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ANARCHISM IN ENGLAND
ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

BY DR. MAX NETTLAU



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JOSIAH WARREN, a plain and only moderately educated New Englander, but of unusually independent and earnest spirit, was probably the first to enunciate precise anarchistic conceptions. He had become interested in the social views and plans of Robert Owen (q. v.), at this time first taking root in the land; had joined the Owenite community at New Harmony; had carefully studied its principles and mused upon its failure, till finally, about 1828, he reached the conclusion that its principles were exactly the opposite of the true ones, and that, instead of the communistic idea of each working for all, as Owen taught, the true way to produce order, harmony, and well-being, was for each to live, in his own way, absolutely untrammelled by others, so far as he did not intrude upon the similar privileges of others. His thoughts took especially a financial turn, and he came to the conclusion that cost was the true limit of price; that usury and profit in all their forms were, therefore, economically wrong, and, moreover, that they would disappear under perfectly free competition. He sought to put his ideas into practice, to actually test them before giving them to the world, and therefore started, and for two years successfully carried on, a store in Cincinnati, where cost was the limit of price, and where usury and profit were eliminated. Finding that he was doing a business of \$150,000 a year — a large amount for Cincinnati in those days — he was convinced of the practicality and correctness of his idea, and therefore closed his business to devote his life to the propagation of his ideas. His main writings were *True Civilization*, a short work, first published 1846, and *Equitable Commerce*, in which he elaborated his ideas of cost as the limit of price. These books found at least a few thoughtful readers. Stephen Pearl Andrews declared at a later day that the *True Civilization* was the text and basis of all his own writings, and John Stuart Mill refers to Warren with expressions of deepest interest and respect. THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SOCIAL REFORM (1897.)

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COMMENTARY NOTE BY BENJAMIN R. TUCKER



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1955

A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE
ELUCIDATION OF THE SCIENCE
OF SOCIETY

BY A MEMBER OF THE LONDON CONFEDERATION OF
RATIONAL REFORMERS

"Liberty is the realization of the sovereignty of the individual"

(LONDON: J. WATSON, TRUELOVE, GODDARD.)

THE pamphlet advertised under this title in the "Reasoner," of October 12 and 19, 1853, is, as far as I know, *the first Anarchist propagandist pamphlet published in England*. I cannot say where a copy of it may be found, but shall try to show to some extent under what circumstances the individualist Anarchist propaganda to which it belongs came into existence in the early fifties. Godwin's "Political Justice" (1793) was never quite forgotten, and was even reprinted in the forties (2 vols., 12mo.). William Thompson's "Inquiry" (1824), however, though beginning in an almost Anarchist spirit, drifted into Owenism rather, and could not serve as a basis for an Anarchist movement. The mutualism of John Gray



(1832, 1842, 1848) is logical, but dry, uninspiring, and anything but revolutionary. The individualism of W. Maccall is purely rhetorical, without aim, and purposeless. The rich Socialist literature of the forties contains no translation of Proudhon, no trace (as far as my limited knowledge goes) of any Proudhonist propaganda. It is wonderful that fifteen years of Chartism did not produce a single writer of mark who, after exposing the futility of the Chartist parliamentary panacea, would have arrived at Anarchism; the Owenites and simple co-operators of those times were anti-political, it is true, but that meant with most of them to acquiesce in any state of political oppression that might exist and just abstained from interfering with them. In France, after but one or two years of experience with representative assemblies (1848-49), parliamentarism was utterly rejected by several Socialists (Considérant, Rittinghausen, etc.) who advocated direct legislation; but the monstrous achievements of universal suffrage, the Napoleonic election and *plébiscite*, knocked the bottom out of this propaganda, which did not to any extent touch England at all, though one of Considérant's pamphlets was translated (London, 1851). So the field from which Anarchism might have sprung was almost barren. ¶ In 1850 Thornton Hunt began to publish the "Leader," a weekly review, which under his editor-

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ship (until January, 1852) was in some sort of contact with the advanced movements, but which later soon degenerated into a malignant anti-democratic paper. Probably the ideas of Josiah Warren (the time store) were known to the readers of Owenite papers by American letters for many years, but to a larger public some letters and reviews published since 1851 in the "Leader" probably first made Anarchism known. Herbert Spencer's "Social Statics" were given a very full review (March 15, 22, April 12, 1851), followed soon by four articles on Proudhon's French book, "*Idée Générale de la Révolution au XIX Siècle*" (September 6, 13, 27, October 18, 1851). Here Proudhon's famous words of 1840 are reproduced, ending with: "I am an Anarchist," and it added: "By 'Anarchy' he means no more than what our admirable friend Herbert Spencer sets forth as the goal to which civilization is irresistibly tending,—viz., the final *disappearance of government*, become unnecessary because men will have learned so to control themselves as to need no external coercion." In another place: "We caution the reader against a natural misapprehension of the word Anarchy, which is not used as synonymous with *disorder*; but simply what the Greek word implies,—viz., absence of government, absolute liberty," etc.

