw materials with them – they cannot take the land, and they cannot take our skill from us. Like Robinson and Crusoe's diamonds, they might adorn their persons with their gold, but their stomachs could not digest it. He had no sympathy either with landlord or moneylord, and the Labour Parliament was the best means of conquering both. (Cheers)." He ended his speech by urging upon the meeting the necessity of affording aid to all those locked out of employment.

In preparation for his attending the Labour Parliament James Finlen included a letter in the *People's Paper* of March 4th;

"Friends – As I shall have the honour of being in the Labour Parliament as one of the representatives of the working men of London, during the week commencing on the 6th of March, I shall be at liberty to attend and address meetings in the following places, at the times stated: Stockport, Sunday evening March the 5th; Stalybridge, Monday 6th – Oldham, Tuesday 7th; Rochdale, Wednesday 8th; Bacup, Thursday 9th; Bury, Friday 10th; and Bolton on Saturday 11th..... direct letters for me to the care of Mr. Hooson, 39, Henry Street, New Cross, Manchester, Yours fraternally James Finlen.

Jones and Finlen played important parts in the Labour Parliament meetings making several speeches - such as Finlen supporting those trades to join the union even if they were in debt [through being on strike]. Many important topics, such as land reform, assistance to striking workers, etc. were discussed but "without mass support and financial backing they were unattainable." Finlen supported and became involved with the Feargus O'Connor Land scheme;

Mr. Finlen addressed the delegates in an eloquent speech. He considered that there was nothing in the shape of a public question that possessed so much genuine importance as the means by which the people could become located on the land of their own country. (Hear, hear.) When a man possessed a few acres of land he considered himself in the possession of that which constituted an independence for himself, he then considered himself beyond the fear of want, above the control of any undue or pernicious influence, and without the harassing thought of having woe or misery entailed on that family whom he might be necessitated to leave behind him. Private possession of land was a thing which should be avoided as much as possible; he was desirous that the

land of a country should be the property of the state—(hear, hear)—not the property of individuals in that state. (Hear, hear.) And it appeared to him that they in that Parliament were going the right way to work. He declared himself to be one who was in favour of the nationalisation of the land by law. (Hear, hear.)

Observing the creation of the Labour Parliament, Karl Marx saw the possibilities in such a development and wrote "the mere assembling of such a Parliament marks a new epoch in the history of the world." What he couldn't see was the petty rivalries that would eventually seal the Parliament's demise. However, he wrote, in full;

"28, Dean Street, Soho, London.
"9th March, 1854,"

"I regret deeply to be unable, for the moment at least, to leave London, and thus to be prevented from expressing verbally my feelings of pride and Gratitude on receiving the invitation to sit as Honorary Delegate at the Labour Parliament. The mere assembling of such a Parliament marks a new epoch in the history of the world. The news of this great fact will arouse the hopes of the working classes throughout Europe and America.

"Great Britain, of all other countries, has seen developed on the greatest scale, the despotism of Capital and the slavery of Labour. In no other country have the intermediate stations between the millionaire commanding whole industrial armies and the wages-slave living only from hand to mouth so gradually been swept away from the soil. There exist here no longer, as in continental countries, large classes of peasants and artisans almost equally dependent on their own property and their own labour. A complete divorce of property from labour has been effected in Great Britain. In no other country, therefore, the war between the two classes that constitute modern society has assumed so colossal dimensions and features so distinct and palpable.

But it is precisely from these facts that the working classes of Great Britain, before all others, are competent and called for to act as leaders in the great movement that must finally result in the absolute emancipation of Labour. Such they are from the conscious clearness of their position, the vast superiority of their numbers, the disastrous struggles of their past, and the moral strength of their present.

It is the working millions of Great Britain who first have laid down the real basis of a new society—modern industry, which transformed the destructive agencies of nature into the productive power of man. The English working classes, with invincible energies, by the sweat of their brows and brains, have called into life the material means of ennobling labour itself, and of multiplying its fruits to such a degree as to make general the abundance possible.

By creating the inexhaustible productive powers of modern industry they have fulfilled the first condition of the emancipation of labour. They have now to realise its other condition. They have to free those wealth-producing powers from the infamous shackles of monopoly, and subject them to the joint control of the Producers, who, till now, allowed the very products of their hands to turn against them and be transformed into as many instruments of their own subjugation.

The labouring classes have conquered nature; they have now to conquer men. To succeed in this attempt they do not want strength, but the organisation of their common strength, organisation of the labouring classes on a national scale—such, I suppose, is the great and glorious end aimed at by the Labour Parliament.

If the Labour Parliament proves true to the idea that called it into life, some future historian will have to record that there existed in the year 1854 two Parliaments in England, a Parliament at London, and a Parliament at Manchester—a Parliament of the rich, and a Parliament of the poor—but that men sat only in the Parliament of the men and not in the Parliament of the masters. Yours truly, Karl Marx.

The Parliament appointed Finlen to be one of its missionaries, to tour the West of England and starting as soon as possible, the other two being Mr. Abraham Robinson (Lancashire, Yorkshire and the North) and Mr. Williams (the Midlands Counties). Pay was discussed (36/- per week) and a percentage of the sums collected also to be given to fund collectors. It was moved that the Parliament appoint three persons who were resident in London to obtain offices for the Executive in the metropolis - Mr. Harrison moved that Messrs. Bligh, Jeffries and Finlen be appointed a Committee for that purpose. The "*People's Paper*" was made the organ of the movement.

"Mr. Finlen was of opinion that the best way to get money was to get first an efficient Executive; their labours were all in vain, if they were to settle down into inactivity after the Parliament adjourned. (Hear, hear) And in order to make the work really useful, it would be requisite for the most active volunteers that could be got to assist the members of the Executive in making an active and extensive canvass of the country, for the purpose of holding public meetings. He had not so much faith in the press as he had in the platform. He thought that public meetings were far (more) efficacious in promoting a movement than the distribution of tracts, pamphlets, addresses, and so on. And he believed that an Executive Committee, of not less than five properly

qualified persons, would be an effective body. And they would have to adopt a system of agitation similar to that which was adopted by the National Land Company; but for that agitation that Company would not, as he believed, have attained the position it did in this country. (Hear, hear.)

Ernest Jones discussed the benefits of setting up a Life Assurance scheme which led to the founding of the 'United Brothers Assurance Society' in May 1854 of which James Finlen was appointed a director. This was ahead of its time and met with initial success. In April the opposition of the O'Brien faction to Ernest Jones broke out into a disturbance, called by some papers a riot, at the Literary Institution. Finlen and the other executives of the Mass Movement, Robinson, Harrison, Hogg and Jones called for immediate financial support to enable them to carry out their missions. Finlen published a letter in the *People's Paper* on the 15th;

" To the friends of labour in the West. I have arranged to be in Worcester during Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday the 17th, 18th and 19th. In Bridgwater the following Thursday, Friday and Saturday. On Monday the 24th, I am to be in Exeter. For eight days I shall be engaged in visiting in that district, besides various trades bodies and public meetings in the city – Crediton, Topsham, Exmouth, Christone [Lymptstone?], &c. on Wednesday, the 3rd of May, and the two following days I will be engaged in Torquay, in attending public meetings and organised bodies of working men. On Saturday, the 6th, I expect to be at Totnes. On Monday, the 8th and Tuesday the 9th at Plymouth. Wednesday the 10th, at Cullompton, Thursday the 11th at Tiverton. I fully expect to make arrangements for visiting, and if so, certainly of organising the agricultural districts of **Somerton, Keinton, Butleigh**, Yeovil, Castle Cary, **Street, Walton, Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet** and various other small and hitherto neglected places in Somersetshire. I am in communication with friends in some of these places. My arrangements with them are not yet completed, but I think that I may with safety set apart for them the days from the 12th to the 19th of May." [*He then carried on to Bristol 20/22, Cheltenham 23/25 including Pershore, Snig's End and Dudley 26/28, Reading 29/30*]. J. Finlen.

Finlen returned to London in June and, apart from a few lectures, was involved in helping rent out cottages at O'Connorville, Herts., the land settlement founded and financed by Feargus O'Connor [all of which was sold off after his death in 1855]. In August he started, with J. B. Leno (joint editors), a monthly Journal called "*The Spirit of Freedom*" (An oil portrait of Feargus O'Connor, Esq was to be given to the writer of the best essay. Subject – "The Justice of the Charter.") but it was seen as a rival by Jones, especially since his "*People's Paper*" was again experiencing financial difficulties in September, as was the Mass Movement itself. This cooling of their relationship may account for the paucity of reports during the summer of Finlen's activities. I have never seen an actual copy of "*The Spirit of Freedom*" though its contents were listed;

Saturday 28th August for September 1st. Price 1d. Contents - Breaking the ice/Rambles in the West; Exeter and its neighbourhood/ The Revolution in Spain - Royal lechery, and popular indignation/ War-Traitors in Downing Street/ The Auto Biography of a shilling, an original tale by Multum in Parvo./Poetry - the Spirit of the Czar/ Ben Adhem and the Angel etc.

I imagine the 'Rambles in the West' may have given some account of his tour there. Money being the root of all evil, especially the lack of it, brought matters to a head in September, when Finlen felt the need to explain his position;

"Dear Friends,—Some few weeks ago my resignation, as a member of the Executive Committee of the Mass Movement, would have been published in the "*People's Paper*" but for one thing, viz., the existence of a debt which has been contracted in your names.

I hold that so long as there is anything owing to any one by us, we have no right to disband ourselves as a Committee, nor to sanction or bring about the dissolution of the Association, We are seeking justice for ourselves collectively—we are prone and eager to upbraid the authors of injustice—while we do so, let us avoid, if possible, being guilty of it, We owe money for work we have had done—while we continue to do so without making an effort to pay it, we will bear, one and all of us, the character of cheats.

If the Executive is broken up, there will be no head for the members of the Movement to look to, and no authority to make any claim upon them for the money required, so I shall not resign my office until I have done my work; for if, as the officer of a new Movement, I have failed, in connection with my colleagues, in procuring

for my fellows the benefits I have sought, I shall certainly not be instrumental, if I can help it, in injuring those who have been kind enough to assist us in our labours by their credit.

The proper period of our office now depends upon your decision. If you are active in contributing the necessary amount of money, we can retire within a week—if not, we must wait your pleasure. But do let us acquit ourselves honourably in this affair without any further delay.

Perhaps I would not have mentioned this now, if it had not been for the untimely resignation of one of my colleagues. I am fearful if it passed unnoticed that his bad example would be imitated by others, and that the members generally would, in consequence, consider themselves freed from all responsibility.

Yours fraternally, James Finlen.

In October James Finlen gave talks on Irish problems and history - the first inkling of his feelings in that direction,

which were to play a greater part in his life in the late 1860's. His support of other foreign Republicans intensified and he became the treasurer for the 'Welcome and Protest Committee' planning a reception for the recently freed Barbès invited to visit England. One problem facing Finlen was that he opposed the Russian Tsar whilst also opposing Napoleon, yet the French were Britain's allies in the fight in Crimea which had now become active.

On October 17th, James Finlen gave a 'fine recitation' at a supper at the Bell Tavern, Holborn, while his partner Mr. Leno sang a song, showing that he still enjoyed the lighter side of life. In December the Bell Tavern refused entry to the Barbès Committee and they moved to the York-Street Assembly rooms where Finlen was giving his 'powerful and animated' lecture on Napoleon III;

Mr. James Bligh then moved the second resolution:- "That the English nation desires to ally itself with the oppressed nationalities of Poland, Hungary, and Italy; scorning to grasp with apparent friendship the treacherous hand of perfidious Austria, or that of the murderer of the Boulevards".

Mr. James Finlen, who was received with loud applause, seconded the resolution, and said, "We shall, Mr. Chairman, you and I, and all of us here to night, be accused of being in the pay of Russia. The Czar must be amazingly rich, Sir, if he can afford to set aside so large a number of people, as have met here upon this occasion to enter their sober protest against the doings of an imperial miscreant; and there are those abroad, sir, in the provinces of England, and the suburbs of this, its Metropolis, who join with us in our work—our noble work—of reprehension, whom he will have to be made vote in the self same way. It is with me a matter of doubt, sceptical as I may prove myself to be, whether being in the pay of the Emperor of Russia is more disreputable than being in the pay of Louis Napoleon. But we can dare to do without either of them. Our work is not done for gain, it is engaged in for truth, for the sake of right, for the triumphs of justice, therefore we fear no falsehood, and can afford to commiserate its authors. If it was right three years ago to speak the truth of Louis Napoleon, it is, I apprehend, right to do so tonight: Truth is eternal, and that which was true upon the fourth of December, 1851, possesses the same great quality now upon the fourth of December, 1854. I will read to you a passage from a history of the half century, which is now being published. It is written by one who has endeavoured to be liberal as a historian, and who has in some instances succeeded. He is a person, I believe, prominently connected with a religious sect, and therefore one who is supposed to speak the truth. Listen! "On the morning of Tuesday, the 2nd of December, the Parisians awoke to find their city in a state of siege—the political and military chiefs of all parties, to the number of 70 persons arrested, the journals forbidden to issue, and an appeal to the people proclaimed. The Assembly, attempting to constitute itself, was forcibly dissolved, and two hundred of its members marched off to the barracks, thence to be distributed among the prisons of the city. The high court of justice, likewise, attempting to exercise its functions, and in the act of pronouncing the President a Traitor was broken up. The next morning symptoms of resistance were visible. The workmen of the Faubourg St. Antoine seemed resolved to maintain the prescriptive frontiers of the locality. But the few barricades raised were instantly demolished, and immense bodies of troops swept through the streets. On Thursday, a massacre was made on the Boulevards that will ever rank that day with the anniversaries of infamous deeds. According to a multitude of concurring and independent witnesses, a fire of musketry and cannon was suddenly commenced at noonday, by an immense body of troops, at whom not a single shot had been discharged, whose path not a hillock of stones obstructed, but whose march through the gay and busy thoroughfare, stretching from the Rue de Richelieu to the Port St. Martin, was merely looked upon from the windows and pavements as a harmless though significant spectacle. Of course the footways and doorsteps were quickly encumbered with the bodies of those who had fallen; men, women, and children stumbled over each other in their heedless flight, and were pierced by bullet or bayonet where they lay! We have all, very naturally, been shocked and disgusted by the manner—the brutal manner—the Russians treat our wounded countrymen in the Crimea;— murdering them as they lay helpless on the ground. Can we be less so when we read such a

narrative as this,— when we know that not only inoffensive men, but panic-stricken, defenceless, tender women and innocent children, as they crouched prostrate beneath their terror, were murdered in cold blood by the bloody agents of that cruel man, and at his instigations, who is now—and I blush to say it—our “friendly ally?” History must do its duty by him. Listen again: “Shop-fronts were beaten in by cannon-balls, and stray shots penetrated to the back-rooms of upper floors. Blood lay in hollows round the trees even till the next morning. The wounded crawled painfully to hiding places, and missing relatives or friends were timidly sought amid the hideous rows of corpses exposed for recognition,”

Lists and calculations, that have never been invalidated, reckon the victims of this day of terror at 1,200; and from authority that cannot be impugned, we know that the soldiers had been stimulated with money and drink.” Here then, we have, corroborated all that the leaders of British democracy have said and written of Louis Napoleon. In this country its rulers think fit to hang Murderers, such as Rush, Greenacre, and Pegsworth, but they are not authorised to visit, and associate with the greatest criminal of modern time; while they court his person and assistance, we will gibbet his deeds and memory. His admirers say that he wishes to imitate his uncle. He more than imitates him in his parleys, but he is a beggar compared with him in his virtue. His uncle was a soldier. He is an assassin. His uncle reigned because the nation willed it; he reigns because a drunken army willed it. I have hopes of France. She is scarcely convalescent yet. Her scars, which Napoleon made, are not yet healed. The blood of her chivalry has hardly recovered from that chill occasioned by the 2nd of December, when hope, the mercury of life, went universally down to Zero; but the fire of war will thaw that blood, and France in health and vigour may ere long strike for right. Some of her best sons are amongst us here. Barbès, whose likenesses is before you, will be with us ere long. The British Isles, like modern oaks, float from out the deluge of French despotism the elite of that nations patriotism. Let them not be sullied, men of England! by the presence of that country's scourge. (Loud cheering accompanied and followed Mr. Finlen's speech.)

