

The Firebrand

OF THE CONCEPTS OF IGNORANCE AND SUPERSTITION.



An Exponent of Anarchist-Communism: Holding that Equality of Opportunity alone Constitutes Liberty; that in the Absence of Monopoly Price and Competition Cannot Exist, and that Communism is an Inevitable Consequence.

VOL. III. No. 15.

PORTLAND, OREGON, SUNDAY, MAY 16, 1897.

WHOLE No. 119.

If the World went Right.

Oh! oh! the delight of beholding delight!
A thing that should be if the world went right—
Scope for all fitness and merriest might.

And oh, the dolour of looking on pain,
Poor heart that exhausts its life in vain,
Brave powers all bent that your rules restrain.

If the world went right 't were a world of bliss:
If everyone dealt with the task that's his,
No wholesomer, sunnier world than this.

Let your bird out of his cage, nor fear;
And if he's a bullfinch, as mine is here,
You'll laugh at his comic, diminutive cheer:

Aye! and what's more, if his food be there,
He'll go back to prison without your care—
If you're fair to him then to you he's fair.

Not that he means it—it's natural, quite;
All the live things are so sure to do right
If you trust them enough, and enjoy their delight.

Freedom! You'll see what a man can be
When his fellows are happy, as happy as he,
When the whole wide world is at work and free!

When the follies are laid which have led to the strife
And the envy with which the sad earth is rife
Shall yield to the Natural Order of Life!

—[L. S. Bevington.]

Constructive Anarchy.

I.

THE political question is best approached through the economic. So long as people's ideas of practical everyday life do not rise above the commercial principles of the present, so long it will be absolutely impossible for them to conceive of Anarchy as anything but the so-called capitalistic "individualism," or, as a variation upon that idea, promiscuous brigandage of the Penny Dreadful (or Dime Bloodcurdler or whatever the American equivalent may be) type. And so long, if all established political authority were done away with, the result would certainly be according to their ideas, though on the whole I doubt if it would not in practice be an improvement on existing conditions, if it could last. This, however, is precisely what would be impossible, inasmuch as some of the capitalists or brigands would speedily form a coalition, and impose their authority upon the rest of the population.

Proceeding a little further in the evolution of ideas, we find people who quite realize that the effects of the present system are immoral, but they are utterly unable to conceive anything radically different. All the "reform" they can imagine is to have only one capitalist, namely a legal fiction called the State. The people are supposed to compose between them this imaginary capitalist, whilst at the same time they do not possess his "rights" among them. On the contrary, they are individually utterly destitute—have not the least right or freedom to use anything, do anything, or be anywhere. All this is nonsense to us, but to a person who has never been able to conceive of anything but capitalism and who does not want private capitalism, this absurd idea of State capitalism, commonly called State Socialism, appears the only alternative. To him the abolition of the State

appears to mean nothing less than his eternal submission to private capitalism, tempered at most by turbulent brigandage and expropriations followed by new appropriations.

The individual, however, who is able to conceive of something quite different from the capitalistic principle, who is able to form a new conception of social life, who can think of himself and his fellow beings as existing in a world where the idea of ownership is unknown, and where if possession is respected the reason is simply that those around find it practicable to consider the convenience of the particular possessor without doing injustice to others favor him; where the established idea—not outer form merely—is simply for people to act for the best satisfaction of their own needs whilst consulting also the needs of others, and to respect and help to satisfy each others' needs with fair regard for their own; where there are no so-called "rights" which are really only the definition of prohibition, to be shifted, cut up and pieced together at every step, and where the man who helps another without exacting an ironbound contract of reward, is not thereby lessening his own right to welfare and happiness: the individual who is able to conceive this, is able to conceive a form of society of which government is not a logical consequence or accompaniment.

Unfortunately the faculty of "scientific imagination" is little developed in the average human being. He is scarcely able to isolate a single impression from the combination in which it comes to him; still less to develop a new conception from the elements of what he knows. In order to conceive he must perceive something which is already very similar to what he is to conceive. If he could conceive the ordinary everyday aspect of Anarchy as the Anarchist conceives it—that is, the economic side—he would have no difficulty in coming to the conception of Anarchy itself; but in order to conceive that, he requires to perceive it in practice, or to perceive at least something sufficiently illustrative of it as a general condition; and therefore argument will be comparatively useless unless it is supplemented with propaganda by deed, that is to say, the example of an Anarchist social system brought into practice to at any rate sufficient extent to familiarise him with its working.

It is here that the difficulty comes in. Attempts are sometimes made to organize communities, but in these whatever Anarchist relation may subsist between members is obscured by the commercial relation maintained collectively towards the outside world, and by the very fact of their being withdrawn from external society; besides, there is an artificiality about these attempts, which appear more like endeavours at acting a drama of Anarchy than applying it to real life. On the other hand some reliance has been placed on ordinary co-operative associations, Labor Exchange, etc., to educate the people; but these are merely expedients for making the best of the Property system, and I cannot see that they tend in the slightest degree to afford a conception of a purely Anarchist form of

society. Certainly, while there is even the so-called Individualist property, the fact that two acres of land of poor quality are less favorable to the occupier than one acre of double the richness, because he must do twice as much work to get the same crop, will tend to produce a situation in which some sort of authoritative regulation will appear necessary; so will the question of inheritance, which nothing but the Communist principle can settle with safety; so also will the problem presented by different sized families in regard to education, for instance; and so will indeed the whole relation between parent and child, and between the sexes. Possibly the necessity might not be apparent to those who call themselves "Individualist-Anarchists," but it would halt the people who are not of that temperament very promptly.

The solution appears to me to be in the organizing of private solidarity, somewhat after this method:—At the Anarchist meeting place, or at the Trade Union or Friendly Society lodge room, at the Labor Exchange depot or at any convenient rendezvous, there should be a list on which whoever had any abilities or time which he would willingly devote as a matter of fraternity if he knew where they were required, or who had anything of no particular use to himself but which he thought someone else might find useful, would make an entry of the help he was waiting to give; and a list on which anyone who had occasion to would enter an inquiry for such help as he needed to find. By looking over these lists people would be enabled to know what needs and what capacities corresponded to their unsatisfied capacities and needs and would place themselves in communication. The entries not answered at the place where posted could be placed on the lists at other places and the advanced papers could help by printing such entries, or arrangements might be made for a special circular. This way would also answer for the working of communistic relations between groups and societies as well as individuals. I think that even as things are it would be capable of considerable application and do much to make life more comfortable and of a healthier tone, whilst given the resources it would serve in principle, as the whole mechanism of communistic society. There seems no reason why people in general who are not yet Anarchists should not adopt the plan readily enough, as it is simply a circulation of inquiries and offers; and while at first it would apply to small miscellaneous matters it would no doubt bring about a more healthy confidence in one another, a better spirit of solidarity would be developed and thus the scope of the plan would tend to broaden and increase; it would then be a good practical illustration of a condition of society for which everyone could see that authority was not required—at all events in the working of the every day economic affairs; inasmuch as this could be seen, the rest would be easily enough carried by argument.

To build the idea of Anarchy upon communistic practice, is I think the only certain and effective method. If there were an uprising of the people,

and such lines were already familiar to them, these lines would be extended immediately, and produce a general economic condition which would not suggest the adoption of a new government to replace that which had been destroyed. On the other hand if the people were not familiar with such lines as practical means of social organization, they would certainly fall back upon the old.

Can the ideas be brought directly into practice on a larger scale—at least on a scale more comprehensive than the mere fraternal socialization of miscellaneous services? Can it be applied to give the same development to nearly the whole everyday life of those who are Anarchists, at all events Anarchists in spirit if not wholly so as yet in reasoned doctrine? Of course this to be possible requires that the comrades shall be sufficiently numerous, sufficiently in contact to be associated or in relation with each other for the everyday purposes of life.

I see no reason whatever to the contrary. We can just as well establish our own principles among ourselves as the whites could come to America and hold their own usages though, perhaps, conforming to Indian customs while in the midst of large aboriginal populations, or as the Chinese can carry their own usages, among themselves, into America and Australia. There is no more need to form special and isolated communities for that purpose than for the members of a Friendly Society to do so, provided that we are within easy reach of each other to a workable number, according to our circumstances.

