

THE FIREBRAND

For the Burning Away of the Cobwebs of Ignorance and Superstition.

VOL. I.

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THE FIREBRAND

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"---, THE DREAM IS THINE."

AH! dreams are such unstable things,
Like shadows cast by brindled wings,
Or echoes, soft, from yonder hills,
That half the words forget!
Unstable, yet how real were they—
The dreams of men who lived, we say,
Before their time; whose hearts, whose wills,
In dreams the Future met.
Is Nature a deformity?
Is Man her one abnormality?
The visionary answered, Nay!
Today his tones we hear
Reverberate in cadence sweet;
Add Freedom! Freedom! and repeat.
We eagerly take up the lay.
The multitude, in fear,
With ear attuned to harsher sound,
A moment listens—spell-bound,
Then scoff at music, vision, all—
Hail! What—Rags be free?
Not subject to authority?
Nor longer grant priority
To Man sublime? Nor creep, nor crawl,
Nor bow to his decree?
If he the Face Divine hath seen,
Held converse with the Lord, I ween,
To him devoutly we'll submit
Our treasures, labor, lives.
Aye, "if," ye myriads of men;
The Dreamer questioned "ifs", and then
The searching torch he brightly lit—
'Twas damped by breath of Dives.

Unhangable, unstable Dream!
Fire cannot thee consume, it seems,
Nor prison walls thy form confine,
Nor leaden bullets quell
Thy riotous propensities!
Haste—measure the Immensities,
For, outcast Fairy, thou art mine!
I'll hearken to thee tell
Of Progress, not o'er paths laid waste
By force perverted, lives debased,

Attracted by the glittering froth
Of human dignities,
As moth to candle's searching light;
But o'er the pathless plain and height
Of earth, born of unlighted troth
Of countless Entities.
Then, man shall be himself—not less;
Refuse, with laughter, to confess
His sins to one by fees upraised
To elevated seat;
Decline, disdainfully, to plead,
"Not guilty" to alleged misdeed;
Probe mysteries, and, unamazed,
His fellow mortals meet.
The Personality shall be
A birthright of manhood made free.
Self-abnegation, sacrifice,
Of virtue shall be shorn.
The Great shall work his bread to earn;
The Small shall trim his lamp to burn.
By force of arms, nor artifice,
Shall egos be upbourne.
The Weak, the Strong, their strength shall give
In unison that all may live.
Vile Competition's savage strife
For wealth and power shall cease.
Man's pride in domineering man,
En masse or singly, which began
In dark primeval times, true lives
Abhor. We shall have Peace.

"The dream is thine"—thrice welcome dream!
By thy unstable, steady beam,
Elusive, beautiful as bright,
The Future challenge we;
Its borders, dank with dire distress;
Revenge—for folly claims redress;
Beyond, we see the mountain heights
Of Peace, Eternity!

VIROQUA DANIELS.

IN view of the approaching May Day demonstrations the Italian Government has ordered the arrest of all socialists and anarchists whose names are registered upon the police records as those of dangerous characters.—[Coast Seaman's Journal.

All in vain! The workmen of Italy are aware that their interests are identical with those of the toilers of other countries, which is the real meaning of the First of May demonstrations; and the imprisonment of the radicals among them simply accentuates the fact that the interests of the governing classes and those of the producers are antagonistic and cannot be harmonized.

MOULDS.

It is well for people to have an ideal and to live as near to it as conditions will permit, but it is sad to see an ideal degenerate into a mould into which the possessor tries to fit everyone else. The ideal which a person holds is simply a conception of what we would like to be, and which we try to be, while the mould is a conception of what we think some one else ought to be and which we try to compel them to be under pain of our displeasure, ostracism, persecution.

It is, perhaps, all right for one who claims to be a reformer, for he or she is trying to mould the world, society or people over,—to re-form them. But for all that it is quite annoying, for it is impossible for any two persons to think exactly alike on all propositions. Why, then, should we want to have any one live or act according to our notions?