Mr. Leno moved, and Mr. Slocombe seconded the third resolution, which, like the preceding, was carried with acclamation:—“That a government acting against the expressed wish of the nation, and contrary to its best interests, should be impeached as traitors to their fatherland, and this meeting herewith advises the impeachment of the present administration.”

The members of the Committee were then submitted for approbation to the meeting, and the entire Committee was recognised and sanctioned amid enthusiastic applause.

[147 years later - the War in Iraq, and 168 years later - Putin's War:- plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose!]

The end of the year saw a final rancorous split amongst the Chartists and Finlen chose his side, by becoming the strongest supporter of Jones, then overseeing the finding of a new Meeting Hall since they had been ejected from their old venues by the opposing groups. At a Committee meeting of the Literary Institution, John Street, Tottenham Court Road on December 19th, after calling for the impeachment of the government over their dealings in the Crimea, Finlen said:

“There is another question of very great importance, to every true Reformer in London at least, to which I will refer in the briefest manner possible. You are now in the Literary and Scientific Institution, John-street. You, I have no doubt, suppose it to be the rendezvous for the true hearted, enlightened, and liberal working men of London. If you are, you are mistaken, for the creatures who have power in it are the most illiberal and intolerant that are to be found in the metropolis, and consequently the place is avoided by well-disposed people. The Atheists of the place have done all they could to frustrate the praiseworthy designs of the politicians of the towns. The bills announcing this meeting have been burked by them; they have actually taken them from the places where all bills have a right to be that announce anything in connection with this Institution—and in places where they have exhibited bills announcing free-and-easys, which were to be supported by the scourgings of the cock and hen clubs of the metropolis—such things they tolerate and favour, but political matters, plain, outspoken, plucky English truths are their aversion. I tell you what, friends, and mind I don't speak at random, for I know them—the mongrel, god-hating, devil-loving rulers of this place are the most rank curs and time-serving toadies that any honest man has ever had the bad fortune to come in contact with. I see that some of them are present. I challenge them to gainsay a syllable of what I utter. I speak what I mean—what I know to be true—what I can substantiate to the letter; there is no mistake about it. Why, what do you think they have done lately? They have opposed, and, I am afraid, successfully, Mr. Ernest Jones, the man who has spoken like a sage and prophetic orator here but now, appearing as a lecturer upon this platform on Sunday evenings. And what do you think one of their reasons is? THAT HE IS A FELON! Mark how they follow up the prosecution which the Whigs commenced! Mr. Jones, for the cause of the people—for the sake of right, in obedience to a chivalrous regard for the interests of humanity, suffered, at the hands of the Whigs, two years' imprisonment. This is not enough for these gentlemen of free thought and free enquiry but they must put an eternal bar upon him, and look upon that as a crime which all good men acknowledge to be an honour.

Mind, there are exceptions to be made - there are some good men amongst them. I will name them: they are **George Hoppey**, John Reid, Edward Sibley, and William Thrower. But, take them as a body, they form an obstacle upon the pathway of progress, and they must be removed, they must be disbanded and completely

dissipated as a body. This is part of the work for the pioneers of Metropolitan Democracy to do. I as an humble individual have determined to do my share of it. Counterfeits must never flourish at the expense of truth and liberty. Another Hall must be got. I know that a fine large one capable of holding 1,500 persons is likely to be taken soon, it is not ten minutes walk from this one; I think that I may with safety say, that it will be taken and opened for public business, in about two months time. My advice is to you here tonight, don't enter this place again; hundreds of the Democrats of London have long set their faces against it: you do the same from this night; don't, don't sanction by your presence or your pence, a party so opposed to every atom of popular right as the one to which I have been obliged, for the sake of justice, to allude. We must free our own camp of traitors, we must have harmony in hope and unity in actions in it, before we can well march out to meet the common foe. I then, not only with energy, urge the impeachment of those connected with the electoral system, but I demand, from the Democrats of London, a censure upon the clique now spoiling this valuable Institution."

Finlen has burnt his bridges by siding with Jones and by his vituperative language, made enemies - at the same time he is trying to keep his friend and head of household, George Hoppey, from the opposing camp, onside. The Jones faction are now also homeless and looking for a new Hall. In return Jones, in a *volte-face* now seems to be helping save Finlan's '*Spirit of Freedom*' which is struggling. As an articulate lawyer with friends in high places, a man with some charisma and imagination, even if lacking in scruple and ability, Jones must have seemed the best guide for the guileless and inexperienced Finlen to follow at this time. Jones had been born in Germany and became a colleague and close confidant of Marx and Engels in England by being able to converse with them in German. Unfortunately Finlen didn't get the genuine friendship and financial support from Jones that the rather penurious Marx did from Engels. Finlen's income was most precarious at this time with his dropping French polishing work to spend time travelling on his missionary work, which was not only poorly paid but often unpaid. Through lack of funding his venture into publishing/editing and his thespian activities seemed to have gained him but little.

1855

In January Finlen gave notice of an intended tour, saying 'I am prepared to visit any locality in any part of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.' His additional comments are rather conspiratorial and unusual:

"I shall require to have an interview with the Chartists of each town I visit, either upon a night set apart for the purpose, or two hours or so before the commencement of the meeting. This is very necessary, as I shall have to introduce to them questions of much importance. - There is no occasion for me, I think, to advance reasons in favour of a missionary going amongst the people at the present time, for all of you are observers; you know what is taking place, and what is likely to take place; - By writing to me you will learn more particulars, and also the questions upon which I wish to talk. If I am to visit you, do not delay in making the-necessary arrangements, for it will be much more difficult to leave London after the time stated [19th February], than before.

In fact he didn't get away until March with a great deal happening prior to his leaving. Localities in the north were asked to bear some of the expenses of a visit. In January he also informed people that they were about to lease a large building on a lease of 21 years and required 200 shareholders to acquire it - in which case they could use it for a Public Soiree to be held on Feb 22nd to celebrate the French Revolution of 1848.

February sees meetings taking place related to the Welcome and Protest Committee and a sub-committee was formed called the International Committee which was to prepare for a banquet on the 25th. The new committee was to have members from Germany, Spain, Italy and Poland. Unfortunately more division arose amongst the old Chartists, as new groups were being created with new titles - and Jones played a large part in trying to ditch the old NCA. Finlen opposed these moves in a significant speech, but was outvoted and gave notice that, as the original programme had been carried, he should resign as soon as the banquet was over, but would work with them until then. His rejected speech was as follows;

Mr. James Finlen moved the following rider: "That we have nothing to do with either programme. That as we cannot properly designate ourselves a delegate council, not having been duly appointed as representatives, we

here undertake to form ourselves into, and adopt as our name the "London Auxiliary Committee of the National Charter Association," and that we have as our objects the forming of localities in connexion with the Association, the convening of public meetings to promote, and the providing of lecturers to explain, its objects." He said: I object to both programmes. Why shall I urge this? Because I do not want to sail under false colours, I dislike expediency. If a proposition is a Chartist one, let it be called so; if it is not, let us know, by its proper name, what it really is. There is nothing to be ashamed of in the National Charter Association. A man, when he becomes a rogue, gets rid of the name, and is ashamed of it, by which he was known. Our association has never been disgraced, therefore there is no occasion to obscure its name. My proposition pledges you to the immediate support of the Association, without any mistake whatever. The other propositions, I submit, do not; they partake, both of them, of the character of new associations. Let us examine them. In the first place, they do not mention the National Charter Association; in the next place, they provide for the formation of a general committee, and of branch committees. They provide also for "distinctive banners," for distinctive payments by distinctive members, for distinctive meeting places and also for a general enrolment "under the banner of European Republican Democracy." One of them, the amended one, which is undoubtedly the best of the two, proposes to furnish members with cards of membership. Well, then, what, through such features, are their tendencies? Why, in the first place, there is betrayed a disposition to shirk the name of our memorable Association; in the next place, there is, by the proposed formation of branches which have a centre, which is now the National Charter Association, but which is called by one programme the "General Organisation Committee," and by the other the "London Central Democratic Association," the introduction of an element which, to all intents and purposes gives to the undertaking the air and the character of a completely new enterprise. Then comes the show, the paraphernalia, in the shape of banners; then the levy for the payment of such sums as our old organisation does not recognise; then the several meeting-places of the members which are to be converted by them into reading-rooms, libraries, &c.; and then that which is most foreign to our old plans and regulations, the mustering "under the banner of the European Republican Democracy" whomsoever we can. Now, then, things, so far as they go, tend to prove to my mind that their supporters are dissatisfied with the National Charter Association, and that they are bent upon having a new association. They have a perfect right to be dissatisfied with it, certainly, if they please, but they have no right to suppose that I and others are such fools as to be dragged by them from the course which it has been our duty to pursue, into their course, under the representations that they are precisely similar. Not by any means. I will have nothing to do with their programmes. I have yet found nothing superior to the plan of organisation which we have been acting upon for years past. It is as perfect as mortals can make it; and the objects of the Association which owns it are such as cannot be superseded. You disclaim the idea of forming any new association: well, then, if you do you must give up your programmes, or else violate those rules that have been prepared for our guidance by the several Chartist conventions that have met, for you cannot, without doing so, attach them to the National Charter Association inasmuch as they affirm new objects and furnish us with new plans. A man can consistently be a Chartist without being a Republican, and he can now join the Association without enrolling himself "under the banner of European Republican Democracy"—but he will not be able to do so if you arrogate to yourselves the right to give such a fresh distinctive phrase to the Association. I maintain that in doing so you are going far beyond your promise. The Chartist body has not been consulted upon the question, and I hold that you have no right to tamper with the plans which conventions have laid down. If you want alterations and amendments, seek them in a proper way—canvass the body's opinion upon your suggestions, and then call upon the executive, if necessary, to convene a Chartist Convention to consider them forthwith. You must not think that I, as an individual, am opposed to European Republicanism, for I am as great an admirer of Republicanism, and as industrious a worker for it as any of you are. I only argue that as our Association has never embraced as one of its objects a Republican form of government, that we are not competent to make such an addition to its objects here; but that it must be the work of a National Convention. You gentlemen, who are supporters of the original programme seek the assistance of the refugees who are in this country. Now, I have a great admiration for the refugees; I admire them because they are democratic socialists, and because they have considered their principles worthy the jeopardy of their lives. But here I beg leave to stop, as far as our Association is concerned. I shall feel ashamed of myself and my countrymen when it has come to this, that those men who are here, not because of choice, but of necessity; men who have dared in their own lands to meet in open combat the foemen who oppressed them, and who are now impatient for the hour when that combat shall be resumed, shall be solicited to help us in effecting an international reform. I hold that those are unworthy of liberty who cannot win it for themselves. My conviction is that Englishmen can, if they like, effect just what reforms they please; it requires but the will upon their part and it is done. If they are not industrious enough to work for what is needed to make them free, they are unworthy of freedom, and I should be truly sorry to see the men who have jeopardised themselves through fighting the battles of their own countrymen, make their lives more comfortless by bringing down upon themselves an Alien Bill, through fighting the battle or doing the work of my countrymen. I tell you that the founders and supporters of the National Charter Association never calculated upon such aid, and your doing so now is a miserable declaration of weakness. Let your programmes if you please, form the basis, as they will inevitably do, of a new association, which will have for its object (which will be a laudable one) the fraternisation of the democrats of all nations; then you will be consistent, then you will be straightforward; then

you will not be getting members under false pretences; then I might be able to agree with your programme; but now as you stand, so inexplicable, so full of expediency, so far from the Association which my conscience and my convictions make me serve and champion, I must with all my heart and soul oppose you. In making these remarks I have done my duty. I leave the rider with you.

This dispute caused a rift between Jones and Finlen with the former pushing his HOLY ALLIANCE and further attempts to divide the factions by calling for *his* form of union. The well-sounding, stated aims of Jones' *International Committee* led to an important beginning, with a meeting held in St. Martin's Hall on February 27, 1855, commemorating the French revolution of 1848. However, it was used by Jones more as a vehicle for self-promotion rather than the grand and ideal aims he proposed and his behaviour alienated many of his fellow Chartists including Finlen. At the meeting Finlen re-iterated his concerns and stating that he would always be a Chartist and even the *Times* reported that 'the Englishman, Mr. Finlen, was, perhaps, the most remarkable speaker of the evening.'

In March Finlen escaped London and began his Tour of the North. His itinerary was: From Monday 5th to Wednesday 7th of March, at Leamington, Warwick, Coventry and Rugby; the 8th and 9th at Lincoln; the 11th at Leeds; the 12th at Ripponden; the 13th at Leeds; the 14 and 15th at Halifax; 16th and 17th Bradford and its vicinity, Sunday the 18th (afternoon and evening) Stalybridge; Monday 19th – Wednesday 21st Stockport, Oldham and Manchester; Thursday/Friday 22/23rd Bolton; Sunday 25th and Monday 26th Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Tuesday 27th and Wednesday 28th Anfield Plain; Thursday 29th and Friday 30th Durham; Saturday 31st South Shields; Sunday 1st April Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Monday 2nd and Tuesday 3rd Sunderland; Wednesday 4th Monkwearmouth; Thursday 5th and Friday 6th Coxhoe, Newcastle-upon-Tyne April 7th., *Communications c/o Mr. James Watson, bookseller, Green Market Newcastle-upon-Tyne*. Monday 9th Merton Colliery, Tuesday the 10th and Wednesday 11th, Edinburgh [*confrontation against George Gammage - "What has been the cause of the failures in the Chartist Movement?"*]; Thursday 12th and Friday 13th, Alva; Saturday the 14th Kirkaldy, Monday 16th of April Kirkaldy; Tuesday the 17th and Wednesday 18th, Arbroath; Thursday the 19th and Friday 20th, Glasgow, Monday the 23rd Tuesday 24th and Wednesday 25th Sunderland; Thursday 26th Anfield Plain; Friday 27th Whitworth; Saturday 28th Castle Eden Colliery.

