

# Clara Dixon

Poet-Printer of Early  
American Anarchism



[historicaleditions.noblogs.org](http://historicaleditions.noblogs.org)  
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# Sources

Digitized issues of *The Beacon* and *Enfant Terrible* can be found at [historicalseditions.noblogs.org](http://historicalseditions.noblogs.org)

Scans were obtained with the gracious assistance of the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam. We have also digitized other regional Anarchist periodicals and maintains an extensive list of digitized papers.

Clippings in this zine came from the following issues:  
*The Beacon*: 5/3/1890, 3/28/1891  
*Enfant Terrible*: 11/8/1891, 12/20/1891

Historical Seditious is also circulating the preliminary edition of an extensive Zine covering the often dark history of the San Francisco International Workman's Association entitled *Deconstructing Settler Socialism: The Internationals and Early Anarchism in the Wild West*. We have not posted a PDF online, but it is available through a number of Anarchist book stores and we will gladly send in response to inquiries to [historicalseditious@riseup.net](mailto:historicalseditious@riseup.net)

Clippings from other radical papers include the *Denver Labor Enquirer* (9/13/1884), *Chicago Alarm* (11/1/1884), *San Francisco Truth* (3/22/1884, Nov-Dec 1884), *The Christian Socialist* (2/1885), *Boston Liberty* (9/3/1892) and *The Oklahoma War-Chief* (7/23/1885)

Most second-hand quotes on Clara's life were drawn two biographies of her son, Joel Sach's *Henry Cowell: A Man Made of Music* and Michael Hicks' *Henry Cowell: Bohemian*.

*Janet & Her Dear Phebe* can be found at [frogpeak.org/dixon/index.html](http://frogpeak.org/dixon/index.html)

Janet unfortunately sold poorly, and Clara's publisher declined her future books. In 1910 she and Henry returned to a small cottage in the then-young exurb of Menlo Park, near the campus of Stanford University. In these surroundings, Henry first achieved notice for his musical talents, while Clara met the final love of her life.

Ellen Veblen was newly divorced from the notable anti-capitalist Stanford economist Thorstein Veblen. Clara later recalled that upon meeting Ellen at the home of a mutual friend around 1912:

**"As soon as Mrs. Veblen had opened her mouth and spoken a few words, I knew that I was not too old for another love."**



Ellen entered into a tight relationship with the mother-son duo, moving them into her house and later making Henry something of an adopted son and executor of her will. She also helped Henry make musical connections and afford a Steinway piano.

Tragically, Clara had only a few years to witness the growth of her son's musical career and spend time with her new close "friend." What she thought was tuberculosis turned out to be breast cancer.

**Clara Dixon died May 15, 1916. She was 64.**

Her last writing included an extensive memoir of her son's early years.

## Clara Dixon Poet-Printer of Early American Anarchism

Before the internet wove its globe-spanning web of social media, far-flung groups and individuals were brought together via the print culture of books, pamphlets, newspapers, and journals. The revolutionary culture of the anarchist movement was, in many respects, incubated in the pages of its printed matter. Letters to one's favorite paper often engaged in discourse with one another, bringing correspondents from San Francisco to South Africa to the same playing field. The rapid proliferation and decreasing cost of such publications thus provided more than just a passive window through which to view the world, opening up a new intellectual and social universe.

As deeply-entrenched patriarchal norms pushed late-nineteenth century women into the "private sphere," anarchist print culture offered an outlet for those determined to make their voice heard. When scanning the pages of periodicals like *The Alarm* or *Free Society*, the femme presence is impossible to ignore. Letters to the editor frequently appear from small-town readers connected to the wider world through their favorite subversive publication. Women also played vital roles in creating and sustaining anarchist publications, as editors and typesetters, as authors and distributors.

Clara Dixon exemplified this literary radicalism. For years she developed her Anarchist politics while living in small-town Iowa coal and farming country. Clara wrote short stories, articles, and most of all poetry for submission to papers across the country. Eventually she took an even bigger leap; at nearly 40 years old she left Iowa alone for San Francisco. Now immersed in a growing anarchist milieu, Clara went on to edit two anarchist newspapers and later write a novel with strong sapphic themes. She also took a particular interest in anti-authoritarian relations between parents and children.