Anarchists may have ideals, but I cannot conceive of any room in their minds for moulds. Yet, I am sorry to say, some who boldly declare themselves anarchists have their own little moulds, just like authoritarians; and while they disclaim any desire to force or compel any one to do as they think best, they try by ridicule or other non-violent yet powerful method to cause another to refrain from or participate in those things to which they object or of which they approve. They will declare that a person who believes some or does not believe other propositions is not an anarchist. They will fiercely oppose methods of propaganda or procedure adopted by another if that method does not coincide with their own view or meet their hearty approval. In other words, they have a mould and are trying to force the other one into it. They may not be aware of this fact, but that does not alter the fact.

When a Christian I had a mould; when an infidel I still had a mould, but a less harmful one. During all this time I had an ideal. Now that I am a radical I have thrown away my moulds and I still have an ideal; it is grown very plain and simple.

An anarchist is simply a person who will neither rule nor willingly submit to the rule of another. The belief or disbelief of any proposition, when such belief or disbelief does not impel to ruling or submitting, cannot affect a person's being or not being an anarchist.

The person with a noble or grand ideal will try to live a noble life, and if free from interference will do so. If that ideal be the freeing of the proletariat, it may impel the possessor to revolutionary acts, and will surely make of him or her a worker for freedom.

A person with a mould will always be liable to make himself or herself disagreeable by trying to fit others into it, and thus retard the cause of liberty. Throw away your moulds and allow every one to follow their ideal, and we will the sooner gain our liberty.

HENRY ADDIS.

AN ANARCHIST ON ANARCHY.

BY ELISEE RECLUS.

II.

HENCE we may say that in letting those whom they govern—and the responsibility for whose fate they thereby accept—waste by want, sink under exposure, and deteriorate by vice, the leaders of modern society have committed moral bankruptcy. But where the masters have come short, free men may, perchance, succeed. The failure of governments is no reason why we should be discouraged; on the contrary, it shows to us the danger of entrusting to others the guardianship of our rights, and makes us all the more firmly resolved to take our own cause into our own care. We are not among those whom the practice of social hypocrisies, the long weariness of a crooked life, and the uncertainty of the future have reduced to the necessity of asking ourselves—without daring to answer it—the sad question: "Is life worth living?" Yes, to us life does seem worth living, but on the condition that it has an end—not personal happiness, not a paradise, either in this world or the next, but the realization of a cherished wish, an ideal that belongs to us and springs from our innermost conscience. We are striving to draw nearer to that ideal equality which, century after century, has hovered before subject peoples like a heavenly dream. The little that each of us can do offers an ample recompense for the perils of the combat. On these terms life is good—even a life of suffering and sacrifice—even though it may be cut short by premature death.

The first condition of equality, without which any other progress is merest mockery—the object of all socialists without exception—is that every man shall have bread. To talk of duty, of renunciation, of ethereal virtues to the famishing, is nothing less than cowardice. Dives has no right to preach morality to the beggar at his gates. If it were true that civilized lands did not produce food enough for all, it might be said that, by virtue of vital competitions, bread should be reserved for the strong, and that the weak should content themselves with the crumbs that fall from the feasters' table. In a family where love prevails things are not ordered in this way; on the contrary, the small and the ailing receive the fullest measure; yet it is evident that dearth may strengthen the hands of the violent and make the strong monopolizers of bread. But are our modern societies really reduced to these straits? On the contrary, whatever may be the value of Malthus' forecast as to the distant future, it is an actual, incontestable fact that in the civilized countries of Europe and America the

sum total of provisions produced, or received in exchange for manufactures, is more than enough for the sustenance of the people. Even in times of partial dearth, the graneries and warehouses have but to open their doors that every one may have a sufficient share. Notwithstanding waste and prodigality, despite the enormous losses arising from moving about and "handling" in warehouses and shops, there is always enough to feed generously all the world. And yet there some who die of hunger! And yet there are fathers who kill their children because when the little ones cry for bread they have none to give them.