This was an incredible schedule. In some places he lectured at more than one venue in a day, other days he lectured in more than one town and sometimes re-visited places. Apart from the regular Chartist material, he covered the Crimea War and the poor treatment of the troops there as well as the government's position.

"He quoted at length the will of Peter the Great, and showed that the aggressive policy there sketched out had been most consistently followed by the successors on the Imperial throne; and he held that it was essential to the peace and safety of Europe that Russia should be crippled in her territory, compelled to make restitution of the various places absorbed within her empire, and confined within due and legitimate bounds." [*Putin regards himself as successor of Peter the Great today, and has said so, thus once again history repeats itself*] Finlen petitioned for a Soldier's Charter and he stated "the successful attack on Alma had scarce a parallel in history, and the noble charge at Balaclava was equalled only by the heroic Spartans at the Stairs of Thermopylæ."

The Scottish press was the most violently opposed to Chartism and often stooped to the most offensive and inaccurate reporting on James Finlen's speeches. Apart from his 'missionary work' Finlen, as a director, promoted 'The United Brother's Sick Benefit Life and Fire Assurance Company' on this and later tours. He earned some commission thereby which would have helped offset his expenses.

Back in London by early May, his main themes in the next months were protests against the introduction of a revised Sunday Trading Bill [thereby acquiring a reputation as being both anti-teetotalism as well as anti-priest], involvement in the Administrative Reform Association as well as condemning police brutality at the Hyde Park demonstration (in July).

His speech on the Sunday Trading Bill was as follows;

THE SUNDAY TREACHERY.—A FEW MATTERS OF MOMENT.

"Some, short time ago the Sabbatarian party, assisted by some few indiscreet Teetotallers, succeeded in getting passed through the Houses of Parliament a bill to demolish Sunday Trading. Through succeeding so far they picked up new hope and strength, and commenced a Jesuitical agitation in favour of a bill for the total suppression of Sunday Trading. This bill, after its merits having been canvassed and duly discussed in Infant, Ragged, and Sunday Schools—in churches, and in chapels, and also petitioned for from such places, is now before the House of Commons, under the immediate and lordly protection of two "plucky" lords—for as such they described themselves at a recent London meeting.

This bill has been framed specially in the interest of the poor, we are told, and especially in the interest of the poor shopkeeper, who is now obliged to be confined to his shop through the principal part of the Sunday. Now, might it not have occurred to the worthy, scented, and sanctified framers and promoters of this bill, that those poor shopkeepers are at perfect liberty to shut up their shops if they please, and that, as they do not shut them up, there is a pretty clear proof that they do not want to do so, and therefore any legislation in their behalf in the direction intended could only be estimated as a piece of pettifogging, sneaking, chandler's-shop legislation, not in any way in unison with the interests of those "poor people," nor compatible with the wholesome feelings of the liberally-inclined and enlightened portions of the public. But we may find that a different motive altogether possesses these individuals. The interests of large shopkeepers and parsons are well represented in Parliament, and to serve those interests the men there wish by law-made power to swamp the small shopkeepers, by depriving them of the best opportunity they have of getting a livelihood, so that their friends—the men of large capital in trade—may have less men to compete with. Again, by putting a ban upon Sunday Trading in one way, they will have a precedent and reason for doing so in another. It will then be argued that if it is right to close chandlers' shops, newsagents' shops, and green-grocers' shops upon the Sunday, it will be equally right also to close railway stations, steam-boat wharves, literary and scientific institutions, and to prevent cabs and omnibuses plying for hire on that day. The questions will be argued in this way, by the same rule that it is argued that the public-houses should be closed during the whole of the Sunday; for it is taken for granted that the public have profited by the "Beer Bill;"—"so," say the anti-beer-bibbers, "if an arrangement which deprives them of only three hours or so works so advantageously, what a grand effect it would have upon the morals of men if the public-houses were closed altogether upon the Sunday." By the closing of public-houses totally in Scotland on the Sunday "by partially doing so here, now—and be it remembered that this is but another phase of the infamous plan—by attempting to interfere with other trades and callings, we may easily recognise the busy parson-power at work. It is well known that the parsons have in all directions been complaining about their unfrequented churches, and that they have attributed the slackness of their trade to the lax, or free and reasonable, conduct of the people. Of course, as Science day by day develops itself, those gentlemen must know that their black reign is nearing its end. Men must naturally progress, and with their progress will their appreciation of the right and beautiful improve—then will they grow tired of the cant and the dread-inspiring atmosphere of the conventicle, will fee it by instinct, regard it as the home of opprobrious hypocrisy, and as one of tyranny's masked batteries, and seek far away from the scene blurred by moil and mammon, through the aid of the rail and river, a respite from the monotony of every day life. Parsons may step forward, like the stupid, petulant Xerxes, to lash the human tide that breaks the banks of the narrow channel that would confine it, and onward, onward goes, impetuous and unheeding; they may get their lacquey lords to manacle it with their laws, and prate the while of the plentitude of their pluck: but the pluck of the plebeian will then assuredly be roused and made manifest to both parson and patrician. Yes, there ought to be no hesitation in this matter. The band ought to be destroyed at once, for we have no time to spare to guard what small amount of rights we do possess, as it ought all to be employed in getting more; but if while we are working for more we allow those to be taken from us that we do hold, we shall never have finished our contest.

It is, I know, a lamentable thing that men should be obliged to stand on the defensive just now, when they ought really to be on the offensive. Lords have no thought of working-men's time; they will put them to the trouble and expense of holding public meetings to protest against their nefarious measures without the least concern. Why, the very idea of those fellows attempting to regulate how, when, and where working-men shall spend their money, is offensive! What do they know about the poor? How do they know but what it is impossible for thousands of families in London to make the necessary purchases on the Saturday? If we were all lords we might dispense with shopping on the Sunday, because our pantries and cellars would be well stored.

What immaculate puritans, to be sure, are these representatives of the people! They ought certainly to legislate for the better observance of the Sabbath, to ensure sobriety and the like—those who work their cooks, grooms, coachmen, footmen, and others on the Sunday!—those very same pure men who by bribery and drink get their seats in the House! Yes, those debauchees, with vice playing upon their lips, are fit moralists and exemplars for the nation!

This Sunday Trading Bill is open to many more objections than here urged, but one of the principal ones is, that it denies the right and prevents the possibility of independent action. A man must not, according to its provisions, spend his money as he likes, after he has earned it. If it takes him till twelve o'clock on the Saturday night to earn enough to get provisions with for the Sunday for himself and family, he will be obliged to fast during the whole of the Sunday, because provision dealers will be subject to certain pains and penalties if they

attempt to supply his wants.

So, on account of its principal characteristic being sheer tyranny, we may very properly solicit the public to petition, and that forthwith, against its enactment. JAMES FINLEN.

June 25 1855 Sunday - Sunday Trading Bill demonstration in Hyde Park. Karl Marx was present and he wrote that he thought it was the beginning of the English Revolution. The crowd attending grew from an initial 50,000 to around 200,000 with the police trying to prevent the organisers finding a spot to speak from. Bligh, the Chartist stood on a raised part of the ground and began to address the multitude. Finlen rushed to a nearby tree and was quickly surrounded by a crowd forming a circle round him and protecting him against the police. He said "Six days a week we are treated like slaves and now Parliament wants to rob us of the bit of freedom we still have on the seventh." On July 1st an even larger demonstration in Hyde Park was put down with police brutality ending in 150 arrests. *The cases were dismissed when huge crowds demonstrated outside the court.*

Finlen's relationship with Jones seems to have been somewhat restored when he condemned in the harshest terms Gammage's "*History of the Chartist Movement.*" In August the Metropolitan Chartist Organisation Committee disbanded itself and in the same month George Harrison was dismissed from the 'United Brothers Assurance Company' for gross misconduct and neglect of duty. [incidentally, Feargus O'Connor, Finlen's hero, died on August 30th 1855.]

During this period of turmoil amongst the Chartists and Reformers, Finlen set off on yet another missionary tour, on the 10th of September, even more exhausting than his previous one. He visited;

on the 10th and 11th September, Exeter; 12th and 13th Devonport; 14th and 15th Torquay; 17th Tiverton; 18th Collampton; 19th and 20th **Somerton**; 21st and 22nd **Street**; 24th **Glastonbury**. Tuesday, October. the 2nd, Ripponden; Wednesday, October. the 3rd, Rishworth ; Thursday, October. the 4th, Sozland; Sunday, October. the 7th (afternoon and evening), Rochdale; Monday, October. the 8th, Coventry; Wednesday, October. the 10th, and Thursday October 11th Llanidloes; Friday October the 12th, Newtown; Sunday, October 14th (second visit) Rochdale; Monday October the 15th, Brickfield; Tuesday October the 16th Heywood., Halifax, Bradford and by October 21st, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It was in the latter town that he condemned the 'Jersey Jackals' for expelling the French Refugees, including Victor Hugo. He was little involved in metropolitan affairs, and on Monday and Tuesday November 5th and 6th he was in Coventry; Wednesday and Thursday November 7th and 8th Bilston; Sunday November 11th afternoon and evening Bradford; Monday and Tuesday November 12th and 13th Glasgow; Wednesday November 14th Paisley; Thursday November 15th Dumbarton; Friday November 16th Alexandria; Saturday November 17th Airdrie; Monday November 19th Lanark; Tuesday November 20th Peebles; Wednesday November 21st Edinburgh; Thursday November 22nd Georgie Mills; Friday November 22nd afternoon Leith – evening Kirkaldy; Saturday November 24th afternoon Tillicoultry – evening Alva; Monday November 26th Stirling Tuesday November 27th Perth; Wednesday November 28th Dundee; Thursday November 29th, Arbroath; Friday November 30th Montrose; Saturday December 1st Forfar; Monday December 3rd and Tuesday December 4th Aberdeen. On December 8th he was back in Glasgow and then from the 9th to the 15th in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

An example of his lecturing;

On Monday evening a lecture was delivered at the Athenæum, [Exeter] on the above subject, by Mr. Finlen, of London. There was a tolerably good attendance – more numerous than might have been expected, considering the excitement in the city consequent on the news of the “Fall of Sebastopol.” The chair was taken (in the absence of Mr. Johns) by Mr. S. Rumson. The lecturer (*Finlen*), in the course of his remarks, alluded to the news which had just then been received of the evacuation of Sebastopol by the Russians, but advised his hearers not to be too sanguine, and reminded them how sadly they had been taken in in reference to Sebastopol once before, and that afterwards they found it to be as strong and formidable as ever. The same was the case in respect to Sweaborg. a short time since they heard of its being totally destroyed, but since then they found that the batteries remained intact, which must be destroyed before Helsingfors could be taken. He believed every Englishman would have cause to rejoice at the downfall of Sebastopol. But whilst they were on tip-toe of excitement, he would ask the reason why it had taken not been taken long ago? Why, it was this. If they had had men in Downing-street with as much pluck as those brave soldiers in the Crimea, he believed that old England's flag, which had braved a thousand years, would have floated triumphantly over Sebastopol long ago. He believed that the brave soldiers in the Crimea had had a more formidable enemy in the Aberdeen Government than they had in the Russian Forces. He then alluded to Alma, Inkerman, and the impetuous Balaklava charge, and maintained that more daring courage had never been evinced; but by the Aberdeen administration these noble fellows had been treated like brute beasts. There was also another party – “the peace at any price” men,

who had seriously damaged the war. These men, when the riots broke out in Wigan, were the first to send to Lord Palmerston for a regiment of soldiers; but when the Czar trespassed on the territory of the "sick man," these very men – who were so very anxious about their own property and lives – were the first to raise a cry for peace – "Peace at any price," with Richard Cobden at their head. That was a specimen of the peace men. Aberdeen did not believe his "friend" Nicholas could be guilty of aggression, but if we had had a Cromwell living he would have detected it at once, and Russia would have been annihilated long ago. There was a friend in our Court, and that "friend" had been the cause of all the delay. The lecturer argued further, that the peace party had spoken out of season. When we were in war, we must push forward to get out of it: Russia had already too much power, and must be curtailed. The lecturer then went on to say that Russia had a destiny to perform, and he read extracts from the will of Peter the Great, wherein it was suggested that rivalry should be promoted, so as to crush Poland. He then alluded to the Duke of Cambridge, who had lately managed to leave the Crimea, and said that if he was at liberty to leave the war, others had the same right; and he ridiculed the idea that because some were of royal blood they should be allowed what was denied to others. It was the same with Prince Napoleon. He was obliged to leave the war, and the next thing we heard of him was that he was leading off a ball with Eugenie. But what was the case in reference to our private soldiers – why, if they lost a leg, they were provided with a wooden one, and perhaps pensioned off with one shilling a day. That was too bad. It reminded him of an officer who went up to an Irishman, and said – "What was the reason you was not at the fight?" The Irishman replied – "That he was just praying that the bullets would be as equally distributed as the favour of prize money." The lecturer then alluded to the formation of the Polish legion, which he strongly objected to, if it was not to fight for its own independence. He compared the present House of Commons to "dummies" in a grocer's shop, and impressed on his audience the necessity of being properly represented. Sir Jas. Graham he denounced as a political coquette, who had deprived a brave and noble admiral of the command of the Baltic fleet. The lecturer concluded by expressing a desire to see Poland free, - that by crushing Russia we should be destroying despotism, - and counselled his hearers not to think of the expense now, but of the benefit which they would derive hereafter. The lecturer drew forth much applause, and after a vote of thanks to Mr. Finlen and the chairman, the meeting separated.

Finlen visited **Street** in Somerset and gave "two lectures to two of the largest audiences we have seen in Street since his last visit, on the evening of Thursday and Monday. Mr. C. Clinker, schoolmaster, presided over both meetings. Some opposition was offered by the manufacturers of the place; it was met and answered much to the satisfaction of the whole assemblies. Arrangements have been made for other meetings to be held here, and also in the neighbouring towns to which Mr. Finlen is to be invited."

During these visits he promoted his newspaper, the '*Spirit of Freedom*' and he also attempted to get backing for a volume he had written on "the *Life of Feargus O'Connor*" - but this never materialised, due to lack of financial support. His exhausting and time consuming missionary work took a toll and he was neglecting his other affairs. By the end of December he wrote 'It has been decided to abandon the above journal [*Spirit of Freedom*] after a struggle of sixteen months,' and so ended his first ventures into publishing and editing.

From October 1855 he seems to have left the address in North Street which he had shared with George Hoppey and his name appears in the Westminster rate books at 11, Exeter Change, St. Mary Le Strand from 1855 – 1858. This address was the headquarters of the 'United Brothers' Sick Benefit Life and Fire Assurance Company'. Whether he actually resided there for some time isn't known, but until he left the company in 1858 his only other address in London was 29, Cranbourne Street, Leicester Square between September and November 1856 where he opened a newsagent and bookshop. By 1857 he had moved to Glasgow. His friend George Hoppey, paid rates in 1856 and 1857 at 4, Greek Street, St. Anne, Soho and it appears that they had gone their separate ways by the end of 1855 though still remaining friends.