The question may now be put thus:

Granted that a sufficient number of Anarchists exist within a given area to recognize the practicality of establishing a working condition of Anarchists among themselves;

Granted also that they possess between them about the average amount of resources per head found among the rest of the population, excluding the great monopolists; or at least enough to afford a basis for subsistence and improvement;

And granted that they wish to make no such difference between themselves and the rest of the population as exists between the members of a commercial society and the non-members, whilst on the other hand they have to preserve their independence and protect themselves against such persons as might take every possible advantage through them without reciprocating:

What would be the expression of the methods adopted, if a descriptive memorandum were made for the information of whom it might concern?

This I shall assay to answer in the next article.

J. A. ANDREWS.

The God-Idea of the Ancients.

ELIZA BURT GAMBLE, author of "The Evolution of Woman," has recently given to the world a very valuable work on the development of religion. All unprejudiced intelligent persons now recognize the handiwork of man in the gods, and Mrs. Gamble, her postulate based on a wide induction, holds that "sex is the fundamental fact not only in the operations of nature but in the construction" of these deities. "The stage of a nation's development regulates its religion. Man creates his own gods; they are powerless to change him."

A few quotations from the earlier chapters of the work under consideration will give a good idea of its scope and of its great value as an educator. It will be seen that these are not mere abstract speculations, or dry summaries of the beliefs of antiquity, of no practical interest to the men and women of today. The sexual, political, and economic institutions of our time are directly connected with the old conceptions so lucidly set forth in this book. I quote from the first chapter:

"As the conception of a deity originated in sex, or in the creative agencies female and male which animate nature, we may reasonably expect to find, in the history of the development of the two sex-principles and in the notions entertained concerning them throughout past ages, a tolerably correct account of the growth of the god-idea. We shall perceive that during an earlier age of human existence, not only were the repro-

ductive powers throughout nature, and especially in human beings and in [lower] animals, venerated as the creator, but we shall find also that the prevailing ideas relative to the importance of either sex in the office of reproduction decided the sex of this universal creative force. We shall observe also that the ideas of a god have always corresponded with the current opinions regarding the importance of either sex in human society. In other words, so long as female power and influence were in the ascendancy, the creative force was regarded as embodying the principles of the female nature; later, however, when woman's power waned, and the supremacy of man was gained, the god-idea began gradually to assume the male characters and attributes.

"From the facts to be observed in relation to this subject, it is altogether probable that for ages the generating principle throughout nature was venerated as female, but with increase of knowledge, which was the result of observation and experience, juster or more correct ideas came to prevail, and subsequently the great fructifying energy throughout the universe came to be regarded as a dual invisible force—female and male. This force, or energy, constituted one god, which, as woman's functions in those ages were accounted of more importance than those of man, was oftener worshipped under the form of a female figure.

With the incoming of male dominion and supremacy, however, we observe the desire to annul the importance of the female and to enthroned one all-powerful male god whose chief attributes were power and might.

"During a certain stage of human development, religion was but a recognition of and reliance upon the vivifying or fructifying forces throughout nature, and in the earlier ages of man's career, worship consisted for the most part in celebration of festivals at stated seasons of the year, notably during seed-time and harvest, to commemorate the benefits derived from the grain-field and vineyard. As within the bosom of the earth was supposed to reside the fructifying life-giving power, and as from it were received all the bounties of life, it was female. It was the Universal Mother, and to her as to no other divinity worshiped by mankind, was offered a spontaneity of devotion and a willing acknowledgment of dependence.

Thus far in the history of mankind no temples dedicated to an undefined and undefinable god had been raised. The children of Mother Earth met in the open air, without the precincts of any man-made shrine, and under the aerial canopy of heaven, acknowledged the bounties of the great deity and their dependence upon her gifts. Subsequently, through the awe and reverence inspired by the mysteries involved in birth and life, the adoration of the creative principles in vegetable existence became supplemented by the worship of the creative functions in human beings and in [the lower] animals. The earth, including the power inherent in it by which the continuity of existence is maintained, and by which new forms are continuously called into life, embodied the idea of god, and, as this inner force was regarded as inherent in matter, or as a manifestation of it, in process of time earth and the heavens, body and spirit, came to be worshiped under the form of a mother and her child, this figure being the highest expression of a creator which the human mind was able to conceive. Not only did this emblem represent fertility, or the fecundating energies of nature, but with the power to create were combined or correlated all the mental qualities and attributes of the two sexes. In fact, the whole universe was contained in the mother idea—the child, which was sometimes female, sometimes male, being a scion or offshoot from the eternal or universal unit. In the old religion the sky was the husband of the earth and the earth was the mother of all the gods.

"The fact has been shown in a previous work that after woman began to leave their homes at marriage, and after property, especially land, had fallen under the supervision and control of men, the latter, as they manipulated all the necessities of life and the means of supplying them, began to regard themselves as superior beings, and later, to claim that as a factor in reproduction, or creation, the male was the more important. With this change the ideas of a deity also began to undergo a modification. The dual principle necessary to creation, and which had hitherto been worshiped as an indivisible unity, began gradually to separate into its individual elements, the male representing spirit, the moving or forming force in the generative processes, the female being matter—the instrument through which spirit works. Spirit which is

eternal had produced matter which is destructible. The fact will be observed that this doctrine prevails to a greater or less extent in the theologies of the present time.

"A little observation and reflection will show us that during this change in the ideas relative to a creative principle, or god, descent and the rights of succession which had hitherto been reckoned through the mother were changed from the female to the male line, the father having in the meantime become the only recognized parent. In the 'Eumenides' of Æschylus, the plea of Orestes in extenuation of his crime is that he is not of kin to his mother. Euripides, also, puts into the mouth of Appollo the same physiological notion, that she who bears the child is only its nurse. The Hindoo Code of Menu, which, however, since its earliest conception, has undergone numberless mutilations to suit the purposes of the priests, declares that 'the mother is but the field which brings forth the plant according to whatsoever seed is sown.'"

With a male god, Yahveh, with a male Christ as the head of the church, and with man as head of the family, "even as Christ is head of the church," we need not wonder that Christianity sets itself in unalterable opposition to any reform in the relations of the sexes that would recognize the equality of woman with man.

E. C. WALKER.

"Consistent Anarchism." *

A NEWS-LETTER in the Firebrand of March 7th says "Matjalis was a consistent Anarchist," and then goes on to tell how he showed his consistency. Seeing two bankers, Francopoulos and Collas, talking together, he "saw in these two sinister individuals the personification of fraud and hypocrisy, living and reveling from the sweat of several thousand families, and passing at the same time as their protectors and nourishers; in them he recognized the personification of the shrewdness, brutality and infamy of the capitalistic system. He couldn't stand it any more nor control his excitement, but" killed the banker with the long name and tried to kill the one with the short name; then he gave himself up to the authorities, and, after a few days in prison, committed suicide there.

In the next preceding number of The Firebrand—Mr. Addis had been quoting with the most emphatic condemnation and denial the words of a correspondent of the Coming Nation, to the effect that Anarchism is "a gospel of hate" and "conceived by despair;" but if A. Klemencic, who signs his news-letters, is to be believed, it would appear that the State-Socialist writer was right and Addis was wrong. For if Matjalis' acts were not the expression of hatred and despair as pure as can be found, I do not know what ought to be the signs of hatred and despair. And we are told that he is an example of consistent Anarchism. (1)

It strikes me that he offers a sample of consistent governmentalism, and that there could not be liberty (Anarchy) in a society full of men like Matjalis. For there can be no true liberty unless men are free to be fraudulent, hypocritical, shrewd, brutal and infamous, and to live and revel from the sweat of thousands (if they can) while passing as their protectors and nourishers. But when Matjalis finds a man doing these things, he puts him to death without even asking him if he has any defense to make. That is government of a very strict kind. (2)

Any government allows men to be good, as the governing power understands goodness. It is only against what are officially held to be bad characters that the penalties of the law are directed. Now Messrs. Matjalis and Klemencic propose that hypocrisy, shrewdness, brutality, etc., be regarded as good reason for killing a man in the name of Anarchism. That is, they have passed a little law of their own against these things as crimes, and any one who violates this law must dread their avenging hand. How does this differ from the actions of any other government? (3)

But these men were fraudulently absorbing the labor of thousands! Certainly. And if you are not going to leave them free to do so, you are appointing yourself a guardian over those thousands in true paternal government style, and telling them that they shall not believe in, and trust the products of their labor to, any one except those whom you regard as reliable. For it is not denied, it is even implied in the phrase about passing as protectors and nourishers, that Francopou-