Others may turn their eyes from these horrors; we socialists look them full in the face, and seek out the cause. The cause is the monopoly of the soil, the appropriation by a few of the land which belongs to all. We Anarchists are not the only ones to say it: the cry for the nationalization of the land is rising so high that all may hear it who do not wilfully close their ears. The idea spreads fast, for private property, in its present form, has had its day, and historians are everywhere testifying that the old Roman law is not synonymous with eternal justice. Without doubt it were vain to hope that holders of the soil, saturated with ideas of caste, of privilege and of inheritance, will voluntarily give back to all the bread-yielding furrows; the glory will not be theirs of joining as equals their fellow citizens; but when public opinion is ripe—and day by day it grows—individuals will oppose in vain the concourse of wills, and the axe will be applied to the upas tree's roots. Arable land will be held once more in common; but instead of being ploughed and sown almost at hazard by ignorant hands, as it has hitherto been, science will aid us in the choice of climate, of soils, of methods of culture, of fertilizers and of machinery. Husbandry will be guided by the same prescience as mechanical combinations and chemical operations; but the fruits of his toil will not be lost to the laborer. Many so-called savage societies hold their land in common, humble though in our eyes they may seem, they are our betters in this: want among them is unknown. Are we, then, too ambitious in desiring to attain a social state which shall add to the conquests of civilization the privileges of these primitive tribes? Through the education of our children we may to some extent fashion the future.

After we have bread for all, we shall require something more—equality of rights; but this point will soon be realized, for a man who needs not incline himself before his fellows to crave a pittance is already their equal. Equality of conditions, which is in no way incompatible with the infinite diversity of human character, we ardently desire and look upon as indispensable, for it offers us the only means whereby a true morality can be de-

veloped. A man can be truly moral only when he is his own master. From the moment when he awakens to a comprehension of that which is equitable and good it is for him to direct his own movements, to seek in his conscience reasons for his actions and to perform them simply, without either fearing punishment or looking for reward. Nevertheless his will cannot fail to be strengthened when he sees other men guided like himself by their own volition following the same line of conduct. Mutual example will soon constitute a collective code of ethics to which all may conform without effort; but the moment that orders, enforced by legal penalties, replace the personal impulses of the conscience, there is an end to morality. Hence the saying of the Apostle of the Gentiles, "the law makes sin." Even more, it is sin itself, because, instead of appealing to man's better part, to his bold initiative, it appeals to his worst—it rules by fear. It thus behooves every one to resist laws that he has not made, and to defend his personal rights, which are also the rights of others. People often speak of the antagonism between rights and duties. It is an empty phrase; there is no such antagonism. Whoso vindicates his own rights fulfils at the same time his duty to his fellow-men. Privilege, not right, is the converse of duty.

Besides the possession of a man's own person, sound morality involves yet another condition—mutual goodwill, which is likewise the outcome of equality. The time-honored words of Mahabarata are as true as ever: "The ignorant are not the friends of the wise; the man who has no cart is not the friend of him who has a cart. Friendship is the daughter of equality; it is never born of inequality." Without doubt it is given to some men, great by their thoughts, by sympathy, or by strength of will, to win the multitude; but if the attachment of their followers and admirers comes otherwise than of an enthusiastic affinity of idea to idea, or of heart to heart, it is speedily transformed either into fanaticism or servility. He who is hailed lord by the acclamations of the crowd must almost of necessity attribute to himself exceptional virtues, or a "grace of God," that marks him in his own estimation as a predestined being, and he usurps without hesitation or remorse privileges which he transmits as a heritage to his children. But, while in rank exalted, he is morally degraded, and his partisans and sycophants are more degraded still; they wait for the word of command which fall from the master's lips; when they hear in the depths of their conscience some faint note of dissent, it is stifled; they become practiced liars, they stoop to flattery, and lose the power of looking honest men in the face. Between him who commands and him who obeys, and whose degradation deepens from generation to generation; there is no possibility of friendship. The virtues are transformed; brotherly frankness is destroyed; independence becomes a crime; above is either pitying condescension or haughty contempt, below either envious admiration or hidden hate. Let each of us recall the past and ask ourselves in all sincerity this question: "Who are the men in whose society we have experienced the most pleasure?" Are the personages who have "honored" us with

their conversation, or humble with whom we have "deigned" to associate. Are they not rather our equals, those whose looks neither implore nor command, and whom we may love with open hearts without afterthought or reserve?

It is to live in conditions of equality, and escape from the falsehoods and hypocrisies of a society of superiors and inferiors, that so many men and women have formed themselves into close corporations and little worlds apart.