1856

The year began with a call from Finlen for support of the NCA's Friar Street Hall, which he had found, and twelve propositions were listed as how to run and use it. More mysteriously was a call in the *People's Paper* 'To all Democrats' to read and follow a special circular sent out by Finlen, asking that "*everyone act in the matter without delay as he values the good name of our cause.*" This was repeated in the *People's Paper* several times and though Jones seemed to insist it was issued by Finlen 'on his own account' it is elsewhere called 'The Chartist Circular of Jones and

Finlen.' What was it all about? It reminded one of Finlen's conspiratorial plea of January 1855. Lots of support for the new idea came in from all quarters. The great idea was made more plain in the *People's Paper* on February 2nd when Jones and Finlen together addressed their 'fellow Countrymen.':[*words and phrases in bold are my emphasis - RCS*]

Two circulars have been issued to you by the executive of the Chartist Organisation – the second of which is intended to base your movement on an entirely new foundation – to make it a **working** movement instead of a **talking** one – to substitute **action** for *discussion*, and a **fixed plan** for *vague deliberation*. Depend upon it, this is as it should be; and the response that the appeal made is beginning to elicit, proves that you feel it too. The new basis that we propose for the movement is one that can alone ensure success. Hitherto we have spent years of work in making our movement strong, just that one day of talk might make it weak; we have complained of treason and government spies, forgetting all the while that government had no occasion whatever for such a thing as spies, since a “National Convention” did unconsciously all the work that spies could have performed, and did it much more completely too – blabbed out every secret, told every weakness, revealed every dissension, showed every feeble point, and warned the government against every strong one. Was ever folly comparable to this? Can you be surprised the Chartist movement never succeeded? Could *any* movement succeed when such a course was pursued? Conventions are useful, are indispensable at certain periods – at others fatal. Where we draw the line is this: when you have to found an organisation, and to establish a principle among people – then have a deliberation – then assemble by all means; but, when the movement is founded, when its principles are established, when the basis of its organisation is laid – then no more talking and canvassing, discussing and wrangling, no more telling the enemy and misleading ourselves at the same time. All that ought to be done then is to spread the movement farther and farther, wider and wider, by tract, lecture, and public meeting; to gather up the newly converted portion of the organisation, **quietly** and **imperceptible**; to let **secrecy**, NOT CONSPIRACY, shroud your movement – and **act when you are strong enough – unexpectedly, suddenly, and unshrinkingly**. The only public sign of the movement should be the lecture, the tract and the public meeting – all else should be **unknown as much as possible**. Never put forth your strength, unless you are tolerably certain of victory; never set it in motion on any but a sufficiently important occasion; and never let the world know your real strength – for even if it is great, it is better not to state it; public rumour, government fear, will make it appear greater than it is – *without any misstatement* on your part, which ought ever to be avoided; for truth is the palladium of a public cause, even as honesty is of a business transaction – while at the same time a public organisation is no more bound to state to all the world, “we have so many members” than a mercantile firm are to reveal how many pounds they possess. But can this be effected, if Conventions assemble, to deliberate on what shall be done, and on what means the movement possesses to do it? Can this be effected if periodical elections for an Executive take place, **with the full lists published**, telling the government exactly how many members there are in a movement, or at least how many of them take a sufficient interest in the cause to put themselves to the trouble of recording a passing vote? Your own common sense must answer: **Never!**

The new basis that we, therefore, propose for the Chartist movement is one that avoids these evils. In plain English it amounts to this; we, **Ernest Jones and James Finlen**, ask you, the Chartist body, to **entrust your entire movement into our hands** – to make us your Executive, and to retain us as such *during your good pleasure* – no periodical election being required – but you having the power to turn us out and appoint others in our stead whenever you think us bad servants, by means of a Convention which should be called for that purpose, and for that alone. We ask you to act up to the details and instructions given in the circulars already issued, and to be issued - **the contents of which will NOT appear in the public papers** – we ask you to **entrust the utmost possible amount of funds to our hands**, to leave to us the appointment of lecturers and missionaries, and **to be implicitly guided by us** in every public act of our movement and every political step to be adopted; we ask you, in fine, to constitute yourselves **AN ARMY**, and make **us its GENERALS**. If you do so, we pledge ourselves to **lead you to victory**. On our side, we undertake to adhere unswervingly to the People's Charter, and to wield the popular strength for its attainment – and for that alone; we undertake not to involve you in any turbulent or ill-advised courses, and to call a convention for the election of a new Executive whenever a majority of your body shall demand the same. More than this we say not; all else must be based on confidence. Without such confidence nothing can be achieved. We see our way clearly in the plan proposed – we know how the Charter is to be gained, and we are determined to gain it for you, if you act upon our propositions. But, to go on in the old track, is useless. We have now struggled many years in the cause – and are resolved **not to waste the best years of our lives any longer** in working on an impracticable basis, whereas we are prepared to devote the whole of our lives to the people's cause, if we are allowed to work in a way that promises success. It is useless to struggle for the sake of struggling and end in certain failure; we are not the men to do so; we can better employ our time; but **trust us, follow us, obey us**, even as a democratic soldier may consistently *obey* a democratic general – and no power under heaven shall long keep the Charter from the people. Events are about to transpire – circumstances are opening out – **combinations are on the horizon** – that make us speak with confidence. **DO YOUR PART** – follow our guidance – **without discussion, doubting or wavering** – and **RESULTS WILL FOLLOW ALSO!** Our second circular is now before you, we again draw

particular attention to the *fifth* paragraph. When you have had that circular before you a sufficient time, and acted up to it to a sufficient extent, **a third will be issued containing a VERY important matter**. Meanwhile, we impress on every reader the following;

1. *Let no one neglect attending to the circular just issued. It is issued in behalf of the holiest of all causes – at the most critical of all periods in the history of the world. It is labour's money spent in labour's cause – and he who wastes or neglects it, commits a cruelty and a sin to his brethren who have struggled for the sake of the poor; and to the poor for whom they have struggled.*

2. *Let everyone who reads this send us the names and addresses of all the democrats they know, in whatever part of the United Kingdom they may reside.* We need addresses above all. Many have been sent us – we need far more. Do not neglect this. Send us the names and addresses of your friends. We publish elsewhere a list of towns where we need the addresses of friends – but those are only a few out of many – wherever you know of a democrat, near and far, send us the direction by which a letter might reach him. Ernest Jones - James Finlen.

All communications were to be sent to Ernest Jones and all monies to the treasurer for The Movement - James Finlen [no address given, but a money-order office in Tottenham-court Road]. This was a dangerous move, especially for the cautious Ernest Jones - what on earth were they thinking of - it was a thinly veiled revolution they were suggesting. What had brought them to this point? After eleven years protesting, including two years in prison, Jones had become frustrated and desperate about the slow progress of change, and he was also running out of money due to the expense of his newspaper – he was ten years older than Finlen. From Jones' point of view, he had alienated all his former associates and Finlen was becoming a prominent orator and activist to whom he could attach himself and use as his lieutenant. Finlen for his part had toured the country and seen first hand the discontent and his ability to motivate the disgruntled. He had seen that the 'talkers' of Chartism had actually made little or no progress in getting what they wanted and spent their time jockeying for position and influence whereas, looking to the continent and America one could see what could be achieved by overturning the status quo, even if it took mass protest leading to revolution to do so. Unfortunately, the British proletariat were in a different class to their continental cousins in that they owned nothing and were so poorly off, as well as mostly illiterate, that they couldn't afford to revolt because starvation faced them should they fail. The lumpenproletariat *would* revolt, but only to loot, not for an ideal or in solidarity with the workers. Revolutions also require lots of cells and organisation - totally lacking in England and to fancy that two men alone, acting as dictators, could muster the support and organisation required was a fantasy. For a while they basked in the glow of positive rapport from the regional localities. I don't know whether any of the 'secret' Finlen circulars have survived, it would be most interesting to see them. Maybe the coming anniversary of the European 1848 Revolution on February 25th was the spur to their issuing this declaration?

While the seeds of this movement were being sown, the enthusiastic Finlen continued with his other activities related to educating and informing his fellow man - he agitated for the British Museum, Crystal Palace and other educational institutions being opened on Sundays; he gave a diametrically opposed view to that of the Government of what was happening, and what should happen in the Crimea, not to appease the Russians but to reward the sacrifice of thousands of soldiers who had died there. His views were widely reported in the Tory and Whig Press, bringing him again to people's notice and increased notoriety.

In London Finlen was involved with the O'Connor fund, to subscribe for a monument and for paying the undertaker's bill. By February 17th Finlen was back in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and lecturing on; "The Crimes of the Peace Makers," and "Is there any political programme so well calculated to insure for the people their full political rights as the People's Charter"? He took part in a discussion on "the People's Charter" with Mr. Richard Hart which was reported in the local papers. Mr. Hart supported the good old days of the distant past when Englishmen were, in his opinion, better off, while Finlen looked to the future when men could elect their representatives to *improve* their lot. Mr. Hart pointed out that the republic of the USA, with its elections, still had slavery, and universal suffrage in France had brought about despotism. After this meeting one local newspaper, *The North of England Advertiser*, no sympathiser with either the Chartists or Finlen, included the following interesting description of Finlen;

Mr. Finlen was brought down, by the Chartist Party in Newcastle, in consequence of some questions which were put to Mr. Hart, in his lecture in this town a few weeks ago. He is a man under 30 years of age, rather youthful and prepossessing in appearance; and, if he may be taken as a fair specimen of the Chartist body, we should be inclined to think its intentions are good at any rate, whatever its achievements may be. He has an intellectual-looking countenance, and *thinks so*; but in capacity of mind his is not that of a great leader. Mr. Finlen's hair is thrown back so as to expose his face and brow to best advantage, and as if he thought he had a face and brow worth looking at, and it is indeed a face and brow not to be ashamed of. We like Mr. Finlen, and the majority of people would like him. Yet it is difficult to say why he is liked; for his faults are neither few nor difficult to discover. We know nothing of Mr. Finlen's past history; but should guess that he was rather precocious as a child and certainly a spoilt one. We can imagine that the six points of the Charter were early laid before him, and have filled his brain ever since, to the exclusion of almost all other points of wisdom. Like all men possessed of only a single idea, he is exceedingly full of vanity and conceit in connection with it. We repeat – we like Mr. Finlen, and if the world is no better it will certainly be no worse for Mr. Finlen having lived in it. [*the author then goes on to give an even more negative portrait of the dark Mr. Hart*].

On Sunday the 24th February Finlen gave two lectures in Leeds. The following day in London at the Bell Hotel, Exeter Street, Strand, a grand banquet took place to celebrate the complete enrolment of the 'United Brothers Assurance Company' - "The income of the company now amounted to 500*l.* Per annum and policies were effected to the amount of 8,000*l.*" "Mr. Finlen in a speech adapted to the toast, most ably responded."

Not all who received the 'Finlen-Jones circular', however, were convinced that this was a correct path to take and the following appeared in the *People's Paper* of March 1st.

CURRENT NOTES - Letter from Benjamin Armfield, Doncaster dated February 16 1856,

Sir, I am ready and willing to render all the assistance in my power to the better organisation of the Charter movement, for the spread of our principles in instructing the people in a knowledge of their social rights by tract, lecture and public meetings, and in using all the moral means in our power for the achievement of our object, but I cannot acquiesce or take any part in a **secret** movement; it looks too much like, and could be easily construed by the Attorney-General into, **conspiracy**. You assure us that there is nothing illegal or dangerous in the plan, but this assurance is not consistent with the following recommendation: "Act when you are strong enough unexpectedly, suddenly, and unshrinkingly." In my opinion that advice implies the use of **physical force**. I am of the same opinion as our late lamented champion Mr. O'Connor on physical force, "that they who marshal it destroy it," not only it but themselves too. I have no desire to see you and Mr. Finlen become victims to your patriotism and love of freedom. Apart from a physical force movement I sincerely believe you are calculated to do good service to the cause of political and social equality. I have no faith or confidence whatever in a physical force revolution even if successful. The history of the two French revolutions of 1739 and 1848 furnishing sufficient evidence to convince any rational being that Democratic institutions can't be maintained when the great mass of the people are ignorant of their rights and duties. When the people of the country shall have acquired a knowledge of their political and social rights, they will get and keep them, without the aid of physical force. If the new organisation is not a physical force organisation, I can't imagine what there is to keep secret from the members of the association. I am willing to act on the advice and suggestions of the executive when I know what I am wanted to do, but I don't like this rendering **blind obedience**, this groping in the dark: there is nothing reasonable in it. As for keeping our strength or weakness a secret from the public or Government, it is impossible. They know that the Chartists are not the men to let important events (to which they are opposed) pass quietly by, if they could offer an effective opposition. They would take the absence of our opposition as evidence of our weakness. Our numbers might be known by the use of spies or without, if they only referred to the weekly subscription list in the *People's Paper*. Sir, in conclusion, I hope Palmerston won't make this secret movement an excuse for making a coup d'état on the Democracy of Great Britain. Yours fraternally. Benjamin Armfield - *This letter was followed by Jones' response, in answer to it:*

*I feel it a duty to give a special and personal answer to the above manly and temperate letter of a veteran and respected member of the Democratic body. He writes under a mistaken impression. Who has ever talked of a secret **conspiracy**? Who has ever hinted at **physical force**? The paragraph our friend quotes does not apply to conspiracy in secret, but to blabbing out too much. We are not bound to tell our enemy our weakness or our strength—or inform him beforehand of our intentions. The Whigs lay the plan of their campaign—but don't tell the Tories—the Tories do the same and don't tell the Whigs. Then why should we, the Chartists, tell either? The Whigs, or the Tories, meet at the houses of their respective leaders—they hold conclaves of their chiefs at the Carlton Club, or at Derby's or Palmerston's, they arrange their electioneering tactics or their Parliamentary campaign, but who know beforehand what it will be? None, but the initiated chiefs, the confidential few. Then, when the time is ripe, when their Organisation is prepared, and their opponents are most unprepared, they come*

down upon them like a sudden storm and frequently from that very fact, obtain the upper hand. Far be it from me to recommend imitations of Whigs or Tories, aristocrats or monarchs, in any point but one: centralisation of force, and keeping the secret of ones own councils. Tell everybody what you mean to do; and ten to one you never will be able to do what you mean. With conventions and deliberative assemblies you cannot keep your counsels secret—and it is merely to counsels and to policy that I intend the term secrecy to apply, The words not conspiracy were specially added in the address issued. Secrecy of counsel is a very different thing from conspiracy in action, The former is indispensable—the second unpracticable in a country like ours.