* This article was delayed for several weeks for the reason that Comrade Addis thinks Bying on has taken the proper position, therefore would not comment on it, and as I am a poor writer—especially in the English language—could not spare the time sooner to make my comments. A. I.

las and Collas received these fraudulent profits by the real consent of the victims, who were led to believe that they were doing the best thing for their own interests. Abominable? Doubtless; but if you are going to kill a man for being abominable, don't pretend to be an enemy of the principle of government. To cut off by the dagger a business which you regard as fraudulent, is to deny your neighbors the liberty of judging for themselves what they will do with their labor; for it is forcibly restraining them from co-operating with a certain man according to a certain method, because you think that if they did so they would get the worst of the bargain. (4)

I condemn as stupid and harmful to the cause the Chicago bomb of 1886 and the dagger of Caserio; but I recognize in them a definite Anarchistic purpose, because they were blows of resistance, struck at those who were repressing liberty; they were a meeting of force by force. But here we have a blow of the dagger to meet not violence, but deceit. If this is right, then any possible outrage on free speech can be defended by the same argument, if only you can make it appear that the man you suppress was deceiving the people. (5)

But Francopoulos and Collas were maintaining the government, and therefore were criminals, sharers in the guilt of the violence of the government. Yes, so are 27,900,000 of the 28,000,000 grown-up Americans; and whenever you have a plan by which you can break the power of government by killing any of its friends, you may do it without fearing that I will condemn your motives, whatever I may think of your judgment. But Matjalis was not, according to the tenor of the report, hoping to weaken the government by depriving it of valuable helpers; he was simply expressing by his dagger his abhorrence of these men, and that not because they were supporters of government like all his neighbors (for there is not a word of that in the list of causes which overpowered his patience) but because they were swindlers in trade. (6)

If you insist that Matjalis was working for Anarchy, look at the results of his work. One banker dead, leaving his property in the hands of heirs with equally long names and purses. One Anarchist dead. Several Anarchist leaders in jail. The moral value of these deaths, as a social lesson, minimized by the fact that they will be generally regarded not as the act of a brave fighter doing his best to advance a great cause, but as just what they were—the act of a fool who vented his spite in murder without an intelligent purpose in so doing, and who had taken the name of Anarchist simply because it is fashionable for those who hate everything in sight to take that name. (7)

STEPHEN T. BYINGTON.

1. What a sample of logic displayed by such a learned writer a Mr. Byington! If an Anarchist commits an act of hatred and despair, then Anarchism is "a gospel of hatred" and "conceived by despair." If an Anarchist should happen to shoot a wolf and sell the hide it would make the doctrine of Anarchism "a gospel of wolf-hunters" and "conceived by commercialism." That would be just as logical. Matjalis was under the existing conditions perfectly consistent in striking at the object that was causing him and others suffering, as he acted purely in self-defense. If Byington would possess means enabling him to restrict my freedom and inflict permanent pain upon me, I would kill him at the first opportunity rather than endure the miseries, and I would be a consistent Anarchist.

2. This paragraph shows plainly that Byington has not the slightest conception of a condition of freedom: "might makes right" is his doctrine. I will not—for arguments sake—deny his right to be "fraudulent, shrewd, brutal and infamous, and to live and revel from the sweat of thousands," but there would neither be true liberty unless I am free to counteract his shrewdness and brutality, and if I happen to be the shrewdest and the most brutal, Mr. Byington would have to join those that are playing the harp in heaven. According to Byington's own logic Matjalis, then, acted as a free man. But this is not so; he was a slave and rebelled and protested against it as he saw fit, and there would be "no true liberty unless we are free to be rebellious." I say again, Matjalis was consistent, as far as his act is concerned, though he may not have been prudent from our standpoint. But if Byington had said that Matjalis' act was not a phenomenon of a condition of freedom, I would not have made any objection,

for we claim that under a condition of freedom Matjalis would have had no incentive to kill, as he would not have been driven to despair and hatred by the sight of starvation and degradation, neither would the banker have had the opportunity "to live and revel from the sweat of thousands."

3. Neither Klemencic nor Matjalis claimed that the banker was killed "in the name of Anarchism," or that it was "an act of consistent Anarchy" (see Comrade Addis' foot-note), or that it was justifiable to kill a man for the simple reason of having the quality of shrewdness, brutality, etc. Byington knew this before he quibbled (and so does Addis), but when such qualities are exercised to suppress, rob and to inflict their brutalities upon us (as for instance in Spain at present), then we are justified to resist by all and any means.*

4. If millions consent to be robbed and exploited, does that imply that I should not resist either? I thought Byington did not believe in "majority rule." Certainly everybody ought to have the liberty to enjoy the products of his own labor, but that is just what the bankers would not let Matjalis enjoy; on the contrary, they robbed him of his labor and enjoyed themselves without labor—not asking him for his consent.

5. Here Byington lets the cat out of the bag. It is not the murdering he condemns, but he is indignant because the blow is supposed to have been struck against deceit. What logic displayed again in this paragraph! If you meet the police with a bomb it is "a meeting of force by force," but when you strike at the man that hires the policemen it is wrong.

6. Is a government an abstract thing, or is it composed of individuals? If the latter, I say again, Matjalis struck at the right man, the man that hires the policemen to make his robbery secure.

7. Yes, Matjalis was working for freedom by showing the people that their real enemy is the man that "lives and revels from the sweat of thousands." On the other hand I say with George Etievant: "Although it may sound like a paradox we perform no act, good or bad, no matter how insignificant it may be, which we are not forced to perform, since every act is the result of the relationship which exists between one or more sensations arising from the environment in which we live and the greater or lesser power of assimilation which they may encounter in us. Then, since we cannot be responsible for the greater or lesser power of assimilation which we possess with regard to some order of sensations, nor for the existence or non-existence of influences arising from the environment in which we live and for the sensations which result from it, any more than for their relationship to each other or for our greater or lesser respective faculty or force of resistance; neither can we be responsible for the result of this relationship, since it is not only independent of our will but, in fact, determines our will." Thus, if Byington cannot conceive of any other state of society but fraud, shrewdness, brutality, etc., he must expect the same phenomena he opposes now.

A. I.

Egoism.

In The Firebrand of April 18th under the heading "Things and Thoughts" "Zadnak the Dreamer" says:

"Why do some individuals continually rant about the non-existence of altruism; is it that they are so proud of never having a kindly feeling for a fellow man; that they never felt an impulse to do good for others even if it cost them a trifling inconvenience? Or is it that, having stifled all such feelings, they are envious of others who are not so wholly selfish and mean-spirited? Or do they merely seek to besmirch the characters of those who dare prove themselves men and women of nobler minds than their own? Because you are false, is no man true?"

The individualists do it because they are bad. Why do the Communists do the same thing?

* The accusation of Byington is that Klemencic indicated the act of killing the banker was an act of consistent Anarchy, and the wording of the news letter leaves room for that accusation. The reason assigned for killing him was that he was the personification of shrewdness, brutality and infamy. The logic is that to kill men who are shrewd, brutal and infamous is Anarchistic, which I deny. It was for this reason, and no other that I left the criticism to comrade Isaac.

H. A.

Here are a few quotations from "Anarchist Morality" by Peter Kropotkin, I am sorry I cannot quote more fully, but to do so would take up too much space:

"It is easy to understand the astonishment of our great grandfathers when the English philosophers, and the later, the Encyclopedists, began to affirm, in opposition to these primitive ideas, that the devil and the angel had nothing to do with human action, but that all acts of man, good or bad, useful or baneful, arise from a single motive: the lust for pleasure.

"The whole religious confraternity, and, above all, the numerous sects of the pharisees shouted "Immortality." They covered the thinkers with insult, they excommunicated them. And when later on, in the course of this century, the same ideas were again taken up by Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Tchernichevsky, and a host of others, and when these thinkers began to affirm and prove that Egoism, or the lust for pleasure, is the true motive of all our actions, the maledictions redoubled. The books were burned by a conspiracy of silence; the authors were treated as dunces.

"And yet what can be more true than the assertions they made?"