America abounds in communities of this sort. But these societies, few of which prosper while many perish, are all ruled more or less by force; they carry within themselves the seeds of their own dissolution, and are reabsorbed by Nature's law of gravitation into the world which they have left. Yet even were they perfection, if men enjoyed in them the highest happiness of which nature is capable, they would be none the less open to the charge of selfish isolation, of raising a wall between themselves and the rest of their race, their pleasures are egoistical, and devotion to the cause of humanity would draw back the best of them into the great struggle.

As for us Anarchists, never will we separate ourselves from the world to build a little church hidden in some wilderness. Here is the fighting ground and we remain in the ranks, ready to give our help wherever it may be most needed. We do not cherish premature hopes, but we know that our efforts will not be lost. Many of the ignorant, who either out of love of routine or simplicity of soul now anathematize us, will end by associating themselves with our cause. For every man whom circumstances permit to join us freely, hundreds are hindered by the harsh necessities of life from openly avowing their opinions, but they listen from afar and cherish our words in the treasury of their hearts. We know that we are defending the cause of the poor, the disinherited, the suffering: we are seeking to restore to them the earth, personal rights, confidence in the future; and is it not natural that they should encourage us by look and gesture, even when they dare not come to us. In times of trouble, when the "groups," freed for an instant from the pressure above, reform themselves according to their natural affinities, on which side will be the many? Though making no pretention to prophetic insight, may we not venture without temerity to say that the multitude would join our ranks? Albeit they never weary of repeating that Anarchism is merely the dream of a few visionaries, do not even our enemies, by the insults they heap upon us and the projects and machinations they impute to us, make an incessant propaganda in our favor? It is said that, when the magicians of the Middle Ages wanted to raise the devil, they began their incantations by painting his image on a wall. For a long time past modern exorcists have adopted a similar method for conjuring Anarchists.

Pending the great work of the coming time, and to the end that this work may be accomplished, it behooves us to utilize every opportunity for word and deed. Meanwhile, although our object is to live without government and without law, we are obliged to submit. On the other hand, how often are we

enabled to disregard their behests and to act on our own free will. Ours be it to let slip none of these occasions, and to accept tranquilly whatever personal consequences may result from doing that which we believe to be our duty. In no case will we strengthen authority by appeals or petitions, neither shall we sanction the law by demanding justice from the courts, nor by giving our votes and influence to any candidate whatsoever, become the authors of our own ill-fortune? It is also easy for us to accept nothing from power, to call no man "master," neither to be called "master" ourselves, to remain in the ranks as simple citizens and to maintain resolutely, and in every circumstance, our quality of equal among equals. Let our friends judge us by our deeds, and reject from among those of us who falter.

There are unquestionably many kind-hearted men who, as yet, hold themselves aloof from us, and even view our efforts with a certain apprehension, who would nevertheless gladly lend us their help were they not repelled by fear of the violence which nearly always accompanies revolution. And yet a close study of the present state of things would show them that the supposed period of tranquility in which we live is really an age of cruelty and violence. Not to speak of war and its crimes, from the guilt of which no civilized State is free, can it be denied that chief among the consequences of the existing social system are murder, maladies and death? Accustomed order is maintained by rude deeds and brute force, yet things that happen every day and every hour pass unperceived; we see in them a series of ordinary events no more phenomenal than times and seasons. It seems less than impious to rebel against the cycle of violence and repression which comes to us hallowed by the sanction of ages. Far from desiring to replace an era of happiness and peace by an age of disorder and warfare, our sole aim is to put an end to the endless series of calamities which has hitherto been called by consent, "The progress of civilization." On the other hand, vengeance are the inevitable incidents of a period of violent changes. It is in the nature of things that they should be. Albeit deeds of violence, prompted by a spirit of hatred, bespeak a feeble moral development, these deeds become fatal and necessary whenever the relations between man and man are not the relations of perfect equity. The original form of justice as understood by primitive peoples was that of retaliation, and by thousands of rude tribes this system is still observed. Nothing seemed more just than to offset one wrong by another wrong. Eye for eye! Tooth for tooth! If the blood of one man has been shed, another must die! This was the barbarous form of justice. In our civilized societies it is forbidden to individuals to take the law into their own hands. Governments, in their quality of social delegates, are charged on behalf of the community with the enforcement of justice, a sort of retaliation somewhat more enlightened than that of the savage. It is on this condition that the individual renounces the right of personal vengeance; but if he be deceived by the mandatories to whom he entrusts the vindication of his rights, if he perceives that his agents betray his cause and league themselves