With regard to physical force, what have I said about it? I neither adopt it, nor repudiate it. The use or the avoidance of physical force is entirely a matter of circumstances. I believe the people of this country can obtain their rights without an actual resort to physical force. I conscientiously believe this—and I hope this belief is well founded. If it is not, I am neither such a fool nor such a coward, as to shrink from physical force if needed. I do not feel myself inferior to a Frenchman, a Pole, an Hungarian, a German, an Italian, or a Yankee. I believe I could fight as well as they, and I believe the English people, under similar circumstances, would do so likewise. Therefore do not let us have any more of this miserable twaddle about **physical force**. **If it is wanted, we'll have it**—if it's not, we'll do without it—and there's an end of the question. As far as that matter goes—I **only wish I'd 100,000 of the Lancashire and Yorkshire men at my back**, and all the peers, aristocrats, bishops, cotton-lords and usurers before me—and I'd give the lookers on a good account about two hours afterwards. But this is altogether beside the question—nobody is talking of physical force. I only mention it as a protest against pusillanimous and sweeping repudiation of its use—than which nothing can be more ill judged or more absurd.

Mr. Armfield justly observes that physical revolutions fail, if popular knowledge does not accompany them, and instance France. I fully agree, though **you sometimes have to make physical revolutions** to GET AT popular knowledge. Don't forget that, my friend!

Mr. Armfield cannot conceive "what there is to keep secret from the members of the Association" if it is not a physical force movement. But that is precisely the very thing that could not be kept secret from the members! The only "secrecy," I repeat, is, with regard to our plans and intention?" —and if those are published to all the world and talked over in public convention —with details of our numbers, our dispositions, and our power, good bye to our movement. We have had rather too much of this, He says it is impossible to keep our strength or weakness concealed from Government, because we should not let great events pass quietly by - by which I presume he means we should by public meetings etc., protest against, or pronounce in favour of, some public acts. Precisely so. But would that tell the Government how many members we had on our books, or how much money we had in our exchequer? I should rather think not.

As to spies finding out the number of our Association a throughout the Chartist movement, it would require a machinery more costly than that of the church—and even that would fail to obtain information of what was known to the Executive alone. Mr. Armfield says he will act on the advice of the Executive when he knows what he's to do.

He shall be informed—but it is precisely that friends like him may—and foes may not, be informed, that the new basis of organisation has been proposed, and is now endorsed by responses from nearly two hundred towns and villages of Great Britain, 160 of which have been already published in this paper!

Thus much for the special points urged by our friend. Now for the general bearings.

Our friend seems apprehensive of governmental molestation. He fears it will come. Of course it will. Does he—do you—does any one—suppose the rose of liberty is plucked without the thorn of persecution? Do you think the Charter is such an easy thing to win that you may have it by asking for it? Do you suppose government won't act in its own defence? As long as your movement is insignificant, you may continue it with impunity, like a pretty plaything to amuse you—when it becomes dangerous you have to fight for it—fight either in the Courts of law, the prison cells, or elsewhere, as the case may be. Mr. Armfield fears the present organisation might be construed as illegal, Why! if they chose, government could construe the Lord's Prayer into high treason. If there are no laws for it—they will make laws for it. Every child knows that—you know it, I know it—and yet I act—and expect you to act as well. It is a question of generalship. We may prove better tacticians than our foes, and if so, we shall escape the casualties and win the day. I for one, undertake to guide the movement scathlessly and victoriously through the pitfalls government will prepare, if the people confide and **rally round our friend FINLEN and myself**. The conduct of a great movement is a matter of such fine tact, that the slightest mistake, one word too much or too little, one act underacted, or carried too far, may ruin all.

A revolutionary movement is a thing for the statesman's cabinet, not for the debater's platform—it should be the secret of the general's tent, not the talk of trench and bivouac — and therefore I say: entrust it to chosen leaders—rally round them—and act as they direct—so long as you see them remain true to the principle, the details of Chartism, and the cause of Democracy. Beyond that—not one hour! and your sound sense could easily detect the slightest deviation! That may be safely left to you!

There are some people who will neither do anything themselves nor allow anybody else to do it for them, There are some people so excessively 'Democratic' that from very excess of Democracy they oppose all vigorous action that may aid their cause. Accordingly, Mr. Lowry, a Chartist of '39, asks: what right have I to make such a proposition?:—I'll tell him, the "right" given, **by having beheld a succession of miserable twaddlers wreck the movement, of petty enviers divide the movement, of mercenary knaves betray the movement, and of**

despicable cowards desert the movement, when the cause might have been made victorious four times, but for their knavery, their cowardice and malice. [Touch of pot, kettle, black here! - RCS] The "right" given by having seen the efforts of great and good men paralysed by the conspiracies of little and bad men—all rendered possible because our organisation was planted upon a false basis, of which division seemed to be the corner-stone—so industriously was it provided for by the very constitution of our body.

The "right" given by witnessing millions suffering in misery, and units sweltering in magnificence, and by knowing that all this might be changed—oh God! how easily! if the great democratic machine had but the hand of a man laid on its leverage, instead of the palsied touch of the dotard, or the slippery palm of the mercenary hireling.—Mr. Lowry asks what right have I, individually, to speak all this? I'll answer him: the right that Galileo had to say, "The world moves!"—although the world denounced it heresy to say so. The right that Luther had to proclaim an Antichrist, though lukewarm friends sneered and fiery enemies surrounded him. The right that every man has to speak the truth according to his conscience.—But, worst offence of all! what right have I to say, "follow me"—"entrust the movement to my hands?" The right that Rienzi had, when he rose alone among a fallen people, and cried, "Follow me," and led them to liberty and glory equal to the earliest days of yet unfallen Rome. The right that Columbus had when he said, "Follow me," and led the fortunes of Spain to a new world, destined, how greatly! to eclipse the old. The right given by the WARRANTY WITHIN, by no patent from without, whether from royal parchment or from platform votes—but by the knowledge of being capable of performing great acts, and producing results that can change the destinies of a nation, if a response is made to the summons I have given, and power for action is entrusted to my hands. Where has been the fruit of your previous course?—what sign of progress does it give?—have you not tried it long enough to be convinced of its utter folly? I have tried it with you for eleven years of arduous service in your cause—it is not lightly, therefore, that I have proposed this change—but, seeing its necessity, I am not such a moral coward as to shrink from proclaiming it, or from personally taking the responsibility of the course I recommend.

Happily, too, I do not stand alone—but one in every way qualified and entitled to equally participate in the leadership of our cause, has joined me in appealing to its advocates —[i.e. Finlen]—and those, in vast and constantly increasing numbers are enrolling themselves under the banner we feel strong enough to lift, and confident, with popular support, of maintaining victoriously to the struggle's end. Ernest Jones

Despite the content, one can sense a *hint* of Jones beginning to pull back a little from the more extreme feelings that the initial letter inculcated. Oddly, he includes in the same issue of his paper an item taken from the *North of England Advertiser* which *deprecates* Finlen's part in a lecture in Newcastle; however, that paper repeats their previous portrait of him:

"He has an intellectual-looking countenance, and thinks so; but in capacity of mind his is not that of a great leader. Mr. Finlen's hair is thrown back so as to expose his face and brow to best advantage, and as if he thought he had a face and brow worth looking at, and it is indeed a face and brow not to be ashamed of. We like Mr. Finlen, and the majority of people would like him. Yet it is difficult to say why he is liked!"

Is Jones jealous of Finlen's popularity and youth, though he is using it for his own ends? It is a pattern that Jones has exhibited often, of praising someone who supports him until they become a threat to his leadership, and then doing them down.

On March 25th, a Tuesday night, a public meeting was held at St. Martin's Hall, Long-acre, on Administrative Reform where some prominent speakers participated. After Sir John Shelley MP proposed that the ballot should be adopted in elections, Finlen tried to speak but there was uproar when he was denied, since he was not 'an elector of Westminster.' He still proposed that the full Chartist programme be adopted but his proposal was 'negatived' by the chairman. This was much reported in other London papers. Also in March Finlen lectured against 'Urquhartism' and published two letters on the subject.

On April 5th in his *People's Paper* Jones re-iterates his and Finlen's aims but I suspect it was concocted entirely and solely by Jones. It exudes a sense of paranoia, even sounding like some sort of scam to begin with, and then descending into his usual verbiage, totally without any concrete plan or action on his part, with no proof of any actual progress being made or organisation constructed.

EXECUTIVE ADDRESS Friends,—You will perceive that our labours are bearing fruit—that the Chartist movement is becoming, gradually, a powerful reality—that every week towns and villages are placing themselves in communication with us, which are either entirely new to Democracy, or in which Democracy has long been dormant. The obtainment of the Charter is merely a question of numbers; the obtainment of the

needful numbers is merely a question of time, and the length or shortness of that time entirely depends on the amount of funds wherewith you supply us, as on that depends the amount of tract distribution and organised machinery we are able to put in motion.

In making these remarks, and in pointing to our cheering progress and its *infallible result*, if duly followed up, we repeat, the Charter is certain, the Charter will be ours, *if the course we have taken is not thwarted*—but we are not prepared to sacrifice our political reputation, perhaps our liberty and lives, for even in the most moral and constitutional movements leaders ever jeopardise both when opposing an infamous oligarchy—we are not, we repeat, prepared to sacrifice liberty and life to divided councils, bickering, rant, and treachery. What is more, we are not prepared to re-create a movement merely that it may be knocked down at the eleventh hour, at the very point of success, by knavery, folly, or imprudence. If our plans are in our own keeping, we know they are safe—no spies can get at them—no oligarchy can counteract them—no letter-opening can find them out, *for no letters will contain them*—but a vast power is raised up, *without conspiracy*—the world sees it growing; but, like the gathering storm of heaven, it knows not which way it will direct its wrath; it knows not its extent; it merely sees the outer form—greatening and spreading all around—but where the storm will burst, and how, remains unfathomed. So revolutions (however legal, peaceable, and moral) should be guided—so only can they conquer. The enemy can not counteract that of which he knows not the nature—he can not betray that of which he has no knowledge. Therefore, we abide unswervingly by our plan. But once throw open the movement to discussions, candidatures, and elections, to independent isolated councils, and desultory action, our enemies need but send their emissaries, division is created, and all is lost. We refuse to place the movement, we refuse to place ourselves, in that jeopardy. When we alone are responsible, we know we are safe; we know the cause is safe as well, and if the masses organise on that basis, when the hour for action comes we shall know what power we can count on, we shall know that we can count on it in time, and that the precious moment will not be lost in getting opinions, in squabbling about straws, in meeting objections, or in conciliating dissent—and that our power will not be neutralised by letting everything out in these discussions that ought to be kept from the foeman's eye; or perhaps by the publicity and squabbles of an election coming on, just when promptitude, secrecy of council, and centralised action were most needed; or by giving up this or that point, to secure the co-operation of some misled portion of our body, which, had the floodgates of dissension not been opened, would have marched on unswervingly amid the stern discipline of our ranks. No! we repeat, we have had too much of this; our cause shall not be so wrecked, so murdered again. As to the objection of the Manchester Council, that to obtain a Convention for deposing the Executive, would lay the movement open to intrigue and division as much as the old mode, we answer: *that is a strong argument in favour of our plan*, since it is an admission that Conventions and Elections are the very source of bickering, disunion, and ruin, and our plan avoids them at least as much as possible. But, we repeat, something must depend on personal confidence something must depend on individual character; act as you will, you cannot avoid this—then, we say, select your men, reflect well, choose well, and, having chosen—*trust*. Though there may be danger here, it is less than in any other plan. Want of confidence has destroyed as many movements as want of honesty in leaders. If we cannot trust each other, all is at an end. Look at the past of those you choose: it answers for the future. Those who were true in times of power and of danger, when governments did all they could to *buy* and *bribe*—those who were true in times of weakness and dismay, are not likely to desert, when the movement is rising around them, *with* them, *is* them, *by* them,—when all that honourable ambition can desire is wound up for them in the success of that movement—and when oligarchs and monarchs can have no fame so great to bestow, no honour so high to grant, no power so mighty to delegate, as that which would result from the successful leadership of the noblest and truest cause. Such men, men in such a position, can not be bought or bribed, for dishonesty can bring no reward so high as that which honesty is sure to give! It is only when there are many hands, any two, or three of whom, being bought, are enough to divide, paralyse, and destroy the movement, that bribery treachery is to be feared—for among so many, some are almost certain to be venal, and their price is not too high for governments to pay. But the recognised heads of Great Britain's Democracy, with the certainty of victory before them, are no more to be purchased than the mightiest monarch in the world, for even were they sordid, mean and venal, no power on earth can pay so high a price—no one has the reward to give. Therefore, we say—trust in the Executive of two, whose appointment you have so unanimously endorsed; swerve not from that centralised action which must prove invincible, when sufficiently matured—roll on the concentrated power of the nation, with the oneness, the decisiveness such a guidance gives—the concentrated action of one brain—the power of organised millions. Bring those two together, and you have victory; let many act, think, discuss, and you have division, helplessness, and a laughing stock. Throughout history, where the two have been conjoined, victory has followed. Rienzi led, the Romans conquered. Had there been a dozen Rienzis all would have been lost. That concentration has been tyranny's strength. Napoleon made the *coup d'etat* through it. Had there been a dozen Napoleons plotting it, it would have been a miserable ridiculous failure. Let Democracy thence take a lesson of power, of unity, of centralised action, and secrecy of council. The same power used for infamous ends by a tyrant, may be used for noble ends by a patriot. By precisely the same plan of action Rienzi liberated Rome, and Napoleon enslaved France. In the time of struggle, have one head—one dictatorship, if you choose so to call it—(though that can NOT be a dictatorship, which the people can remove any one day by one vote of the majority) after the victory—perish the dictatorship—then let the masses come together, then Parliament

meet, and Democracy assume her rightful garb and power. Meanwhile, remember, that which *is best for Democracy is most Democratic*.

The following has evidently been implied by the Manchester Council: what guarantee is there that if the majority desired to depose the Executive by a Convention, that majority would have its voice fairly heard? The guarantee is the following: the Executive hold power only by the consent of the body. If a number of localities voted for a Convention, their resolutions must be published—if any were withheld, the aggrieved locality would, of course, inform other localities. This no Executive *could* prevent, as the addresses of leading members are pretty generally known—and, therefore, as the power of the Executive rests altogether on the good opinion of the body, any Executive tampering with the votes and will of the latter would soon fall helplessly without support. Therefore, it is that the very essence of Democracy (while yet struggling for its rights) is embodied in our motto:—PERSONAL CONFIDENCE UNDER POPULAR CONTROL. Ernest Jones. James Finlen.

Interestingly, we get an opinion about Finlen's status at this time from a Scottish newspaper, the *Edinburgh News and Literary Chronicle* of April 12th. Discussing the anniversary of the Chartist's demonstration of April 10th, 1848, the piece describes what has happened to all the Chartists since - O'Connor, Cuffy, O'Brien, Cooper, and Lovett, all gone or declined, and, from the writer's point of view, gladly so. But;

If Chartism yet have a leader, I suppose we are to recognise him in the person of the lean and hungry-looking Finlen, who seems to care for no points save the point of precedency, for he is the veritable stormy petrel of all open meetings held in London. Dreaded by chairmen, abhorred of secretaries, and scouted by platform holders, he either mars proceedings or makes the meeting his own.