"Here is a man who snatches its last mouthful of bread from a child. Every one agrees in saying that he is a horrible egoist, that he is guided solely by self-love. But now here is another man, whom everyone agrees to recognize as virtuous. He shares his last bit of bread with the hungry and strips off his coat to cloth the naked. And the moralists, sticking to their religious jargon, hasten to say that this man carries the love of his neighbor to the point of self-abnegation, that he obeys a wholly different passion from that of the egoist. And yet, with a little reflection, we soon discover that, however great the difference between the two actions in their result for humanity, the motive has been still the same. It is the quest for pleasure."

"And now before we close let us say a word concerning those two terms altruism and egoism, outcomes of the English school, which continually grate upon our ears.

"Until now we have not even mentioned them, for the simple reason that we cannot see the distinction between them which the English moralists have striven to establish."

"The distinction, therefore, between egoism and altruism is absurd in our eyes. That is why we have said nothing of the compromises that man, if we are to believe the utilitarians, is always making between his egoistic and altruistic sentiments. Such compromise can have no existence for the man who knows his own mind."

I don't know why Kropotkin wrote this, whether it is because he never had a kindly feeling, or because he stifles them, or because he wants to besmirch the noble minded Zadnak, or because he is false.

Suppose "Zadnak the Dreamer" wakes up long enough to ask Kropotkin these questions. I am willing to bet he will lie still and pretend he is still dreaming.

HENRY COHEN.

The Letter-Box.

J. B., Drill, O.—That's all right, comrade. First comes the family and then the propaganda.

F. F., Milwaukee, Wis.—Address is changed now. The Fire brand has been sent regularly to H.

C. M., Otter Lake, Wis.—The address of Ezekiel Slabs was sent to the address you had enclosed.

E. F., New York—Your acknowledgment is accepted in the spirit in which it was made, and I can assure you the one dollar bill was acceptable. Don't despair of your neighbors. They may be slow getting started, but some of them will come sometime.

A. G., New York City—Thanks for your friendly letter and money order. Anyour subscription is paid far ahead, and money needed to pay the hospital, we have credited it to "Wellsbrooks Relief Fund." He is improving at present. Your address is changed.

E. B., Cleveland, O.—Don't despair, comrade. The Americans are slow in coming, but they are coming as we know. There are relatively very few that ever heard or read anything about Anarchism. Is "Commercial Street" sufficient for 87 or did you forget to write the number of his residence? Thanks for your efforts.

M. M., St. Elmo, Ill.—Certainly, misery will make things unbearable and bring a bloody revolution about, but I don't think "the laboring people ought all to buy winchesters and cartridges to be ready for the pinkertons," as there are now-a-days lots more effective and cheaper means than a Winchester to resist with. Thanks for the "greenback." "The Old and the New Ideal" is sent.

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Anarchy.—A social theory which regards the union of order with the absence of all direct government of man by man as the political ideal; absolute individual liberty.—Century Dictionary.

Hunger and Cold.

WHILE the music fell and rose,
And the dance reeled to its close
Where her round of costly woe.
Fashion strolled.
I beheld with shuddering fear
Wolves' eyes through the windows peer
Little dream they you are near,
Hunger and cold!

God has plans you must not spoil,
Some were made to starve and toil,
Some to share the wine and oil,
We are told.

Devil's theories are these,
Stifling hope and love and peace,
Framed your hideous lusts to please—
Hunger and Cold.

—[James Russell Lowell.]

A Queer Customer.

BY SILAS CRANCH.

THE manuscript of which a copy is given below is supposed to have been addressed to the editor of a prominent Republican paper, in an eastern city, by a sincere seeker for light from one whom the writer believed to be capable of giving it. The manner in which this paper came into the hands of the comrade who has forwarded it to The Firebrand is not disclosed.

Mr. Editor:—I have heard and read of some very strange things happening to men's minds by reason of accidents that injured the head, but I never heard of anything just like the case of a man in our neighborhood, and it seems so very curious that I thought I would write to you about it. It may turn out to be quite a story before I get through with it, especially as I am not much of a composer, and may not be able to tell it in the best way, and I hope Mr. Editor that you will see to the punctuation and proper arrangement of the matter if you should think it worth printing, and of course I know you will make any changes that you think best to put it in the right shape. I don't want to hold this man up to ridicule in anyway, as he really seems to be a very good sort of man, takes good care of his family and seems to be generally well-meaning, and I don't want to use his real name. But as it will be the easiest of course to call him by some name I think I will make the name Hoback, as that seems an unlikely sort of name, and if there should happen to be a man of that name he will of course know that I don't mean him, as I don't think it best to use the real name.

Well, this is the way it was: Some weeks ago Mr. Hoback came to my house to tell me about the sanitary sergeant calling on him to warn him to have his slop barrel emptied. He seemed to be so vexed and surprised about it, and sort of mystified, that I couldn't make out at first what his trouble was. Mr. Hoback has always kept his yard cleaned up and kept things neat generally about the place, and he seemed to be much offended that anybody should take the liberty to call his attention to a thing of that kind. The man did not tell him at first that he was an officer, because I suppose he thought Mr. Hoback would see his star and would understand it.

Then Mr. Hoback asked him where he lived, and the officer told him. It wasn't anywhere in our neighborhood, but quite a little distance off in another part of the city. Mr. Hoback asked him then what business it was of his whether the slop barrel was emptied or not, and he began to get mad at the interference of a perfect stranger about his premises. The officer told him there was no use in talking about it, that if he didn't empty his slop barrel he would be pulled into police court and fined. Mr. Hoback didn't want to lose his temper any further, so he told the sergeant he would see about it, and the sergeant went away.

This happened, as it appeared from what Mr. Hoback went on to tell me, several days before, and Mr. Hoback had asked his near neighbors if his slop barrel had offended them in anyway they all agreed it had not, and he asked me if I thought it was bad in

anyway. Now the neighbors that he spoke to before of course might have told him what they did simply because they did not want to get into trouble with him, or hurt his feelings. But I told him just the truth when I said that I had not noticed it at all, although his house was right across the alley from the rear end of my lot, and I might have noticed it anytime that I went out to get coal or empty ashes. I couldn't see anything the matter with the slop barrel.

Then he wanted to know what business this man that called himself sanitary sergeant had to do with it. I told him of course that the sanitary sergeant was an officer of the city, and that he had to see that certain ordinances were carried out. Then he went on to question me and I was greatly puzzled, and at first thought he was fooling me, because he did not seem to understand at all what I was talking about when I spoke of the city government, the common council, the police court, and such things. I was inclined to get angry at the way he talked, as I thought he was wasting my time, but after awhile I began to think queer as it was that he really was honest in his ignorance. After he went away I had some talk with my wife about it, and she went to see Mrs. Hoback to find out from her if her husband was just right in the upper story. Mrs. Hoback said her husband was certainly all right, and acted some as if she wanted to break friendship with anyone that thought he wasn't. But my wife was soon able to convince her that she did not mean any unkindness. Then Mrs. Hoback said that her husband used to be quite a good deal interested in politics, but when the last city election was held he paid no attention to it at all. She thought strange of this as it was so different from what it had been before, and when she asked him on election day if he wasn't going to vote he didn't seem to think anything of it and just went about his work as usual. She did not know that anything had happened to his head, only that she noticed that he did not talk any more about the offices and who was elected, or anything of that sort.

Well, however it happened, it certainly seemed that everything about the officers and government, and all that he had ever known about things of that kind had passed out of his mind, although he knew just as much about everything else as he ever had.

Now the conversation I had with him about sanitary sergeant was something like this, leaving out all the part about his seeming to be fooling with me, and so on. When I came to believe that he really did not understand about government, it went on about like this:

"Who gives the sanitary sergeant his orders, tells him what he is to do?" he asked.

"Why," said I, "the city council of course. They make ordinances or laws for the city. Then there is the mayor and there is a committee of the council that have something to do with it."

"Well," he went on, "what is the city then?"

Of course his ignorance on these things puzzled me all the while as I have said, but I don't see any use of repeating that over and over, so I shall suppose it to be understood from this on.

"The city," I told him, "is a certain district in the state, and the people living in that district."

"What makes the common council then?"

"Every year or so the people elect the members of the council from different parts of the city."

"How do they know how many to elect, or from what parts of the city to elect them?"

"The state law, the city charter, fixes that."

"State, that's something else ain't it? But we'll stick to the city now and try to find out about the State later. Then the people of the city every year or so, as you say, choose in some way who shall be their bosses, is that it?"

"No," I said, "of course not. The council have to do just as the state laws say."