with his oppressors, that official justice aggravates his wrongs; in a word, if whole classes and populations are unfairly used and have no hope of finding in the society to which they belong a redresser of abuses, is it not certain that they will resume their inherent right of vengeance and execute it without pity? Is not this indeed an ordinance of Nature, a consequence of the physical law of shock and counter-shock? It were unphilosophic to be surprised at its existence. Oppression has always been answered by violence.

Nevertheless, if great human evolutions are always followed by sad outbreaks of personal hatred it is not to these bad passions that well wishers of their kind appeal when they wish to rouse the motive virtues of enthusiasm, devotion and generosity. If changes had no other result than to punish oppressors, to make them suffer in their turn, to repay evil with evil, the transformation would be only in seeming. What boots it to him who truly loves humanity, and desires the happiness of all that the slave becomes master, that the master is reduced to servitude, that the whip changes hands, and that money changes from one pocket to the other? It is not the rich and the powerful whom we devote to destruction, but the institutions which have favored the birth and growth of these malevolent beings. It is the medium which it behooves us to alter, and for this great work we must reserve all our strength; to waste it in personal vindications were the merest puerility. "Vengeance is the pleasure of the gods," said the ancients, but it is not the pleasure of self-respecting mortals; for they know that to become their own avengers would be to lower themselves to the level of their former oppressors. If we would rise superior to our adversary, we must, after vanquishing him, make him bless his defeat. The revolutionary device, "For our liberty and for yours," must not be an empty word.

The people in all times have felt this; and after every temporary triumph the generosity of the victor has obliterated the menaces of the past. It is a constant fact that in all serious popular movements, made for an idea, hope of a better time, and above all, the sense of a new dignity, fills the soul with high and magnanimous sentiments. So soon as the police, both political and civil, cease their functions and the masses become masters of streets, the moral atmosphere changes, each feels himself responsible for the prosperity and contentment of all; molestation of individual is almost unheard of; even professional criminals pause in their career, for they too, feel that something great is passing through the air. Ah! if revolutionaries, instead of obeying a vague idea as they have almost always done had formed a definite aim, a well-considered scheme of social conduct, if they had firmly willed the establishment of a new order of things in which every citizen might be assured bread, work, instruction, and the free development of his being, there would have been no danger in opening all prison gates to their full width, and saying to the unfortunates whom they shut in, "Go, brothers, and sin no more."

It is always to the nobler part of man that we should address ourselves when we want to do great deeds. A general fighting for a

bad cause stimulates his soldiers with promises of booty; a benevolent man who cherishes a noble object encourages his companions by the example of his own devotion and self-sacrifice. For him faith in his idea is enough. As says the proverb of the Danish peasants: "His will is his paradise." What matters it that he is treated as a visionary? Even tho' his undertaking were only a chimera, he knows nothing more beautiful and sweet than the desire to act rightly and do good; in comparison with this vulgar realities are for him but shadows, the apparitions of an instant.

But our ideal is not a chimera. This, public opinion well knows; for no question more occupies it than that of social transformation. Events are casting their shadows before. Among men who think is there one who in some fashion or another is not a socialist—that is to say, who has not his own little scheme for changes in economic relations? Even the orator who noisily denies that there is a social question affirms the contrary by a thousand propositions. And those who would lead us back to the Middle Ages, are they not also socialists? They think they have found in a past, restored after modern ideas, conditions of social justice which will establish for ever the brotherhood of man. All are awaiting the birth of a new order of things; all ask themselves, some with misgiving, others with hope, what the morrow will bring forth. It will not come with empty hands. The century which has witnessed so many grand discoveries in the world of science cannot pass away without giving us still greater conquests. Industrial appliances, that by a single electric impulse make the same thought vibrate through five continents, have distanced by far our social morals, which are yet in many regards the outcome of reciprocally hostile interests. The axis is displaced; the world must crack that its equilibrium may be restored. In spirit revolution is ready; it is already thought—it is already willed; there only remains its realization, and this is not the most difficult part of the work. The governments of Europe will soon have reached the limits of the expansion of their power and find themselves face to face with their increasing populations. The superabundant activity which wastes itself in distant wars must then find employment at home—unless in their folly the shepherds of the people should try to exhaust their energies by setting Europeans against Europeans as they have so often done before. It is true that in this way they may retard the solution of the social question, but it will rise again after each postponement more formidable than before.