¶ In this paper, then, on July 19, 1851, was pub-

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lished a letter, signed "H. E." (New York, June 19, 1851), in which the writer, who went to America to join Cabet's Icarian Community, says: "Fourier is more known here than any other European Socialist writer, but Proudhon seems to me more adapted to meet the sympathies of American Socialism. He, in his paradoxical way, proclaims himself an Anarchist; and recently, in England, Herbert Spencer taught substantially the same thing, and tells you that government is not to be regarded as an institution, to be for ever needful to man." Then he tells how he got acquainted with Stephen Pearl Andrews's "The True Constitution of Government in the Sovereignty of the Individual", "The Science of Society," (No. 1, New York, 1851). "Here," he says, "the principle of absolute individualism — or, if Proudhon prefers, we will say Anarchy (an-arché) — is laid down in plain English unconditionally; but the party profess to have made a grand discovery,— viz., of a principle which will render this absolute abolition of government possible and practicable forthwith—at once, by such as choose." By this he refers to a book then in the press: "Cost the Limit of Price" ("The Science of Society," No. 2, New York, 1853).

(The ideas of individualist Anarchism (which I need not discuss here) were formed at the end of

the twenties (1827) by Josiah Warren, an American who had lived in Robert Owen's New Harmony community, and then began various experiments by himself. His work, "Equitable Commerce: a New Development of Principles as Substitutes for Law and Government," in part published in 1846, was edited in New York in 1852 by Stephen Pearl Andrews; it was followed by "Practical Details in Equitable Commerce" (New York, 1852). ("H. E." is Henry Edger (born in Sussex, 1820, died in Versailles, 1888, a London barrister, later on an agriculturist in Modern Times, indications taken from Positivist publications). He sent several other letters to "Ion," the pseudonym of a contributor to the "Leader." Next, on March 4, 1851, a lady signing "M." wrote to William Parr on a lecture by St. P. Andrews at the North American Phalanx, in New Jersey, who mentioned the existence of an "equitable" village in Ohio, at that time; land had already been taken on Long Island, where Modern Times community was soon to be started (the "Leader," Sept. 6, 1851). On March 13, 1852, "Ion" publishes in the "Leader" a review of Andrew's "Science of Society," which had also casually been mentioned in the "Westminster Review." Henry Edger sends very full notes on Modern Times, as "Trialville" on Long Island had been called (November 21, 1851, in

the "Leader" of March 27, 1852): "It seems to me not unworthy of remark that a heresy among social reformers should have sprung up simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic. Proudhon and Andrews alike discard association, alike proclaim Anarchy; but Andrews, more intelligently to English ears, proclaims it as the sovereignty of the individual. Nor is Andrews alone here: a small party of thinkers, of whom Henry James and Dr. Curtis may be considered the chief, unite with him in teaching the doctrine that the individual is above the institution. Society is for man—not man for society." This is, of all the letters by Edger, the most descriptive and fullest of details scarcely anywhere accessible now, I believe. The "Leader" (August 14 and 21, 1852) reviews Henry James's "Lectures and Miscellanies" (New York, 1852), saying: "That his thoughts point in the direction of no government, whither Proudhon, Herbert Spencer, and others also tend, will startle only those unaccustomed to modern speculations. Everywhere the police becomes less and less a faith with thinking men; and the necessity for 'strong government' in the baser physical sens gets less recognition" (the latter qualification being the means by which the critic of the "Leader" usually retracts everything sensible he has advanced). I have looked up some of the writings of Henry

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James, but whatever good he may have had to say is hopelessly buried in religious twaddle, and it is impossible to resuscitate him as an Anarchist sympathizer of any use.