"But if they don't, what happens?"

"Why, if anybody don't like it he can bring a law suit, or have them arrested and find out if it's all right."

"Ah, a law suit—how do they do in a law suit?"

"They have to come into court, and the judge determines what is right."

"The judge, is that another kind of city, or city council, or what?"

"No, it is a man learned in the law, elected to try law suits."

"But doesn't he ever make mistakes?"

"Yes, sometimes people are not satisfied with his decision, and they can take it to a higher court and

have it tried over."

"And is that all?"

"No, not quite. They can go to the supreme court of the state, if the decision of the appellate court is not satisfactory."

"And that ends it?"

"Why, no. Sometimes they go to the supreme court of the United States."

"Now I begin to learn something," said Mr. Hoback at this. "Your city government may make a mistake, and the judge may make a mistake, and the supreme court of the state may make a mistake, but there is a supreme court of the United States to make everything right. But this takes sometime doesn't it?"

"Yes," I told him, it takes a year or so, perhaps. I'm sure I don't know just how long, quite awhile anyway I guess."

"But doesn't it cost something, who pays?"

"The judges have salaries, but each party has to pay lawyers that is," said I thinking of his strange ignorance, "there has to be men learned in the law to argue the questions before the courts."

"Well, now it seems that all these parts of what I believe you call government can make mistakes, but with considerable time and expense it may be determined what is right and what is wrong."

"Yes, I said, a little dazed, but not seeing how it could be any other way.

"And while this is being decided in the courts, the city officers may go on making the same mistake in other cases, and perhaps sometimes making new mistakes?"

"Yes," I said, not knowing what else or anything else to say.

"Now then," went on Mr. Hoback, "it looks quite odd to me that these people in the supreme court of the United States that you tell about, who I suppose don't live right about here, should have to say what is right for us in this little place to do?"

"Why," said I once more, "they must decide according to the law. The law is put down in the books, so that anyone can see the law, and the court decides according to the law, and that settles it."

"Well," said Hoback, as though there was something very strange about this, "if the laws are plain and are put down in books that anyone can read, how does it come that it has to be decided by this court, and that court and two or three more, before it stands?"

Well I don't know just how I explained this. Of course you know Mr. Editor and your readers know, and I am not writing a primer for your instruction or for theirs, so it is not necessary to go over all this ground. I am only trying to tell you of the oddities of my friend Hoback, and an odd one he is sure enough. Our conversations on this subject came up every few days as we chanced to meet, and there is no use in my telling just how we came to meet every time and how the conversations commenced, so I will go on and put down such things as I can remember just as though it all took place at one time.

"About the law that you were speaking of," he said. "What makes the law, and how is it made?"

"Well, every two years the legislature meets at the capitol of the State and passes the laws that are needed. They consider what it is the people want and make it into law, and that stands to guide the people."

"The State?" he said looking at me queerly. "The legislature?"

"Yes," I said. "The state is a country that has a good many cities, counties and towns, and these cities, counties and towns send up each a man to make up the legislature, and when they all get together they make the laws for the whole State."

"Well, but don't some of the cities want laws different from some of the others, to regulate some matters of their own that may differ from the state of things in other places?"

"Oh, yes, of course that is true. Each city has a little legislature of its own as I told you about before, that is the common council. The legislature of the state makes the laws that regulate the cities generally, and then the common council makes special laws in each city for that city."

"Yes, yes," cried friend Hoback, "we are getting on famously. So the people choose their members of the legislature for the state and their members of the common council in the cities, and get the laws just as they want them?"

"Well," I felt bound to say, "it don't always turn out exactly like that. Sometimes one set of people

want a law or laws that the others don't agree to, and each tries to get its members in the legislature and those that get the most members they have it."

"Then it seems one set of people bosses the other set?"

"Oh, yes, but if they don't make laws according to the constitution then the courts knock them out, say they are unconstitutional, and they don't stand."

"How can they do that?" he asked again seeming to be much astonished.

"Why, when the State was organized the people got together in a convention and made a constitution, and that makes the rules that the legislature and the courts must go by. The constitution that the people made themselves is the great law over everything, which the legislature and the courts have nothing to do with, unless the people decide themselves to change it."

"Then when the courts say anything is not according to the constitution the people see just how it is, and everybody is satisfied?"

Well, of course you know Mr. Editor I would have liked to have told him that this was so, but I couldn't do just that, so I was obliged to tell him that sometimes the people were not altogether satisfied with the decisions of the courts. Then he wanted to know what could be done about it, and I told him that sometimes the legislature could pass a new law that would very nearly (if not quite) reach the same object without running against the constitution or the court. In extreme cases they could change the court and get a new decision overthrowing the old one, and sometimes they had to go to war about it, and get the matter settled in that way, as our civil war settled the old question of slavery in the south.

Mr. Hoback studied on this quite awhile, and then he said he thought there must be a good many questions that it was hard to get decided satisfactorily, and that would make a great deal of trouble. Then he thought again a little while, and kind of suddenly asked me what they did when a case came up that was not provided for by law. Well, I know that the courts never give up any conundrums that are put to them, but I hadn't the answer ready to this one; in fact I had never thought of it before, had always supposed there were laws to fit all cases, but I guessed this might not be so, therefore I put him off until I could talk with a lawyer friend of mine about it.

The next time I had a chance to talk with this lawyer friend I told him about Mr. Hoback's question, and he laughed a little and told me that was "an easy one;" wanted to know if I hadn't any harder than that. Well, I told him, this was hard enough for me, and I asked him to explain to me how this was.

Of course I can't remember all that he said just as he told it to me, but I got the idea into my head some way that there are two kinds of law; perhaps there are more, but anyway there are at least two kinds that common people can get some little understanding of. There is the statute law, the kind that is made by legislatures, by congress and so on, and there is something else called "common law." The common law is the way people generally have of regulating their affairs, and settling questions among themselves not covered by statutes; or that is what it is supposed to be, although I can't remember that my lawyer friend made it very clear that the judges took good care to make sure that the customs really are among the people about them, or anything of the kind. I got interested in this question myself, and as nearly as I can make out my lawyer friend told me that the decisions that had been made in the common law for hundreds of years had been kept in books, and the judges went back to the books to tell how to decide the cases that came up, and the decisions in the books and the decisions that the judges make from time to time are law just the same as the laws made in the legislature.

Still it seemed to me that there must be cases coming up quite different from any that had ever been decided before, and I asked the lawyer what the judges did, as there might be cases in which the people had no customs or practices whatever, and how could the judges make their decisions according to the customs and so on. Then he told me the courts or judges sometimes had to make up the law themselves to fit the case, just according to their own ideas, and in some cases even where there had been a good many cases decided one way before they had to make law the other way to fit some case, and decide it as they wanted to.

"Why," he said, "you know that damned Anarchist case in Chicago, a few years ago. Those fellows deserved to be hung and had to be hung, and lawyers stood by the court solidly at the time. But the law was made for the case right along, they had to convict Herr Most and the rest of them, and had to have the law to do it. It was Herr Most they convicted, wasn't it?"

I was a little uncertain about this, but I couldn't tell for sure so I let him go on.

"Why," he said, "those fellows were convicted of conspiracy, eight or ten of them, when some of them had scarcely any acquaintance at all with others; and they were denied separate trial, were all tried together so that every particle of evidence against anyone stood against all the rest, and they brought in books in German when some of them knew nothing about the German language at all. Then they convicted them for exciting (maybe he said inciting) some one to throw a bomb, and never proved who it was that threw the bomb, or whether he ever heard any of the speeches those fellows made or not. In fact they gave up long before the trial was over trying to prove who threw the bomb, and never proved that anyone of them really had anything at all to do with the killing of the police. But they were dangerous men and had to be convicted, and the law was made by the judge to do it, just as fast as the law was required."

I never read much about the Anarchist case that he spoke of—, and about all he said was news to me, but it sounded queer just the same, and I asked him if the judges made law in this way in other cases and it had to be obeyed. He seemed to think the hanging of Anarchists under such law was a pretty good joke, but when I began to question him he hedged a little bit, but said of course the judges had to make law sometimes because they had to decide every case that came up, whether it was like anything they had before or not.