Let economists and rulers invent political constitutions or salaried organizations whereby the workman is to be made the friend of his master, the subject the brother of the potentate, we, "frightful Anarchists" as we are, know only one way of establishing peace and goodwill among men—the suppression of privilege and the recognition of right. Our ideal, as we have said, is that of the fraternal equity for which all yearn, but almost always as a dream; with us it takes form and becomes a concrete reality. It pleases us not to live if the enjoyments of life are to be for us alone; we protest against our good fortune

if we may not share it with others; it is sweeter for us to wander with the wretched and outcast than to sit, crowned with roses, at the banquets of the rich. We are weary of these inequalities which make us the enemies of each other; we would put an end to the furies which are ever bringing men into hostile collision, and all of which arise from the bondage of the weak to the strong under the form of slavery, serfage and service. After so much hatred we long to love each other, and for this reason are we enemies of private property and despisers of the law.

The Letter-Box.

R. W., Lents, Or.—Read the article from Elisee Reclus, and you will find out what we are "aiming at."

L. G. and J. M. L., Shelby, Mich.—Your letter gave us much pleasure. We will continue to send you the paper; your appreciation is sufficient pay until the tide comes in. The questions are sent to Miss Viroqua Daniels. Our best greetings.

U. T., Cannon Falls, Minn.—We don't see things quite that way. Of course we'd like to have the crowd with us, but knowing that we are right, we can well afford to be in the minority, fighting the majority with arguments until they come over to us. We cannot consistently engage in a practice we condemn.

X., City—No, we are not prohibitionists; we believe in letting everybody do as he pleases. Our 'beer drinking German comrades'—as you call them—who support THE FIREBRAND in proportion more than any other people, are of much more help to us than spook-conjuring teetotallers, a few of whom read the paper but do not take any further interest.

M. L., City.—Yes, we have read the article in the People's Party Post about Anarchism, and had quite a "job" to find all the unpopular words in Webster's Dictionary which Mr Gib—pardon! "Nescio Nomen" uses. But we are not surprised as you think, because we never expected anything else from a man whose mind is utterly covered with cobwebs of theological—rather, metaphysical—trash. It is useless to argue with a man who is subjugated to authority from the top to the bottom, who is a slave in mind and body. The rhyme he cites and attributes to the Anarchists is very often used by Populists and members of the K. of L., but never by Anarchists; it appeared in THE FIREBRAND in an article written by a person who is avowedly NOT an Anarchist, and to our knowledge the writer of the Post article is aware of the fact.

He "Don't Like Us Any More."

TO THE FIREBRAND:—It seems I am too ignorant to contribute to your learned and erudite journal. I don't even seem to know how to spell my own name.

Please don't send THE FIREBRAND to me any more. Sincerely,

D. PRIESTLEY.

Newberg, Or., April 27, 1895.

So far as typographical errors have contributed to this "seeming" ignorance, the printer offers his apology; but Brother Priestley is aware of the difficulties under which we labor, and we had thought him too sensible a man to notice such trifles. Even if one be

not as "wise as Solomon" he needn't get mad about it.

The First Spiritual Society meets G. A. R. Hall, First and Taylor sts, as follows: Conference, 11 a. m. Lyceum, 12:30. Lecture and tests 7:45 p. m. every Sunday. Everybody is invited.

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"What we need to do is to develop ourselves, to unfold and round out our own natures, to surround ourselves with all that tends to do this, and his not for the sake of children, but because of the love of so doing, and we need to take no thought, to have no fear that our children will not follow the law of like producing like."

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