¶ A year after his first visit H. Edger saw Modern Times again (letters in the "Leader," January 8, 1853); the first winter had been very trying. "For, there being no association, the first leaders cherishing a horror of *Fraternity-sentimentalism*, everyone had to shift for himself as he best could." In 1853 H. Edger spent five months at the North American Phalanx, but expresses himself strongly in favor of Modern Times (letter of July, 1853, the "Leader," September 10): "The intelligent portion of social reformers are nearly all looking in the direction of Modern Times. . . Social reforms, then, which limit themselves to industrial organization, and studiously ignore the existence of the deepest and most widespread social disease, and the social want thereby indicated, may well be failures. . . . The Modern Times reform alone attempts to grapple with this master difficulty, and it does it in the way at once manly and philosophical—of boldly guaranteeing to woman her natural right and the highest duty: that of supreme sovereignty in her own legitimate domain—that of the affections. This is the central idea of Fourier's speculations, the identity of which with the Mod-

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ern Times movement is again very remarkable. A movement which starts by eliminating altogether the idea of *association*, or any *combination* of interests whatever, is coming to effectuate the very reforms which have in this country gone generally by the name of Associationism, while the associations themselves are sinking into inanition."

¶ In this year Edger, who prepared to go to live at Modern Times, got hold of Positivism, which from that time onward he zealously propagated. Letters of January and February 5, 1854 (the "Leader," July 8, 1854), and of March, 1854 (dated Modern Times, *ib.* July 22), show how it was possible for men of different social ideas to live together at Modern Times. "Beyond our one principle [that of the sovereignty of the individual]," he says, "we are in no wise responsible for each other's doctrines any more than for each other's acts, here, in our village of Modern Times. But our principle does this one thing, and here I distinctly take my stand: it unites all of us here in a firm, final protest against the competency of political authorities to decide questions of morals." ¶ I have not found further letters by Edger in the "Leader," but the little French volume:

LETTRES D'AUGUSTE COMTE . . .
à Henry Edger et à M. John Metcalf
(Paris, *Apostolat Positiviste*, 1889)

contains Comte's letters to H. Edger at Modern Times, 1854-57, published by Jorge Lagarrigue. Early in 1854 Edger sent his "full adhesion" to Comte, who was delighted over another example "of aptitude towards noble submission with souls who had been most led astray by anarchical utopias" (March 16, 1854). They agreed, it seems, on the "affinity of Catholicism and Positivism," and Comte recommends "the particular importance of a dignified contact with the Jesuits, to whom, I presume, the supreme direction of the Catholic movement in America belongs. You will feel in this way that their success prepares our success." These are not jokes, as can be seen from the article, "*Auguste Comte et les Jésuites*," by G. Dumas ("*Revue de Paris*," October, 1898). Edger entertained Comte with a project of a sort of Positivist colony, which Comte at first rejected ("I cannot accept your proposal of a sort of Positivist monastery"); but Edger maintained his idea of an agricultural colony (1856), and tells Comte of the influence his ideas begin to exercise round him. Comte thinks that Modern Times may, some years hence, "really become a Positivist village," and after fifteen or twenty years the "spiritualist centre of a Positivist island [Long Island] which would soon form a separate State in the [United States] Federation."

¶ If Comte addressed himself to the Jesuits,

Robert Owen tried to convert the kings of the Holy Alliance, Fourier looked to Napoleon and later on to the never arriving millionaire, and the St. Simonians endeavored to win over a prince to their ideas. It was Blanqui who first struck the note of uncompromising revolutionary Socialism. ¶ As to Henry Edger, we learn more about him and Modern Times from his pamphlet "Modern Times, the Labor Question, and the Family." (Modern Times, October 8, 1855), which contains a fair general statement and an exposition of Positivism. I ignore his second tract: "Brief Exposition of Religious Positivism" (1856). His third "Modern Times Tract" is: "The Positive Community: Glimpse of the Regenerated Future of the Human Race. A Sermon Preached at Modern Times . . . 5th September, 1863" (Modern Times, 1864), which is curious, as it shows his endeavor to put forward something real and tangible about Positivist aims.

¶ Modern Times is best known now by Moncure D. Conway's description, "Fortnightly Review," 1865; he visited it in 1860, and found all the Anarchist arrangements working very well. Of its end he reports there, as well as in his "Autobiography," 1904, that "soon after the [American Civil] war broke out, most of those I had seen there sailed from Montauk Point on a small ship,

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and fixed their tents on some peaceful shore in South America" ("Autobiography"). I hope that fuller accounts are in existence, but have not seen them.