"Then," said I, "the judges or courts can decide any case just about as they please, can they? Or can't they?" He acted as though he didn't really like to answer this, but he seemed by the way he spoke to think of some case that hadn't gone to suit him in some court, and he finally said, "Yes, the courts can decide any case that comes before them one way or the other just as they please, and there are so many thousand cases in the books that they can find precedents (or precedents perhaps it was) to support their decision whatever it is."

I can tell you I got a good deal of light on the law from this talk with my lawyer friend, but I didn't give it all to Hoback. He was already cranky enough, and I didn't want to make him any worse.

Every time I met him I expected to find that he had come to himself, and would have no more foolish questions to ask, but I was disappointed in this for he kept on just the same as ever. And he must have been thinking about the things of which he talked with me a great deal of the time for he always brought them up very soon after we met. Shortly after we had this talk about law and the courts he came at me something like this:

"If the judge can decide the law to be just what they have a mind to, that is make up the law out of their own heads, people are pretty careful who they get for judges ain't they?"

Hoback has seemed so curious and so sharp too that I have got pretty careful what I say to him, but I want to answer all his questions as fairly as I can, because I am wondering all the time where he will come out. Of course you know I have always been a good republican, but I didn't dare say republican and democrat to him for he would want to know right away what they meant. I know the republicans are all right sure enough, but he might ask me what is the difference between republican and democrat, and I am sometimes a little confused and I might not be able to tell him off-hand. The republicans always choose their judges from the most eminent lawyers and most honest men that can be found and they always do just what is right. But the democrats have put up sometimes and (cuss 'em) they have sometimes elected the most ignorant and meanest men that could be found, and the pops—well it's no use talking about the men they put up. But of course I had to say something to Hoback, and I answered him about like this:

"Why a good share of the judges are certainly the very best men, but sometimes the people make a mistake and get some not quite so good, and this makes trouble. But then we must always sustain the courts for they are the palladium of our liberties." I don't know at all what that last part means, but I have

heard it from our political speakers so often I know it is a good thing, and I thought it might kind of stun Hoback and settle the matter with him.

"But," says he, "if as you say the judges and courts can make the law just as they want it, and can undo the work of your legislatures and so on by declaring it unconstitutional and then the people have to submit to it, isn't it true that the courts and judges are the government and the other parts don't amount to much?"

Now it had never struck me just that way, but it did seem as if it was so when he put it to me so straight.

"I should think it did make trouble," Hoback went on, "if as you said the other day people had to go to war with each other to overturn the decisions in regard to slavery in the south."

"Well," I said, "of course it don't come to that very often; and everybody knows that if the decisions of the courts are not always right it is best to uphold them so that things may be settled instead of having confusion by criticising the courts and trying to change their decisions."

I remembered that my lawyer friend had said something like this when I was talking over the matter with him, and it was the best thing I could think of just then but I must say it seemed kind of weak to me.

"Don't they criticise the courts sometimes, and talk pretty strongly about the decisions that are made?" Hoback asked.

"Why, of course," I answered, "there are some foolish people, Socialist, Communist and Anarchist agitators, dirty, beer-guzzling foreigners" (that's what my lawyer friend said) "who are always attacking the courts, but the best citizens always sustain them, even though they don't altogether like their decisions in certain cases."

"Now it seems to me," he went on, "I saw something a few days ago about a decision the courts had made about railroad pooling, and I think the people who were criticising that decision were not foreigners, and as nearly as I can guess they were not any of the other kinds of people you spoke about."

"Oh, of course, that decision about the railroads was way off. The great men that run the railroads know how to carry on their business, and it is all foolishness for the legislatures or the courts to try to run them."

I know I was kind of careless in saying this, but the way he spoke just pulled it out of me at the moment. He took advantage of me right away, for he seems to be getting sharper all the time.

"Oh, ho," he said, "then it seems it ain't the courts that boss after all. Maybe it's the railroads!"

Of course I know I ought to have had something to say to this, because it ain't true. We all know that in this county the people rule, and that

"The ballots fall like snow flakes on the sod,
And do the boddler's will by god,"

as the poet says; but before I could get my breath Hoback went on to say:

"Then I think I read something a little while ago about an income tax decision, and if I recollect right there was quite a good deal of criticism about that."

"Oh, yes," said I, "but that was certainly all right, and the people who attacked that decision were just Communists and Anarchists."

"Yes," once more responded Hoback, "I think I've heard you say something about those people before, what are they anyway? But is it not the same set of people who are criticising the railroad decision now that stood by the court in the income tax case, and urged the people to respect the decisions whether they liked them or not? But it strikes me as nearly as I can make out that there were some pretty respectable people who thought the court should have decided the income tax case differently, and could had they been disposed to."

Well, I can tell you I was awful glad he did not stop with his question about the Anarchist and Communists, because I could not have answered that easily at all. I know they are a very bad set because I have heard a good many people say so, but what kind of people they really are, that is what they believe and what they are trying to do I haven't any idea at all. But just then I happened to look at my watch, and saw that I had just time to get away and meet a man with whom I had important business.

Now Mr. Editor I wish you would tell me what you think about my friend Hoback, and if you can help me to answer some of his questions (which I know are dead easy to people who are just a little smarter than I am) it will be a great relief to me.

Note and Comment.

J. T. FOX has donated 25 copies each of parts I and II of his pamphlet entitled Religion and Labor to The Firebrand, and "Ireland" has donated 50 copies of his pamphlet entitled Social Conditions and Character, James Tochatti donating the postage on them from London.

THERE is now no saloon in Lafayette, Or. It is not a prohibition town, but the business did not pay, so the one saloon in the town was discontinued by its owner. Here is a lesson for prohibitionists. Stop the demand and the supply will stop, but it is hard to stop the supply while the demand continues.

WHY travel across the continent to discuss a proposition with a few other comrades when the same discussion can be carried on by letter and in our periodicals? The discussion when carried on in the periodicals has an immense audience: When carried on in a convention it has necessarily a limited audience. Not only that; when a person reads carefully what one says they are apt to understand it better than when they listen to a more or less excited statement.

CONVENTIONS are expensive and unsatisfactory. Every delegate must sacrifice the time spent in traveling to and from the convention, and in attendance on the convention, from something else. Windbags make the others weary, and clear understandings are seldom, if ever, reached. Heated discussion, points of order, and appeals from the decision of the chair make up the bulk of the proceedings, and the average delegate goes away worse muddled than he came.

H. M. KELLY writes us, from Chicago, protesting that the young man who claimed he had paid him (Kelly) a dollar for The Firebrand, has not spoken truthfully, and that he has not taken any money from anyone, since his return from London, for The Firebrand, and demands that the young man make his name known. We think it nothing but right that the accuser should make his identity known to the accused, stating the time and place that he paid the money to Kelly. We want no one accused wrongfully, nor do we want The Firebrand misrepresented. If people contribute to the support of The Firebrand we are anxious that they should have it, but we know that a comrade might forget a name, or lose the paper on which it was written, and an error of this kind occur without anyone intending to be rascally, and I think it unwise for either party to call names or indulge in bitter denunciations until both have a full understanding of the case. H. A.

Free Trade in Ballots.

ASSUMING government by a majority to be right; assuming that in a Republic a man has a right even that it is his duty to vote—; assuming that a man has a right to property as his own—has a man a right to sell his vote? Yes, he has both a moral and an abstract right to do so, for the following reasons. His vote is his property to dispose of as he pleases or elects for his own good if he is egoistic (and all men are) or for the good of his country if he is altruistic (as he should be.) The onus probandi devolves upon those who deny him the right to sell his vote, to show why he has no right, which cannot be done—popular as the idea is, and easy as it may seem at first thought to do.

Let us analyze the proposition before coming to too precipitate a conclusion as to his right to sell his vote. Suppose he has with all the power of mind he possesses, during the whole campaign last summer and fall, tried to determine which he should as a conscientious patriot vote for, Bryan or McKinley, and having read, heard discussions in favor of both candidates, is utterly unable to form a conviction in favor of either candidate. Mark Hanna comes along and offers him \$5 to vote for his man. He takes the money; he is \$5 better off and Hanna gets the worth of his money. The transaction is a mutual free trade. Both are satisfied, as all free traders are with their exchanges. Can a jury be found in the United States (unless it be a picked one) that will decide that any one has been wronged to the amount of one cent by the transaction? Suppose the man thinks Bryan should be elected, and has pretty strong convictions that way, but Hanna offers him \$10, and he, being a poor man, (as most men are now) takes the money and votes for McKinley. Can it be proven that he has wronged any one out of

a cent? Suppose he decides to vote for McKinley and Hanna gives him \$5—is anyone wronged? Hanna is satisfied or he would not have given it to him.