A big event took place in April, on the 14th., for the 4th anniversary of the founding of the *People's Paper* and to welcome back from exile James Watson. The meeting was attended by Karl Marx who spoke about the Proletarians of Europe;

The so-called revolutions of 1848 were but poor incidents—small fractures and fissures in the dry crust of European society. However, they denounced the abyss. Beneath the apparently solid surface, they betrayed oceans of liquid matter, only needing expansion to rend into fragments continents of hard rock. Noisily and confusedly they proclaimed the emancipation of the Proletarian, *ie.* the secret of the 19th century, and of the revolution of that century. That social revolution, it is true, was no novelty invented in 1848. Steam, electricity, and the self-acting mule were revolutionists of a rather more dangerous character than even citizens Barbes, Raspail and Blanqui. But, although the atmosphere in which we live, weighs upon every one with a 20,000lb. force, do you feel it? No more than European society before 1848 felt the revolutionary atmosphere enveloping and pressing it from all sides. There is one great fact, characteristic of this our 19th century, a fact which no party dares deny. On the one hand, there have started into life, industrial and scientific forces, which no epoch of the former human history had ever suspected. On the other hand, there exist symptoms of decay, far surpassing the horrors recorded of the latter times of the Roman Empire. In our days, everything seems pregnant with its contrary. Machinery, gifted with the wonderful power of shortening and fructifying human labour, we behold starving and overworking it. The new-fangled sources of wealth, by some strange weird spell, are turned into sources of want. The victories of art seem bought by the loss of character. At the same pace that mankind masters nature, man seems to become enslaved to other men or to his own infamy. Even the pure light of science seems unable to shine but on the dark background of ignorance. All our invention and progress seem to result in endowing material forces with intellectual life, and in stultifying human life into a material force. This antagonism between modern industry and science on the one-hand, modern misery and dissolution on the other hand; this antagonism between the productive powers, and the social relation of our epoch is a fact, palpable, overwhelming, and not to be controverted. Some parties may wail over it; others may wish to get rid of modern arts, in order to get rid of modern conflicts. Or they may imagine that so signal a progress in industry wants to be completed by as signal a regress in politic. On our part, we do not mistake the shape of the shrewd spirit that continues to mark all these contradictions. We know that to work well the new-fangled forces of society, they only want to be mastered by new-fangled men —and such are the working men. They are as much the invention of modern time as machinery itself. In the signs that bewilder, the middle class, the aristocracy and the poor prophets of regression, we do recognise our brave friend, Robin Goodfellow, the old mole that can work in the earth so fast, that worthy pioneer—the Revolution. The English working men are the first-born sons of modern industry. They will then, certainly, not be the last in aiding the social revolution produced by that industry, a revolution, which means the emancipation of their own class all over the world, which is as universal as capital: rule and wages: slavery.

I know the heroic struggles the English working class have gone through since the middle of the last century - struggles less glorious, because they are shrouded in obscurity, and burked by the middle-class historian. To revenge the misdeeds of the ruling class, there existed in the middle-ages, in Germany, a secret tribunal, called the 'Vehmgericht.' If a red cross was seen marked on a house, people knew that its owner was doomed by the 'Vehm.' All the houses of Europe are now marked with the mysterious red-cross. History is the judge—its executioner, the proletarian.

Perhaps an indication of how Jones [the editor of the *PP*] was viewing Finlen as a rival is evidenced by the mention of Finlen's contribution at this gathering:-

The Chairman [Jones himself!] then gave "The Chartist Movement" which was responded to by Mr. James Finlen in a speech which for wit, point, and argument, we have never heard surpassed." - *but not a word of it was printed!*

James Finlen gave lectures in Northampton in April and May concerning the War with Russia, and also the six points of the People's Charter. Back in London Jones called for more donations for the cause but was vague about how plans were progressing or what details had been decided - he claimed in May [also in Finlen's name] "Our friends, may, however, rest assured that we are neither idle nor negligent. We are pursuing a fixed course - and we need means to extend our operations in the country..." Finlen was in London at the end of May and gave a lecture in Chelsea.

In early June Finlen was away lecturing in the Midlands and Wales. A letter printed in the *People's Paper* on Jun 7th hints at possible discord between the two as sensed by a third party. Jones wrote:

We have to say that a letter from our friend Finlen was never once rejected or excluded from our columns - and that we do not believe he ever said it was. We suspect this to be merely an attempt to breed ill-will between Mr. Finlen and ourselves; of which our enemies may rest comfortably assured there is not the slightest prospect.

Finlen lectured in Nottingham, Sutton-in-Ashfield then Buckley in Flintshire. On June 21st, while Finlen is still away, Jones, in both their names, asks their followers *NOT to send any more money!*

Extracts: For .. action, we must wait, till circumstances occur to arouse them—such as continental revolutions, an anti-republican war, or—bad trade. The first and last of these contingencies are certain—the second is not impossible sooner or later, within no very distant time. There is, however, evidently at present, a pause, in public movements. Be not deceived, as to its nature: it is the calm that precedes the storm. Under the circumstances, we request you **Not** to subscribe farther for the GENERAL Chartist Fund, until you hear from us again. Our object in thus requesting you to desist for a while from subscribing, is, simply because we know times are not prosperous with working men at present, and we cannot bear the idea of depriving you for one moment of a single penny, where it is not absolutely needed for immediate work in our cause. Having enough in hand for immediate purposes, we prefer the money that you would continue to subscribe remaining in your own pockets till needed.

When the hour for agitation returns, we will fearlessly and unhesitatingly call on you again. "LET NOT THIS ADDRESS DISCOURAGE YOU. It is no sign of weakness, or of drawing back—" *he says, though it seems obvious that NO moves or plans had actually been carried out by the two.* Keep your ranks together—increase your members—agitate the districts around you-- DO NOT RELAX IN YOUR ENDEAVOURS—a working staff has been recruited by this new attempt—*do not*—DO NOT—LET IT BE DISBANDED, Work as ever—we hope soon to summon you for the next stage of action in our progress to the sovereignty of Labour. Ernest Jones, James Finlen.

There was no actual organisation or command structure - even though Finlen was attracting good support wherever he went. Without action [which had been promised] or demonstrations nothing *would* happen. There was no working staff - it was all delusion.

After a short return and lecturing in London [partly about the possibility of a dispute with America] Finlen resumed his touring - this time to Yorkshire and one of the main aims was the welcoming of John Frost back from exile. He held several well attended meetings, some in the

open e.g. at a great meeting at Stoodley Pike, Bradford Moor. Finlen attended the Lancashire and Yorkshire delegate meeting on July 20th at Todmorden and on the following day there;

"delivered one of the most eloquently, powerful, and instructive lectures it was ever our pleasure to hear; his subject was, "Both Sides of the House." Mr. Finlen was listened to with the deepest attention throughout, for one hour and forty minutes. It was one continued flow of glowing eloquence; his description of the Whigs and their policy was truly characteristic, and also that of the Tories; Mr. Disraeli's speech in reply to Lord John Russell's on the present state of Italy, was given by Mr. Finlen, most correctly, in a mimic style. It is indeed a most excellent mimic, truly masterly. The Central American question was very ably expounded, fully proving that should there be an hostile movement between the two countries, the fault will be that of the present cabinet of St. James's.....It is the opinion of the Chartists of this town that Mr. Finlen has done much good, and we most earnestly hope that those places that have not had the pleasure of hearing him will lose no time in doing so."

The following day, Tuesday at Ripponden, he lectured on "Benefits of Education," and then he visited Bradford where he lectured both on Bradford Moor and in the 'Democratic School Room.' Thence back to London where he lectured in Tower Hamlets and Deptford before proceeding back to Todmorden for the biggest meeting yet - at Heyhead Green near Todmorden on August 24th when John Frost attended, as did Ernest Jones who came from London especially, to speak before some 25,000 people. A bond was formed between Finlen and Frost at this time. In his long speech Frost, after covering the atrocities he had witnessed in Tasmania, suggested that men such as James Finlen should be supported and sent to Parliament. Finlen's speech was not printed at the time, having been submitted too late, according to Jones. Frost and Finlen spoke together in Bolton on the 28th August.

The *People's Paper* then published Finlen's Heyhead Green speech on September 6th. After his welcome eulogy to Frost he said;

"Despair not, for despair is the destroyer of hope, and hope is the buoy of life. As our liberties depend upon the triumphs of our cause, so does that triumph depend upon our activity; we must, therefore, work, that we may win. By working for the Charter, we shall be dubbed disturbers again. Let it be so. I proclaim myself a disturber. Disturbance is better than stagnation. Stagnation breeds and spreads disease. Society is poisoned by it - it must not be allowed. Yes, I like disturbers, they are public benefactors. That man is a disturber who in the dead hush and middle of the night, when observing his neighbours house on fire, breaks through doors and windows, shouts and roars to disturb, and wakes the sleeping inmates, to bring them to a sense of their peril—that man, I say, is a benefactor. He who stands upon your public platforms, he who conducts your Democratic news-papers, is equally a benefactor. He alarms his countrymen of perils imminent and awful. From his position he describes dangers hitherto: untold, advancing, and which ought to be averted. He tells you that the blood-reddened, the withering, the devastating hand of tyranny is upon you, that it grasps you in your sleep, and summons you to watchfulness and action, that you may be saved. Such a disturber is a saviour, such a disturber I wish to be. What would the world have been without such men. Would to God we had more of them. We are now infested with a nation of sneaks. Mealy-mouthed flunkeys, idolators of big names and little heads, long purses and short consciences, who would shrink and scrape the hoof before a fellow with a patrician name, although he might have about as much brains in his head as he had in his boots, and as much heart in his breast as in his pocket. Our country is overrun with such menials. When will men become wiser? When will they endorse and champion truth for its sake, and its alone. We want indeed sturdy men to-day, men who are conscious of their manhood and their importance, men who will recognize and prove this simple fact, that the ploughman is a more serviceable member of society than the lord—that every man who works, has by his handicraft, won, and that legitimately, one of the foremost places in the world, and that he who works not at all is nothing short of a usurper, a cormorant, and an incubus, a pest to society, a heap of lumber to be removed. I want men, working men, to place a different estimate upon themselves,—to know that, without the labour of the men, the land of the landlord, and the capital of the capitalists would be literally useless. When men can be got to think this they will be less disposed to cringe to either one at every turn, and more determined to be Britons free, great and glorious. The example given by Mr. Frost to his Country is, and ought to be, invaluable. In him no cringing was found, but the real personification of all that should be associated with a holy, an ennobling, and historic cause. I say that I would to God that Britain to day could boast of an army of such men, they would be worthy of the Cromwellian era. Are they to be got? they must be sought. Let no man be distressed because he's poor. Remember that a ship's purser combatted his country's foes and freed his countrymen. Faith is much in every undertaking. Be determined that your next campaign for the Charter shall realise the main and foremost hope of your lives. Do not have your next mighty movement dissipated, squandered by the foe. Climb upward, the

ascent is difficult, certainly, but then it is as possible to master; from the possibility take faith and conquer. The work is great, the help must be co-equal, the strength can be garnered. We shall be dastards if we fail."

This sort of rousing speech showed a different side of Finlen to that of the lecturer trying to educate and inform his audience. It fitted the aims of the 'Movement' as proposed by Jones and Finlen on February 2nd, a more active and adventurous spirit that accorded with the time.

James Finlen makes another move in his career when in September 1856 he opened a book shop and newsagents at 29, Cranbourne Street, Leicester Square, London. His primary occupation of French polishing must have been seriously disrupted when he took up missionary work for the Chartists, which itself, as a source of income, was unpredictable and unreliable. The book-shop was probably intended to provide a steady source of income as well as furthering his Chartist aims in the materials he carried and sold, as well as what he hoped to publish. However, the book shop enterprise doesn't seem to have succeeded since there is no more mention of it after November 29th, though he probably gained a lot of experience through it that gave him courage to attempt a similar venture in Glasgow shortly afterwards. I doubt if Finlen lived there and his address in the Westminster Rate books, 11, Exeter Change, St. Mary le Strand, was possibly where he stayed - also listed as the address for the United Brothers Assurance. The Insurance company, of which he was director and treasurer for some time, was possibly his main source of income. Incidentally, at this time two agents for the 'United Brothers' were newly created not far from Butleigh in Somerset - Mr. George Petty of Somerton and Mr. Alfred Adams of Street - which we could well think of as being due to his initial proselytizing in 1851.

September 15th also saw a huge demonstration in London at Primrose Hill to welcome the return of Mr. Frost after 15 years exile when he was accompanied in a carriage by Ernest Jones and James Finlen and three others. Frost and Finlen both made lengthy speeches and this established a pattern for the months to come when, after more meetings in London, they toured the North together in October. In Yorkshire they gave many speeches that attracted large audiences. The itinerary was: Dewsbury on Monday and Tuesday the 6th and 7th October; Huddersfield 8th and 9th; Todmorden 10th; Halifax 11th and Queenshead 12th, [Leeds 13th], Halifax again 14th; Pudsey 17th Keighley 19th, Leeds again 20th; Bradford on Monday and Tuesday 21st and 22nd, Thurs. 23rd Bingley; Friday 24th Windhill Cragg; Sunday 26th Leeds. Some of the meetings were attended by up to 4,000 people.

Extracts from Finlen's speeches;

He commented upon the fact of education bills being thrown out of parliament, by the men who said the people were too ignorant to be entrusted with the franchise, mentioning the crimes committed by educated men, and members of parliament. Lord John Russell said the people were too ignorant to exercise the franchise. He denied the truth of Lord John's dictum. But what did it prove if admitted. Why, that the laws of the country had been made to keep the masses ignorant, by obstructing their education. The aristocracy had not neglected themselves. They had abundance of seminaries, besides the universities of Cambridge and Oxford: but, till lately, it was a Tory sentiment that it was dangerous to give the people knowledge, and even now it was doled out in as scanty a form as possible. Such notions and such injustice were the real cause of outbreaks and revolutions. Mr. Finlen contended that the House of Commons was inimical to a sound education of the people, by showing that systematic attempts were made to defeat every liberal measure, having that end for its object. Mr. Finlen then advocated universal suffrage; and incidentally a shortening of the hours of labour; stating that R. Cobden, John Bright, and Milner Gibson had, by voting against the Ten Hours' Bill, shown themselves to be opposed to the interests of the people. The ballot; This was said to be un-English, but it was more un-English to see the nation drunk at a general election, or to see a land-owner driving his farmers up to vote as he desired: bribery corruption and intimidation were un-English so if they had the ballot, even if it was un-English, there would be one un-English thing instead of three. He wanted annual parliaments. Many persons said the time was not long enough for the members to learn their work, he said they should know their work before they went to parliament, and the annual elections would allow them to get rid of bad or useless members. They must have paid members. If a man was working and was not paid, he paid himself. The property qualification must also be abolished, not because rich men might not be members of parliament, but because then poor men could be elected to represent labour, as the others represented capital. The last point was equal electoral districts, and it would not be that 30,000 people in Halifax should send two members to parliament while the 250,000 persons,

or more, in Manchester, only sent two members. He concluded by urging them to support the views he advocated, which he considered would be the panacea for all social evils.