¶ To return to England, Modern Times was described in "Chambers Journal," December 18, 1852 — which I have not seen — and in a lecture by William Parr before the British Association at Glasgow, 1855, printed in the "Journal of the Statistical Society of London," June, 1856, pp. 127-143 ("Equitable Villages in America"). Here he mentioned "The Periodical Letter on the Principles and Progress of the Equity Movement," a monthly paper by Josiah Warren, since July, 1854, which, like the "Peaceful Revolutionist" and similar papers of early Anarchist experiments in America, seems to be quite inaccessible in Europe. ¶ These remarks led me a long way from the consideration of the pamphlet of October, 1853, mentioned above. I saw it noticed only in a paragraph of the "Leader," October 15, 1853, headed "New Society of Reformers," mentioned that this London Confederation of Rational Reformers — perhaps the first English Anarchist group — was "composed, we believe, of seceders from" J. Bronterre O'Brien's organization, the National Reform League. This was their "initiatory tract." Perhaps a paper that stands nearer to Bronterre

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O'Brien's party may contain further details; Ernest Jone's "People's Paper" contains none.

¶ Meanwhile I can only add that the only other Anarchist publication of the fifties which I know is: "The Inherent Evil of all State Government Demonstrated"; being a reprint of Edmund Burke's celebrated essay, "A Vindication of Natural Society" [1756], with notes and an appendix, briefly enunciating the principles through which "Natural Society" may be realized. (London, Holyoake & Co., 1858, vi., 66 pp., 8vo). The notes and appendix are written by an unknown author entirely in sympathy with Josiah Warren's ideas, and who had been in Modern Times himself. They contain no reference to any existing propaganda in England. Perhaps Mr. G. J. Holyoake (who knew so well Ebenezer Edger) will be able to supply the name of the author. . . .

¶ I need hardly add that any further indications on this subject—*e. g.*, where this first English propagandist pamphlet may be found, etc.—are more than welcome.

P.S.— Two days after writing the above, when looking over a truly remarkable collection of early literature, my eye caught a four-page leaflet, bound

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up among currency tracts, which the owner, an old member of the Socialist League, with great kindness let me have, though he had only this copy of it. This is:

AN OUTLINE OF THE PRINCIPLES, OBJECTS,
AND REGULATIONS OF THE LONDON
CONFEDERATION OF RATIONAL RE-
FORMERS, FOUNDED AUGUST, 1853,
BY A FEW PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS OF
THE MIDDLE AND WORKING CLASSES.

¶ This programme, published after the above-mentioned twelve-page tract No. 1, is an amalgamation of the Anarchist ideas of Warren and Andrews with the general demands of advanced reformers of the time. The ideas which the Americans tried to realize in small communities these Englishmen wanted applied to the whole country; hence some practical compromising, but also the idea of a broad and large propaganda.

¶ The secretaries of the new organization were A. McN. Dickey and A. C. Cuddon. With the second name we re-enter known territory, for this is Ambrose Custon Cuddon, whose articles with strong Anarchist leanings in the "Cosmopolitan Review" (London, 1861 — Feb. 1, '62) — also in the "Working M." (1861-62) — I have long since noticed.

¶ As chairman of the "Working Man's" Com-

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mittee he headed the deputation which greeted Bakounine on his escape from Siberia and arrival in London, January 10, 1862; he also spoke at the famous gathering in Freemason's Hall, August 5, 1862, when the same committee welcomed the French delegates to the International Exhibition and the idea of the International Working Men's Association was first alluded to in public. He had been in America early in 1858, and as early as 1841 he was honorary secretary of the "Home Colonization Society," an organization with somewhat more practical, more immediate intentions than the main Owenite body — as he explained in the "New Moral World," Leeds, February 13, March 20, 1841. The "Dictionary of National Biography" records Ambrose Cuddon, a Catholic publisher and journalist in the twenties. A. C. Cuddon may have been his son; neither his articles in the sixties nor the above-mentioned programme, 1853, lack some useless religious phraseology. From such a comparison of idea and style I conclude that A. C. Cuddon wrote the "Programme of the Rational Reformers" of 1853, and it is at least probable to me that he was also the author of the pamphlet in question, and very likely also of the notes to Burke's *Vindication* 1858.

FREEDOM, November-December, 1905.
London, England.

COMMENTARY NOTE

BY BENJAMIN R. TUCKER

PERHAPS some of the older readers of *Liberty* can give Dr. Max Nettlau, the bibliographer of Anarchism, the information which he asks for in the interesting article that I reprint from *Freedom*. I have never seen the pamphlet of which he writes, but there are references in some numbers of Warren's *Periodical Letter* which indicate that Nettlau is correct in his surmise that A. C. Cuddon was its author. I think that I met Mr. Cuddon in London in 1874; though considerably more than eighty years of age, he was as enthusiastic a disciple of Warren as ever. Mr. Henry Edger too, the Positivist of whom Nettlau writes, I met once in New York in 1877, and, as a result of the meeting, he wrote for the *Radical Review*, the quarterly I published in 1877-78 in Bedford, Mass., a long article on "Prostitution and the International Woman's League." Now that Mr. Bailie's life of Warren has appeared, it is hardly necessary to correct Mr.