Please enjoy this brief journey through Clara Dixon's radical life.



Clarissa "Clara" Dixon was born November 30, 1851 in the small town of Hennepin, Illinois. At a young age her family moved to another small town in Iowa's farming and coal belt: Amityville. Her "Scotch-Irish" family had early-colonial settler roots and were strict religious fundamentalists. Her parents even taught their children "a roundabout route to school to keep them from passing the house or a reputed atheist.



**But when she turned 17 (the age of confirmation in her church), Clara instead "stood up and announced that, having lost her belief in the tenants of the church, she was renouncing her membership.**

She sensibly left town," moving to the nearby towns of Eddyville and Kirksville, where she would spend more than two decades. Within a couple years of leaving home, Clara had married George Davidson and the two had a son Clarence.

**Clara did not intend to become a quiet housewife.**

She hustled through school classes in nearby Ottumwa, eventually taking college courses. Clara became one of the few schoolteachers in her local area and also became a prolific writer.

Clarence later recalled happy memories of his childhood, painting a "warm and loving domestic scene in which Geroge treated Clarissa with tenderness." The couple's finances were handled jointly. But all was not marital bliss: they briefly separated after a year of marriage because "she refused to submit to sexual relations, which she found distasteful." She also later claimed to have found her husband's business practiced unethical. Nevertheless the couple remained together for twenty years.

#### QUEER THINGS

How queer are likes and dislikes! My father likes sweet-potatoes and my mother likes them, too, but I would rather do without my dinner than eat them.

My father and my mother and my Phebe love me, but Inez passed on the other side of the street yesterday so that she need not speak to me.

I do not know why I do not like sweet-potatoes nor why Inez cannot endure speaking to me.

#### MEDITATIONS

I saw Phebe yesterday. She was on her way to the spring. She stepped like Mr. Steven's colt with its first harness on; she stepped as if she wanted to break something.

To-day I saw Phebe go out of the church ahead of me. She was so near I could almost touch her dress. She did not seem to step at all, then; she moved forward smooth and straight among the other people, like the deep part of the Nodaway River going fast and still between the gurgly water among the stones on each side.

To-morrow, Phebe will walk some other way, I know. She is always new. Every day her face is different and every day it is beautiful, like flowers that are never two alike but every one is loveliness and delight.

**Janet & her Dear Phebe** tells the intense, emotionally charged tale of a loving relationship between two girls in a small Iowa town.

Separated in their teenage years, they never gave up seeking contact and eventually re-united as adults. The novel might be dismissed as merely depicting an unusually intense Victorian friendship between two gal-pals, but what today might be called "queer" was hardly unknown in the Clara and her son's bohemian circles. In 1936 Henry, who thought of himself as bisexual, would in fact be convicted of having oral sex with a young man and served four years in San Quentin.

There is a girl who has a friend  
And she will love her till the end.  
THE FRIEND

Henry Cowell was raised amid his parent's San Francisco bohemian writers crowd. At a young age he was gifted a quarter-size violin and developed a lifelong commitment to music that led to a career as a renowned avant-garde composer. But at the age of six, Harry and Clara divorced so that Harry could marry another woman. Clara would take custody of their child, and would instill in young Henry a "philosophical anarchist principle of mutual aid and non-competition that he took seriously as long as he lived." For several years they lived near San Francisco's Chinatown, close to friends of his mother like the anarchist Anna Strunsky.

Clara encouraged her son's musical career, and also apparently supported him during a youthful gender-bending phase in which he refused to wear trousers and insisted on being called "Mrs. Jones." After Henry suffered both illness and severe bullying at school, Clara took it upon herself to homeschool him.