While poverty and want were the lot of the industrious, and extreme wealth was possessed by those who did nothing useful, society could never be in a healthy and happy state. *He spoke against the church which denied human rights and perpetuated ignorance* - what had the parsons accomplished in London, the centre of modern civilisation? According to Mr. Mayhew there were 60,000 prostitutes, 30,000 professional pickpockets and 10,000 houseless vagabonds, who slept under archways, and in obscure nooks and corners, and who knew not where the morning's breakfast was to come from. While 100,000 persons thus existed, they necessarily lowered the dignity, the prestige, and the importance of the city and the country. The church and the aristocracy revelled in the wealth which they did not create nor deserve. But, said Mr. Finlen, we are pointed to the numerous charitable institutions which exist around us for the relief of the poor. He accepted discussion upon the subject. He regarded them as indicative of a horrible wrong, and proving the necessity of a change; for it showed a perverted, state of society when the industrious classes had to look for refuge to such charities, and to seek eleemosynary aid from the white hands of those who never did an act of useful work in their lives.

He referred to the House of Commons, as a huge museum, occupied by a majority of *dummies*, whose business there was merely to vote with the ministry or party in being, at the beck of the whipper-in, when they knew nothing of the subject or the debate—they ought to be whipped out, and their places supplied by such men as John Frost.

On November 1st the *People's Paper* published a curious article from Finlen in which he describes a visit he made with John Frost to Saltaire in Bradford, the model village and factory founded by Titus Salt. He described it as;

'like a palace, it is like a barrack, it is like a madhouse, it is like an hospital, it is like a prison; it is like a workhouse, a pandemonium, a vast, deafening, deadening rattlebox.' What they saw was 5,000 men, women, and children, "cribbed, cabined, and confined" there—his "hands", of whom, in *one room* were, eleven hundred women in one weaving shed! Eleven hundred looms all in impetuous motion! Twenty-two hundred shuttles flying, flying, flying! Yes, there, in that place—that one place alone, with the dense, dusty atmosphere; with the stench, the noise; the 'distracting, head-splitting' din.'

The Mill and village were built in 1851 with stone houses, wash houses, bath houses, a hospital, school, library, concert hall, almshouse and other facilities for the workers. In 1856 it was still brand new when Frost and Finlen visited, and provided far better living conditions for workers than existed elsewhere, but Finlen and Frost saw the worker's conditions, on the whole, as being still much below what they aspired to for their fellow human beings.

From Yorkshire Finlen must have temporarily returned to London because he attended a lecture at the the King's Arms, Charles-street, City-road near the Canal Bridge on Sunday evening, 2nd November. On the 16th he was in Newcastle-upon-Tyne to deliver a lecture and then went on to Glasgow where he was to address a public meeting in the Democratic Hall, on Sunday night, November 30th. He opened another bookshop, at 22, Nelson Street, Glasgow - but still retained his 29, Cranbourne Street shop in London at the time [*People's Paper* Nov. 29].

James Finlen was now cutting out a new career for himself and it would seem that he had little time to set up an active revolutionary organisation as Jones and he had proposed at the beginning of the year. Jones probably thought he could control Finlen's youth and exuberance by tying him to their joint enterprise, with himself as the head while Finlen was attracting new recruits and doing the work. He also hoped to attract Frost to his side, but Finlen was now showing too much independence and their 'friendship' was about to sour and subsequently Frost went his own way too.

Finlen's own account of this period, from his 1868 'Defence', is summarised thus;

"Shortly after completing much work imposed upon me by the Labour Parliament—work which took me throughout England, I was called upon by a very important section of the Radicals of North Britain to assume the editorship of a weekly newspaper, started in the interest of the most ultra political views. Notwithstanding my multifarious engagements, I obeyed their call, and did my duty. Almost simultaneously with the performance of such editorial work, I was, along with my friend Mr. J. B. Leno, an editor of a literary magazine, entitled the *Spirit of Freedom*. One of the most important contributors to the *Northern Star*, the paper started in the North, was my very excellent friend Mr. John Frost, a gentleman whose noble devotion to the Chartist cause

culminated, in the year 1839, in his being, along with two others, sentenced, under the administration of a brutal and bloody aristocratic Government, to be hanged, drawn, and quartered."

1857

The Cranbourne shop in London is never mentioned again but in Glasgow, James Finlen is not only listed as a newsagent at 22, Nelson Street but also now, from January 10th at 53, Trongate [*Commonwealth* January 3rd and 10th]. This is a serious change of direction for Finlen, away from London where the most action was taking place, and away from Jones. Scotland's press was even more antagonistic to Chartists than the English Press - but there was *no* cheap paper there that supported the worker's cause. Finlen found backers, but he was taking a gamble on the future. With the move we find less information in the press about Finlen's other activities. However, in the *Paisley Herald and Renfrewshire Advertiser* of January 17th 1857 and two other newspapers, we read of Finlen giving the first in a course of lectures on "the Crimes of the Popes," in the Mechanics' Hall, Canning street, Calton. The lectures embraced the "sins and iniquities" of the various August sinners who filled the pontifical chair from the time of Boniface II. If Finlen had, in fact, been baptized a Catholic this was surely proof that he had broken away from the church. With his already pronounced antipathy to priests could this signify that something may have happened to him in his childhood? Abuse by Catholic, and other clergy on juveniles was occasionally being reported even in Finlen's time, though not exposed as much as in the present time.

In Glasgow we next hear of Finlen attending a public meeting on Monday the 19th January at the City Hall where the subject was the Scottish Freehold Movement - the reform movement there wanted all property owners to get the vote, similar to the English franchise, and the hall was 'crowded in every part with an eager and enthusiastic audience.' A Dr. Begg spoke first and several other speakers followed ending in a second resolution calling for the principle of the forty shilling freehold existing in England be extended to Scotland. A Mr. James Adams rose to move an amendment, and was received with hisses and groans from the promoters of the meeting, and cheers from his supporters. He said he was induced to take this step because of the crude, trifling, and imperfect character of Dr. Begg's measure. He objected to this extension of the privileges of the mere property class, while no recognition was made of the working men as such. - Universal manhood suffrage was the reform needed - his amendment was;

"Resolved, - That as the House of Commons very inadequately represents the people of Great Britain and Ireland at the present time, this meeting cannot but conclude that the extension of the electoral system under which it has been created would be a positive aggravation of the existing evil of bad representation. Therefore, as a radical change in the system is manifestly needed by all men subjected to it, this meeting is of the opinion that it would be utter folly on the part of any portion of the British People to favour or in any way advance any measure of an exclusive and superficial character, and more especially the invidious one propounded by Dr. Begg. It likewise declares that it regards as a waste of time any movement for electoral reform that has not for its object universal manhood suffrage, the arrangement to vote by ballot, the equalising of the electoral districts, the shortening of the duration of Parliament to the period of one year, the paying of the representatives, and the abolishing of the property qualification."

James Finlen took to his feet to second an amendment. He said;

"As it is now late, getting on for twelve o'clock, I will, if you give me a patient hearing, be as brief as the lateness of the hour and the important questions under consideration will permit me in being. Statistics of crime have been alluded to by preceding speakers, and employed by them to illustrate their views, and favour their propositions. The first speaker, Dr. Begg, said that there were in Scotland three thousand criminals, and in Great Britain and Ireland, altogether, thirty thousand—a whole army of them. Now, I wish to avail myself of the rev. gentleman's statement, because it will be of much service to my cause—ininitely more than it could be to his, as I will presently show you. The population of Scotland is three millions, of England seventeen, and of Ireland seven; in round numbers, a total population of thirty millions for the three countries. Now, gentlemen, it has been asserted that the Scotch criminals number three thousand, so if you take the respective populations of the countries named, you will find that those supposed to be in possession of a better electoral system than Scotland are undoubtedly in possession of a proportionate complement of criminals with Scotland. So, if we are to take the statistics of crime as a criterion by which to judge of the nature of political arrangements, we must, in all

fairness say that Scotland, as her crime is precisely proportionate to that of England and Ireland, is no worse politically than those two countries are (Hear, hear), I am quite prepared to say that it is a fair criterion. And then, what conclusion am I led to? Why that as the British political system has engendered amongst men vices at once so prominent and so dangerous, that they have brought within the grasp of rigid law, in the space of one year, an entire army of criminals. I am using Dr. Begg's own language—it must necessarily be a bad, a vicious, and a vitiating system; consequently, one that, instead of being enlarged by being introduced into Scotland, ought to be annihilated at once and for ever. (Cheers). Besides, if we look to the character of the House of Commons, we shall find it deplorably disreputable; finding it so, we will not, I apprehend, be enamoured of the source from whence it emanated; we will not wish to enlarge that source at all events. You would enlarge it were you to succeed in introducing the forty shilling freehold system into this country. Have you nothing better to agitate for? Have you no loftier aspirations than to be able to do what the forty shilling freehold men of Warwickshire have done?—furnish the Legislature with a crotchety intolerant Spooner, and an unfortunate Newdigate—a man who is the woe-begone representative of a ragged, rotten system, the awkward mouth-piece of your most inveterate feomen. Surely the exploits of Mr. Taylor's friends have not been so efficacious and productive of creditable representation as to warrant you, who have been waiting and working so long for political freedom, in abandoning your old cause, and surrendering your hard won vantage-ground in foregoing a creditable position, and a character for constancy, in the mere hope of effecting by some sort of a change a good which to some men is utterly problematical. (Hear, hear). Allow me to tell you that this movement will not advantage working men at all. Allow me to tell you, gentlemen, that any movement not embracing the interests of working men will be, must be abortive. Allow me to tell you that working men have been made cat's-paws of too long and too often. They worked for you in '32; they enfranchised you then; you have worked against them ever since. Now that you have got the boroughs pretty well into your own hands, and that through the credulity and confidence of the toilers, you want the same men, you have ever snubbed and choused, and kept from their due inheritance, to apply themselves once more to the heat and dangers, the toil of another agitation that they may enable you to dominate in the counties. Yours is simply a struggle against the landed aristocracy; you are not working—you never have worked for the people, you merely seek your own aggrandisement. Wherefore, then do you call on the people to work for you? (Cheers).

Now, working men, be careful. Mind, as far as I am individually concerned, I don't care a jot about what may be the issue of this discussion, for I am qualified to vote both in Scotland and England, so I seek nothing for my own gain. But I want you to be careful for your own sakes, for your own credit. It is not because I have the vote that I should sit tamely by, when I know that those who have it not are equally as well entitled to it as I am. I seek it, I demand it, I work for it for the poorest man in the empire—I claim it for him, not as a privilege, but as a right. His claim is embodied in this amendment. Accept nothing less at the hands of these men, for even Palmerston or Russell will give you much more without agitation than these individuals, who are disposed to "Begg" political rights—or promising you after you have agitated. (Cheers).

The Chairman then took a show of hands on the motion and amendment, when the former was declared carried by a large majority. About one-third of the hall, as near as one could guess, voted for the amendment.

The failure of the amendment was elsewhere in the paper explained by; the fact that Adams and Finlen insisting on a resolution containing ALL the points of the Charter leaving no middle course for more moderate suffrage supporters to pursue; the late hour before the organisers of the meeting allowed discussion on any topic other than the promoters had chosen; the organised efforts of the teetotallers to whip up the rank and file to support Dr. Begg. The paper suggested that Adams and Finlen should in future consult beforehand with others who agree with them in essentials as well as their friends, 'when next they essay battle under similar circumstances.'

Two weeks to the day after this meeting Finlen suffered a serious setback;

Between nine and ten o'clock on Monday night [2nd Feb], fire broke out in the premises of Mr. Finlen, bookseller and news-agent, 53, Trongate. The constable on the beat observed smoke issuing from the premises some time after they had been closed, and immediately gave the alarm; but before the engines could be brought into play the whole interior was in a blaze. The shop was opened just the other day, but the stock, we believe, was not very valuable. Such as it was, however, it is entirely destroyed, as well as the fittings and woodwork. The tenant was insured to the extent of £300, which will probably cover the whole loss.

It is possible that Finlen acquired the tenancy of 53, Trongate, north of the river, in the centre of town, in order to transfer his goods there from the less salubrious Nelson Street, else why have *two* shops in Glasgow? The fire was probably accidental, nothing in Finlen's character would suggest it was an 'insurance' job and even though some of the press, such as the *Atlas*, called him 'dictator' and 'noisy braggart' it was unlikely to have been arson on the part of his opponents.

The *Peoples' Paper* of February 28th shows what the effect of Finlen's independent move had on Ernest Jones.

A circular has been issued by certain friends in Glasgow, for starting a weekly newspaper to advocate Chartist principles, and calling for the subscription of one pound shares towards the same. The direction of many of the circulars is in the handwriting of our *friend*, James Finlen, who is settled as a newsagent in Glasgow. We are also informed, whether correctly or not we cannot say, that Mr. Gammage is associated in the undertaking. Far be it from us to seek a monopoly in the democratic press, Messrs, Finlen, Gammage, and others have as good a right to start a Chartist newspaper as any one else, but we put it to the Chartists of Glasgow and the country at large, whether the starting of the proposed new paper will not cause a competition fatal to the new and to the old alike. - We do not think it in either case, friendly or democratic to run that risk, and trust Messrs. Finlen and friends in Glasgow, will reconsider the step they have taken; if not, we trust the Chartists throughout the United Kingdom will weigh the matter well.

There is no proof that Gammage had anything to do with creating the new paper, but by associating him with Finlen, his now ex-friend, Jones was blackening Finlen's name. On March 7th a letter was included in the *Peoples' Paper* from a Mr. Hamilton of Glasgow explaining 'that Glasgow newspapers run down the Chartists on every occasion and they think a paper, called the *Northern Star*, could be issued to reflect *their* news and views and that Mr. Gammage was *not* involved. It is intended to run alongside the *People's Paper* [which doesn't circulate well in Glasgow] and not against it.'

Jones writes in return 'We trust our Glasgow friends will not be made the dupes of any designing individuals whose purpose it may serve to profess friendship for us that they may the more securely knock us down. On March 14th Hamilton replies that the Glasgow democrats wanted a journal *pre*-Finlen, but he was good enough to join them in getting one started. The March 21st issue contained further accusations, recriminations and counters, *plus* a backlash about the price of the *People's Paper* asking for it to be brought closer to the price of the competing *Reynold's Newspaper*. In March Finlen was refused permission to speak at a meeting of the Advanced Liberals at the Trades Hall, Glasgow, since he was neither an elector nor a liberal.