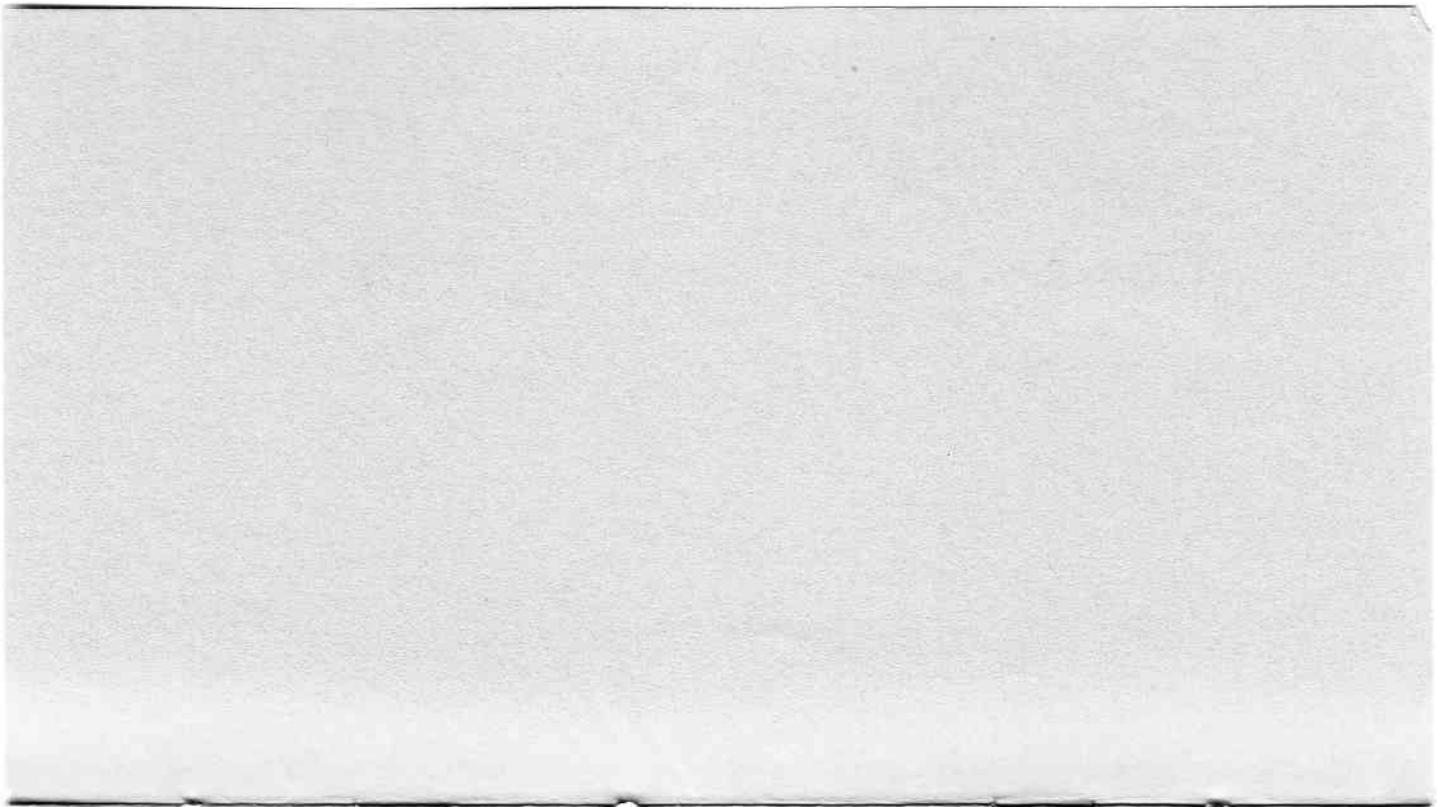
Nettlau's error in calling Warren an Englishman.
[This has been corrected in the present text.] On
the other hand, what is left of the sect of Univer-
sologists will learn with joy from Mr. Nettlau's
article that, though since the death of the Pantarch
the usually necessary period of one hundred years
is far from having elapsed, he has already gained
admission to the calendar of the Saints.

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