But you may say, if there was no law nor disgrace attached to selling votes, an election would depend entirely upon the respective size of the purses. So it would; but does it not now? Does not an election depend on the ignorant, and money to buy them? Is not every dollar expended in regalia and torch light processions for the purchase, but appeals to the passions of the ignorant? Is there any argument to the reason in a pyrotechnic display? Who can prove that any man ever did sell his vote against his convictions? Who can blame a patriot for buying a vote for his country?

Then why enact laws against free trade in ballots? It only increases litigation and humiliates the purchaser and the seller of what he intuitively knows to be his right. They are both compelled to exercise stealthiness to evade the law, which fosters immorality. Every law made to restrict people in their rights, makes villains of the people. J. C. BARNES.

Mrs. B. of Omaha Replies.

It appears to me that my letter is misunderstood and if I do not reply soon, some women may ask in the near future if my husband has not murdered the children and myself, and therefore I want to make it clear that such epithets as "brute", etc. he does not deserve.

Let me tell Comrade A. E. K. (No. 12 of The Firebrand) that her comparison between Mrs. A., B. and myself is very lame. I never was a sexual slave and was not even as ignorant as Mrs. A. I never have and never would pray a man to "let me alone"; when I did not feel like it, I told my husband so, and he never tried compulsion.

That we had so many children was not any more his fault than mine—our ignorance was the fault. The children were not all welcome, although I love children very much, because we were not able to take proper care of them. My husband would have been satisfied with one child or none, but since the children were here he has tried to support them. The greatest trouble of it was that he could not, or very seldom, find employment. This is one of the reasons that he left me.

Furthermore, I want to explain that it was not the knowledge of "free love" why we lived together at first without being married, we had not the least conception of free sex relationship: we simply resisted the laws in general, but we were soon threatened with arrest and so we got married "according to law." But this fact (of being legally married) was neither beneficial nor detrimental, as I never felt any more under obligations than before marriage, neither did my husband, but it was the economic side that confronted us, and it was not the wedlock that deprived us of the means of existence or brought my husband among the unemployed—it was our infernal economic system. And as I said before, we were utterly ignorant on the sex question, consequently it was ignorance that prevented us from leading a more happy life. Only of late, after reading The Firebrand and Ruedebusch's book I have conceived a better idea of sex relations, as the German—I am a German—Anarchist and Socialist papers and periodicals never treated this question. (Except Der arme Teufel often speaks of free sex relations, but never in an explanatory way—at least I never could conceive the proper idea.) In short, we were radicals in regard to religion and economics—that was all. About 18 years ago I read Owens' book, in which he pictures a free society and where children and woman are supported by the community and I could easily conceive of free sex relations in a free society, but not how free love could be carried out to-day.

I am not an angel, neither is my husband a devil; we all have our faults. It is rather our ignorance and the prevailing conditions that ails us than our "bad qualities." The praise that has been given to me for supporting ourselves, belongs to my son; without him we would probably have starved. Mrs. B.

Clippings and Comments.

WHATEVER the individual cannot do without a general or special law empowering him to do, is properly a function of the government.—[Pittsburg Kansan.]

There is nothing necessary to human happiness but what the individual can do without any law empowering him to do it.

THE following was clipped from a Chicago paper at the time the A. R. U. strike was in progress and very well illustrates the intent of the Freight Managers Association in precipitating that strike, and the role the government took in it. It also shows that many of the capitalists are perfectly conscious before hand of the results of their acts, and commit them knowing the ruinous effect it will have on other people. It proves, too, what the Anarchists constantly contended: that it is impossible to successfully combat the capitalists without coming in conflict with the government, and that the parent and protector of all monopolies is the government. It was written by the banker Henry Clews:

"For the past week, the chief influence acting upon Wall street interests has been the disorganization of business arising out of the great Western strikes. The remarkable fact is that with so many thousands of the working classes in open hostility not only to capital but to the United States Government, and with the threats of labor leaders to carry this disorder to the utmost extent the numbers of their followers made possible, the financial center of the country has remained calm and values have been comparatively unaffected. European holders of our investments have shown some uneasiness at this spectacle of organized revolt against capital and the laws that protect it—which is only what might be expected from the distance separating the event from the observers—and there has been some consequent selling by the London market, though barely sufficient to visibly affect quotations here.

"The cause of this confidence in the financial markets has been the conviction, entertained from the first, that the disturbance could only be temporary—so brief indeed as barely to afford a chance for making a safe "bear" attack on the market. Wall street has become so familiar with labor disturbances as to know pretty well how to value them.

"The firm attitude assumed by the Government in, for the first time, affirming that these violent methods of strike are fundamentally opposed not only to the rights of the citizens, but also to the laws of the United States, is an invaluable contribution towards confidence in the future immunity of our railroads and other large corporations, as against the lawless interruptions of labor from which the country has suffered so much, and by which the use of capital has been surrounded with very serious risks. In brief, Wall street regards the struggle as the crowning battle between the employing class and the employed class, in which the former has regained its right to unobstructed freedom of contract in the employment of labor. The result of this victory is of no small value to the future stability of our industries and the estimate put upon it is significantly expressed in the steadiness of the financial markets amid so much confusion.

"Another result of much value to the railroads has come out of the strike. Under the past depression of business and the general fall in prices, the roads have felt the necessity of a general reduction in wages, and yet they have hesitated to enforce it lest it should produce a labor disturbance. They have now an opportunity of replacing their past employees, and are doing so upon a generally reduced scale of wages. A valuable opportunity has thus been afforded for the railroads conforming their scale of expenses to the general, and probable permanent, reduction in prices. Thus what has been dreaded as a possible great national calamity turns out to be a valuable contribution towards completing the process of readjustment which our material interests are now undergoing."

Its no Good.

The Colorado Legislature adjourned a few days since without passing an appropriation bill and was promptly called together in extra session by the Governor for this sole purpose else there would have remained another opportunity for the tax payer to shuffle off taxes. Our own Representative, (Pop.) from Loveland, when asked his opinion of the Legislature as a means of relief for the people replied in a disgusted tone "No good—its a perfect fraud."

A. L. W.

Youth's Department.**WHAT LIBERTY MEANS.**

By Liberty we mean that there shall not be any rulers. Every person, having equal rights with the

others, and should be to the others as if they were brothers and sisters, like the Quakers were years ago. I don't mean to do foolish things as the Quakers did in believing in a God or Jesus when we never saw them. I just mean that all should be happy and comfortable and those who can work should work, not like it is nowadays where people are starving to death all day long and have no place to get work, to make a living so as to support themselves and family.

In other places there are people who have money to throw away, or burn as we say it. Now people look here and see for yourselves which is the better way of living, in this order where everybody is happy and comfortable or in the order we are in nowadays.

I. LEVENE, (aged 12 years.)

JOHN'S WAY.

I HAVE just finished reading the book "John's Way, A domestic Radical Story," by Elmina D. Slenker. The book contains 96 pages and advocates Secularism. It is like most of the secular works that I have read, always gets after the church and christians. It tells how a town was turned into liberalism because two of the flock left the church. How the preachers tried to prevent them from spreading liberal ideas and declared them insane. How they were kept from playing their tricks etc. It brings about a great change in a comparatively short time. This is, I think, where Mrs. Slenker makes a mistake. She brings the change about too easy. If it should happen that a christian be turned into liberalism by reading this book it would make the person converted anxious. With anxiety the person or persons would work for just such a change as shown in the book. But such changes as pictured in this book, very seldom, if ever, happen, such a change could not be brought about in so short a time; it would make the anxious persons despair and then they quit working for liberalism altogether, and let things come as they will. It is an interesting story for people who already know that such changes cannot be brought about so easily. But if I was trying to spread the cause of freethought I would prefer a different work. She also advocates interest, and in order to keep interest up, there has to be government and this is the main obstacle in the way of progress. The price of the book is 25 cents, and those that are interested should write to Elmina D. Slenker, Snowville, Pulaski county, Virginia.

A LITTLE ANARCHIST.

Literature.