On April 11th 1857 the *People's Paper* published a letter from a 'Particular friend', a Mr. H. Wilkins of Bedminster in Bristol [seems to be a pseudonym] in order that Jones could counter the implications made in it and so that he could further his usual excuses and explanations. The letter follows, and it accurately sums up, to my mind, Jones' faults and weaknesses;

Sir,—You have now been five years the acknowledged head and chief of the Chartist movement, and during that time the Chartist body has subscribed funds to start a paper for you; and year by year they have made subscriptions to keep that paper in existence; and now you ask for a further sum of £500 to bring the price of the paper down to the level of the other metropolitan journals. And what right have you to ask or expect such a thing? What great benefit has the Chartist body derived from your advocacy, that they should subscribe such a sum? Are we any nearer the Charter now than when the paper was started? I think not; and I think the longer we acknowledge you as our leader the farther off we shall get from it. This is no hasty conclusion of mine; for till the last few weeks I have been one of your most ardent admirers; till then I had the greatest faith in your integrity and abilities; but now that confidence has been shaken, and you will have to alter your mode of proceeding very much before I have confidence in you again. I will endeavour to give you my reasons for thus losing faith in you. Ever since the paper was first started you have been at war with most of the old advocates of the Charter, whom you have denounced as enemies in the guise of friends, and by such means you have driven every man of talent from the movement, and you put yourself forward as the only man fit and willing to conduct the movement. With Mr. Frost, however, you acted different. You found the Chartists, as a body, took some interest in his fate, and, of course, you, as their leader must do the same, though you wished him anywhere else rather than in England advocating the Charter; and lest he should have the confidence of the Chartist body, you took him in hand, got up a demonstration for him; wished him (once) put at the head of the movement; sent him through the country to cause an agitation, and then, when he had served your purpose, you treated him with contempt, making it appear that he left the movement of his own accord. Subtle policy that; but, fortunately, the Chartist body is composed of men who can weigh actions as well as words, and who are not always to be carried away by brilliant speeches, if the speaker lacks consistency. You ask the Chartists to raise £500 before you will consent to lower the paper to twopence. And why should we do it? Is the paper such a talented one? Are there so many talented editors and writers engaged on it? Has the paper such a standing and reputation as to

be acknowledged as the chief paper in Europe, that we should make such a sacrifice to keep it going? I really think it is not worth it. In the first place it is got up worse than any penny paper now published. We have no editorial articles to compensate us for the price; and the few paragraphs on the middle page are scarcely worth reading; and to fill up the papers you put in stuff about Holloway and his pills, and things that are of no interest to the readers; and this week you have printed in it the "Paper on Emigration" which you made us pay a penny for before, but which, compared with other publications, is not worth half the money. Besides, these articles on emigration were published in the earlier numbers of the paper, and you call your paper "The People's Paper," with a few thousand readers, at an aristocratic price, and far below every other metropolitan paper in talent and interest; and with this, after beating every other man of talent out of the movement, you think we can put faith in you when you tell us you are going to get the Charter for us. Why, man, had you faith in the principles which you so loudly profess—had you no other interest at heart than the Chartist cause—and did you give your services so disinterested as you say—you would have associated with every man of talent whose principles led him so far (and there are plenty in the country), and by this time you would have raised an organisation which might have had some weight in the country, and would have carried your election and many others besides. But you have done none of this. On the contrary, you have shown such a selfish fear if any one else took a prominent part in the movement as must lead us to infer that you had other longings besides the Charter. You told the men in Smithfield you had a good business and a large income, and did not want money to help the election, Yet a few weeks after, your only cry is "Money! money!" And when you are defeated you tell us, who helped you with the money, we were to blame for not sending it before; if you could have had the money before and have brought the 614 independent electors to the poll before noon, you could have carried the day. Did your voters want buying (this requires explanation), if so where was your own large income, or could not some of your wealthy committee advance funds, if necessary? It's all nonsense to write us such senseless twaddle for fourpence. You lost the election because you did not organise it well before the time. You are so graspingly selfish that you won't keep any one to help you on the paper, and so you could not attend but a few days in Nottingham for fear the paper should suffer too much. As it was, the week you were away, there was not a duller paper published. And since, though you did not scruple to spend the money, you have scarcely condescended to let us know what you did there, and did not report a line of your own speech. You might have done this to make up for our disappointment; you might have given us some of the brilliant speeches which you delivered, and not have insulted us by telling us we should have subscribed earlier. If the money was not sent soon enough to be of service, you ought not to have spent it. You yourself showed no energy before the time of election; but sent out a whining address for a split vote. You tried to coalesce with the Whigs yourself. You found it would not do, and then threw the defeat on our backs. I have given you our reasons for want of faith in you, and if you can justify your conduct I trust you will, for you may depend on it others are as dissatisfied as we are in Bristol. We think also it requires some explanation why you refused to review Mr. Frost's last pamphlet on transportation.—Yours, on behalf of the Bedminster Chartists, H. Wilkins.

[P.S.—Enclosed is an article from "Paul Pry;" by this you will find there are other eyes on you besides the Chartists, and if you carry on much longer, as you have done lately, you will sully your reputation as a philanthropist, and instead of being beloved by the people, your name will be a bye-word and a reproach, and future historians in writing of our times will rank you with Castlereagh instead of Wilberforce.]

—Bristol, April 7, 1857.

To compound Jones' woes, his wife died on the 18th April, leaving him with four sons to care for. He complains in later issues of his paper that a new London paper is to be issued called "*The People*" and backed by rich people who he denotes as the *Evangelical-Shaftesbury-Bishops-Apronstrings-Crystal-Palace-Closing-Sunday-Humbug-Association*, and that this paper and Finlen's "*Northern Star*" are out to crucify the *People's Paper*. Some provincial localities welcome a new 'very good and democratic' paper from Finlen whilst others take Jones' side.

In July Finlen attended a Chartist meeting at the St. George's Hall, St. George's Road in which he stated that it was his first address given to a meeting in London for the last *eight months*. In his speech he argued for the full Charter and that there was no point in a half measure such as merely giving a ballot to the existing voters, as the middle-classes wanted, and that a conference being called to discuss the reforms sought from the next Parliament should include universal suffrage, to include working men. A further meeting held in Deptford, in the Hall of the Institution was attended by both Jones and Finlen and Jones' paper reported its opinion that;

Mr. James Finlen devoted almost the whole of his speech to a tirade against the Conference, and an indirect attack on Ernest Jones. He believed the Conference was a sham and a humbug—he was sure it would fail - he had no faith in pumped-up Conferences, got up at the beck of an individual. That individual was now, to suit his own purposes, calling on the Chartist body to knuckle under to the middle classes, though he had, a short time

ago been the loudest to declare against them—and had sought to make a compromise of principle with them in the case of the National and Constitutional Association, the Administration Reform Association, and other associations. He was seeking to make a compromise of principle now. He called on them not to support such a Conference. What they wanted was, not to be at the beck of an individual—they wanted union, one united movement. He (Mr. James Finlen) would give it them. He had, during the last fortnight, put himself in communication with the leading minds, the real democrats—and he would, in about another fortnight, be able to show them a great, practical movement. The above remarks of Mr. Finlen, were listened to with silent astonishment by the audience, whereon the speaker changed his ground, and alluded to the justice and truth of the Charter, and the treachery of the middle classes.

This is most likely inaccurate reporting by Jones himself trying to blacken Finlen's character. Finlen had railed against the calling of a Conference at the 'beck of an individual (Jones)' who was now himself calling on the Chartist body to knuckle under to the middle classes' though he had been against the idea a short time ago. Despite this, Jones was elected as delegate for the Conference.

In August, Jones spreads another unsubstantiated rumour that: "Mr. Finlen, *or his friends*, are sending round circulars for starting a penny paper in London. The opposition of the new paper - "*The People*" - is not considered enough, but the pretended champions of our cause must also help the capitalists, our enemies, to try to crush the organ of the Chartist movement. We think it right to let our friends know."

Finlen's new paper the '*Northern Star*' was struggling and he was hardly in any position to start another. The *People's Paper* was also on its last legs, never refers to Finlen again, and expired on September 4th 1858. By then Jones had ditched Chartism and become a Radical Reformer.

Finlen moved to Manchester in September 1857 and lectured at the People's Institute, Heyrod Street, Ancoats where the discussion was on "The Maine law and Teetotalism." John Frost wrote a letter in November to Mr. Vardy, secretary of the Chartists of Nottingham, supporting Finlen against Jones and saying that the Chartists must unite or they would fall. In Manchester the Reformists were gaining the upper hand and Finlen's more extreme views in only accepting ALL the aims of the Charter, or nothing, were falling out of favour. At a meeting at the People's Institute in late November he was outvoted, and two other delegates were chosen to attend the proposed National Conference. By November, however, the Indian Mutiny had broken out and was becoming the principal news item of the time.

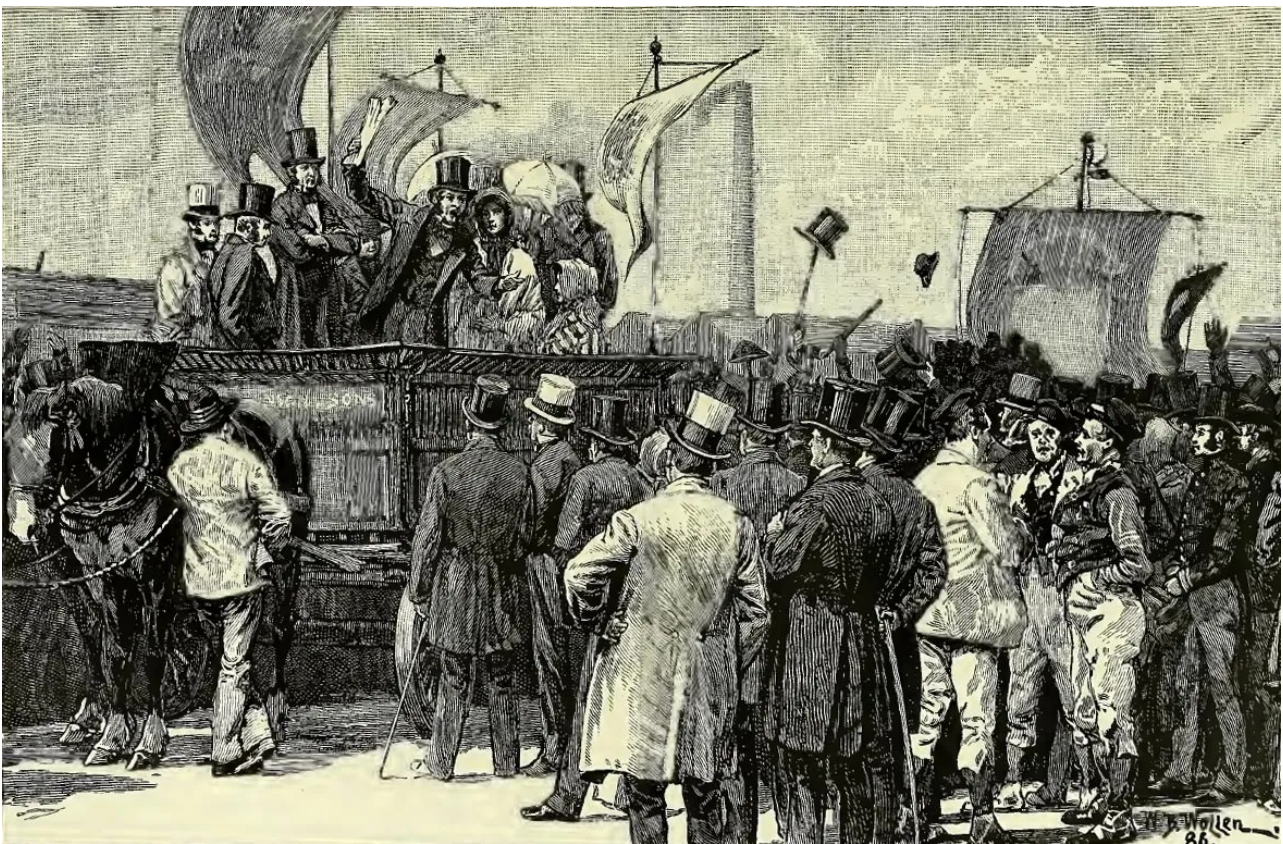
1858

Finlen had kept his newsagent's shop in Glasgow and it is still being mentioned there as late as February 20th 1858, though the number is now given as No. 45, not 22, Nelson Street. We know that he was living in Manchester, at 6, Egerton Grove, Hulme, in January, in a middle-class neighbourhood and his prospects, and probably income, seem to have improved. His life style was also about to change and on Monday the 18th January he gave a 'Dramatic Entertainment' in the Oddfellow's hall, Stamford Street, Ashton-under-Lyne under the title 'A Night with our Poets' and it was aimed not at the working class but 'the clergy, gentry and inhabitants' of Ashton. It began with an introduction, then came items from Shakespeare, Otway, Byron, Goldsmith, Scott and Knowles, as well as by his political friend J. B. Leno. After a ten minute intermission he continued with another Shakespeare item (Othello's apology) followed by more political and revolutionary poems by Charles Mackay, Ernest Jones (!), Gerald Massey and William Smyth. In the middle and to finish he included two more Shakespeare pieces - the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius and 'The Seven Ages.' "Besides the above, Scenes and Passages from some of our leading Comedies will be introduced, making in all one of the most popular, elevating, and interesting entertainments of the day." In the event, the entertainment was not so well attended and Finlen expressed his hope to give another similar entertainment in the near future. If he did, no record of it has surfaced.

In very short order James Finlen travelled the next day, Tuesday, (or possibly on the Wednesday,) to Newcastle-upon-Tyne where, on Thursday 21st he married Mary Caroline Magee at St. John's Church. No member of James' family seems to have been in attendance and on the

certificate he named his father as Patrick Finlen [*see p. 5*] but gave no rank or profession for him. This often suggests that the father was deceased, even though not actually stipulated. Interestingly, apart from giving his home address in Manchester, he no longer gives his profession as French polisher, but 'Agent.' On subsequent documents this is expanded to Commission agent or general agent - and this can only refer to his activities as selling insurance, newspapers or taking commission on attracting new members to the Chartist Associations. His wife was of 'full age' and her father given as John Magee, a cheesemonger. Her family will be dealt with in an appendix, but it would seem that she was the child of Mary Vickers by her second marriage, and that John Magee, her father, had been transported to Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) for theft in 1843. He may well have returned in the 1850's but probably had no further contact with his family. Mary Caroline was brought up in her grandfather's house from childhood - a man who had been a prosperous grocer and a Wesleyan preacher. The witnesses to the wedding were a) James Watson, a friend of James Finlen, and a notable Chartist in Newcastle and b) Isabella Hunter who hasn't been identified for certain.

The couple probably immediately went to Manchester where, ten days later, James Finlen is mentioned attending a council meeting. James again takes up cudgels on behalf of the Chartists and his rivalry with Ernest Jones intensifies, but this is a new chapter in his life and will see another great rise in his popularity and an even greater fall. He was no longer an unknown workman. His name was now recognised by the thousands who had heard him speak and by even more who knew of his celebrity through the, largely negative, Press. No longer a working French polisher but a 'white collar' insurance agent with artistic aspirations and a husband trying to build a family whilst still pursuing a political agenda, if not a political career. He was almost 29 years old, and his wife was around 22.



Chartist demonstration, Kennington Common, 1848

illustration from *The Life and Times of Queen Victoria* (1900) by Robert Wilson.