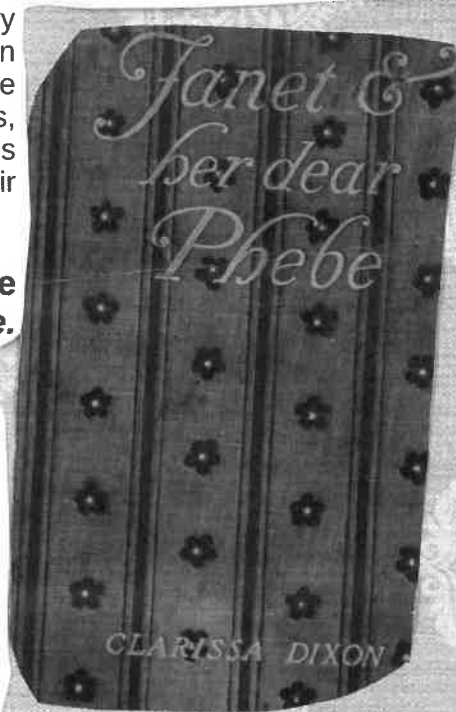
### Life for the young mother and child was not always easy.

A small child-support payment from Harry was not enough to live on; Clara relied on her writing to make ends barely meet. She sold poems

and stories to various literary magazines. After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire destroyed most of their possessions, the pair briefly lived with Clara's midwestern relatives before trying their luck in New York City.

### 1909 Clara published her lone novel: *Janet & Her Dear Phebe*.

"Both ways are right if they are your ways," Janet answered loyally. "I feel again the strong spirit my childhood hung upon in secure faith. I believed in you then; I believe in you now. You are Phebe; your words were always true." The sweet light of love and trust shone in Janet's eyes as brightly as ever.



Through her writing and poetry, Clara's mental horizon expanded far beyond little Kirckville. She became a frequent contributor to a wide variety of reform and later radically minded newspapers. Papers like the *Chicago Sentinel*, *New Thought*, *The Christian Socialist*, and the *Iowa Farmer's Tribune* circulated widely but frequently relied on volunteer contributions to fill their pages. Eventually she even utilized a toy typesetting device to produce her own radical leaflet.

It should be noted that at least one of these early poems betrayed the settler-colonial mentality all-too common in white radicals then and often now. *The Oklahoma War-Chief* sought to bring about its demands of "restoration of the public domain, lands for the landless and homes for the homeless, Universal Suffrage, and a national currency issued by the federal government" through the settlement

of the Oklahoma (aka "Indian") territory, preceding the infamous Oklahoma "Land Rushes" by several years.

#### THE OKLAHOMA BOOMER.

BY CLARA DIXON DAVIDSON, OF KIRKSVILLE, IOWA.

Columbus was a boomer,  
He jumped the Indian's claim,  
Not for a home and fireside,  
But for the throne of Spain.

Balboa was a boomer —  
A cranky boomer he —  
He jumped the fishes' title —  
For Spain — and claimed the sea.

Hugo and Patrick Henry  
Made booms for liberty;  
And all are cranks or boomers  
Who strike at slavery.

The Oklahoma boomers  
Assert their rightful claim  
To wrest uncultivated lands  
From Mother Nature's hands  
For homes; where lies their blame?

Clara's poem put a bottom-up spin on the issue, seemingly arguing that settler's were even more justified in making claims than conquistadors had been; the latter did so on behalf of a crown, the former to find land for homes.

#### THE CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST.

##### FLUMMERY.

**A**MONG minds that feel effects without grasping causes there is necessarily a superstitious reverence for work. You have all heard of the benignant idiot who employed a labourer to remove a heap of stones and afterward to carry them back and pile them in the old place. His act has been lauded as if it were a piece of philanthropy. The labourer was out of employment, he gave him work and paid him for it.

Was it necessary that the stones should be moved away and returned? Oh no, but the labourer needed work. Was it the work or the pay that the labourer needed? If the idiot wanted to give away money why didn't he do so without any silly flummery. There are other idiots who forego the help of machinery in order to give employment to a greater number of labourers. They do not seem to understand that the machinery might be used and just as many men employed for a less number of hours per day at the same wages now received for ten or twelve hours' labour.