We are glad to welcome to our table, and place on our exchange list, The Philistine—A Periodical of Protest. It is "printed every little while for The Society of The Philistines and published by them monthly. Subscription, \$1.00 per year. Single copies 10 cents." The Society of The Philistines is "an association of book lovers, and folks who write and paint. Organized to further good fellowship among men and women who believe in allowing the widest liberty to Individuality in thought and expression." Address: The Philistine, East Aurora, N. Y.

We have received the following French Books and periodicals which we recommend to our French comrades everywhere.

Bibliographie de L' Anarchie, par M. Nettlau. Preface d'Elisee Raclus. The book is a 296 page biography of the Anarchist movement, gives the periodicals, persons and incidents most conspicuous in the rise development and growth of Anarchism. Every Student of Anarchism should have it. Price \$1.00. Address: Brussels, Belgium, Bibliotheque des "Temps Nouveaux," 51 rue des Epronniere. *

Le Co-operatisme devant les Ecoles sociales, by A. D. Bancel. Preface de Jean Grave. Of interest to all economic students who can read French. Address, Bibliotheque Artistique and Litteraire, 81 Rue Bonaparte, Paris, France.

La Jennesse Nouvelle, is a new juvenile magazine. No 2 of which has reached us. It is a 16 page, neat magazine intended especially for the young. Price 4 fr. in France, 50 cents in foreign countries, per year. Address La Jennesse Nouvelle, Rue de la Monnaie, 9 et 11 Lyon, France.

HETERODOX ECONOMICS vs. Orthodox Profits, is

* P. V. Stock, Galerie du Theatre Francais, 8, 9, 10., Paris, France.

before me. In it the author shows quite elaborately, that "net profit" is a phantasm, and that what is called "net profit" is merely a "misappropriation of floating capital." The book shows beyond a possibility of cavil that net profit is a form of robbery, and must of necessity lead to the bankruptcy of the vast majority of those who engage in business.

There are some funny things in the pamphlet, for instance his occasional bringing in of the word god, and the claim that what he is contending for is christianity; the assertion that the only way out of present chaos is through the International Socialist Labor Party.

THE Bar Sinister and Licit Love; the first biennial proceedings of the Legitimation League, of England, is a book of over 300 pages, containing a brief outline of the objects of the League, portraits of Edith Lanchester, Lillian Harman and the Vice president of the League, J. Greevz Fisher and J. C. Spence, and the letters, addresses, etc., that were read and delivered at the meeting of the League. It is interesting reading to all who take an active interest in the question of marriage, especially if they favor greater freedom in matrimonial relations.

THE Dawn of Civilization, by J. C. Spence, is a fine satire on present conditions, and prevailing notions. He writes as though he were a historian, writing in the year 2286, and his pictures of present conditions and beliefs, which, compared with the ideas then held, form a wonderfully satirical arraignment of things as they are. He places the dawn of Civilization in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and attributes the change from our hideous conditions to those of civilization, to the influence of the new ideas of equality and freedom that are now growing so rapidly and spreading over so much of the world.

It is well worth any one's time and attention who delights to see the absurdities of present institutions held up to view in all their grotesqueness.

It and the Bar Sinister, are both printed on good book paper in clear type, and bound in boards and cloth. They are remarkably cheap for the quality of work and size of the books. The Bar Sinister sells for 35 cents and the Dawn of Civilization for 15 cents. Order of Lucifer, American agents, 1394 West Congress St., Chicago, Ill.

Various Voices.

I. W. B., Jr., Corsicana, Texas:—Please send your paper to me. I saw a copy of it today for the first time and it is a daisy. Will remit later.

Victor Laine, Santa Cruz, Cal.:—I have received some back numbers of your noble paper, and read them very carefully. I am a great admirer of your principles. I believe The Firebrand is the best paper published in the United States. I am sorry I haven't seen it before. I hasten to enclose the sum of \$2.00 for which please send The Firebrand—two copies every week—to my address, and send a copy of "The Old and New Ideal" by Emil F. Ruedebusch. I will send for more books in the near future.

O. P. Victorien, Hillman, I was very sorry to see you come out in only four pages again, last week. I was still more sorry knowing that I had not made any contribution, and not being able to do so, now in your time of distress. I wrote to a friend of mine, however, and begged him to let me have a few cents for a sacred purpose, and hark! here is a year's subscription. But I do feel a little ashamed of sending 50c. for a paper so brave and fearless as The Firebrand. A paper that we shall still be wanting to pay \$5.00 a year for and not be able to get it. If so-called radical people really wanted a fearless exponent of freedom it would be a small matter to keep The Firebrand out of debt. But radicals like all others want a paper to be edited to suit every reader in every particular way, and this can not be done without trampling upon the principles of freedom. Don't be so rash, Comrades, if some of us believe in free love and some do not will that be a sufficient excuse for withdrawing our support to The Firebrand? I guess not. I have told the readers of The Firebrand once before that I am no Communist, and still I extend to The Firebrand group my heartiest sympathy and good wishes. Alas! If I were able I would lend you a helping hand, Comrades.

A. L. Eastman, Lopez, Washington:—I have been reading The Firebrand for some time and although it was a new idea to me I saw very soon to use a rather rude expression you had the right pig by the ear. I see now, plainly, we are being crucified between two thieves; namely, Church and State. And now the sex question. I do not know how I stand on that. The problem to me is how the undesired children are to be provided for; or will you say they will know how it can be prevented. It seems to me if there is anything on earth that humanity ought to know, it is how to prevent conception. All around me wherever I have lived has been dozens of poor families, raising children like rats; the mothers in poor health, and the children sickly. Thousands of women who ought not to give birth to a child, or not more than one or two at the most, give birth to six or seven scrawney, badly nourished objects of pity, and, as far as I have been able to find out, there is no absolutely sure and harmless preventative of conception. Enclosed find 25 cents for the cause.

[The comrade should remember that unwelcome children are the result of two causes; ignorance and insecurity. The ignorant belief that indissoluble marriage is right and necessary, and the insecurity which all poor mothers feel concerning their offspring are two chief causes of children being not wanted, but rather dreaded. In a condition of freedom mating between the sexes would be mutually desirable and the security from want both for the mother and child would remove the dread that attends the thought of childbirth now with so many.

I know of some preventives that are not injurious, and are reasonably sure, but the law does not allow such knowledge to be communicated, but in a condition of freedom all women would be possessed of such knowledge. Now a publication of such knowledge would subject the publisher to fine and imprisonment. H. A.]

Propaganda Fund.

Proceeds from a meeting in Boston, \$5.56. Julia Marcus, \$2.00. Group I. A. A., Cleveland, O., \$2.00. Ctenarka Beeda, Wheeling Creek, O., \$1.50. Forsyth, Laine, Sch., Hatman, Halbeck, each \$1.00. White, Klein, Graef, Victorien, Rathburn, Beal, Liberty Co-op. Association Eastman, Jackson, Lewallen, Levene, de Maupassant, Shneider, Gruenberg, Lacock, each 50c. Duggan, Karl, Smith, each 25c. Barnes, 30c. Melbye, 10c.

Special Announcement!

The publication of The Firebrand is carried on by a few individuals, aided by a number of radicals everywhere, for the purpose of spreading radical ideas. We have no organization, no constitution, by-laws, rules, officers or dues. Each works at what he or she is most competent to do. The Firebrand has no editor in the ordinary sense, and we invite everyone who has anything to say to send in their "copy."

Those engaged in the work of getting the paper out have no other means of support than the receipts for the paper, as it keeps them busy to do the work necessary to its publication, and most of the contributors to its support are poor, therefore we appeal to all who can to contribute what they can to the propaganda fund, thus helping to increase the circulation of The Firebrand, by making it possible for us to distribute a larger number of free copies. All donations and subscriptions are accounted for in the propaganda fund.

We accept anything we can use in payment for subscription. Any one wanting the paper can have it sent to them regularly by writing for it. If you can pay nothing now, we will credit you. If you are disabled, or otherwise prevented from paying for the paper you can have it free. We gladly accept any contribution to the propaganda fund, from a 1 cent stamp up, or anything to eat or wear.

The receipt of sample copies is an invitation to read, and to state that you like the paper. If you want it you need not fear to take it from the post office, as you will never be dunned to pay for it.

Notice.

To find the HOME OF THE FIREBRAND take the Oregon City car at cor. First & Alder Sts., and ride out to Sellwood. Get off at Spokane Ave. Walk two blocks toward the river, then turn to the right and walk one block.