"Want to give the labourer a chance to earn his money," I dare say. How thoughtful! How philanthropic! Better begin to kill off inventors before the perfection of their art has reduced the necessity of labour for each individual to be a mere bagatelle.

I wonder how long the devil will have to keep an aristocrat shovelling brimstone before he will have earned in the climate of sinners the money he spent on earth posing as a saint, building holy houses and endowing Christian colleges.

CLARA DIXON DAVIDSON.

Clara Dixon Davidson's radical reading and writing eventually led her to correspondence with anarchist and socialist papers. During the mid-1880s, two parallel organizations claimed to carry-on the torch of the "International Workingman's Association," the "First International." The explicitly anarchist "Black" International Working People's Association was rooted in the midwest and northeast, its most famous adherents organizing in Chicago. The self-described "Red" international, the "International Workman's Association" meanwhile, was headquartered in San Francisco with significant participation as far East as Colorado and Kansas.

In 1884, letters and poems from Clara appear in Chicago's *Alarm*, the English weekly of the "Black" IWPA, as well as the main organs of the IWA, Denver's *Labor Enquirer* and San Francisco *Truth*. By this time Clara clearly counted herself in the radical camp, ending a treatise in the *Enquirer* advocating for men and women to organize with the famous call:

**"Workingpeople of the world, unite; you have only your chains to lose, you have a world to win."**

Both Internationals loudly called for organizing and direct action to overthrow the capitalist system, by dynamite if necessary. But unity between these two bodies was not to be.

## THE ALARM

### CORRESPONDENCE

From Iowa.  
 KEOKUK, Ia., Oct. 22, 1884.  
 MR. PARSONS: I received your postal and ten copies of THE ALARM. Every time I am called upon to welcome the birth of such ventures in journalism as THE ALARM I feel less alarm for the future of earth's slaves. I say "some true words, but yet for humanity." I allude to the people who stand behind these organs of down tearing and up building are people with their souls baptized in the fires of earnestness and self-forgetfulness. They cannot expect to make fortunes out of their work, happy are they if the little life-boat can stay at the surface. They cannot expect popularity or fame as writers, for all such authors are studiously kept out of the "great journals," snubbed and ignored by them. They find their friends among the poverty cursed, who must deny themselves comforts in order to help sustain revolutionary journals, they find their admirers among those whose opinions are without weight with the paid, sycophantic, conservative, popular press, so they must be honest, they must be brave, and must bid themselves, and I say to THE ALARM, welcome, and may the toilers whom you befriend be able to sustain you.  
 Fraternally,  
 CLARA DIXON DAVIDSON.

In an 1893 article to the Boston anarchist paper *Liberty*, Clara outlined her vision for the relationship between parents and their children which, she thought, ought to resemble friend and friend rather than master and slave. Rather than notions of duty compelling either to care for the other, she felt that such relations ought to be rooted in love and a desire for social harmony, arguing that "generally speaking, people's love for their children is in inverse proportion to their love of God and duty." When it came to education, children deserved truthful, complete explanations for their many questions. Clara's meditations on childraising did not remain a matter of hindsight:

## Liberty

• NOT THE DAUGHTER, BUT THE MOTHER OF ORDER •

Grown older, the babe does not know the danger of touching a red-hot stove. How should it know? It is without experience. The mother's impulse is to rescue the tender, white baby-hand. Is she wise in interposing this restraint? I think she is not. If the child is to have bayoneted sentries always on guard between it and experience, it can only grow surreptitiously. I say "bayoneted" advisedly, since the hand interposed between the baby and the stove not infrequently emphasizes its power with a blow which gives more pain than the burn would have given, while its value as experience may be represented by the minus sign.

Parents beat their children, elder children beat younger brothers and sisters, and the wee ones avenge their wrongs vicariously by beating their dolls or their wooden horses.

Through individual revolts against the general barbarity, revolts of increasing frequency and power, humanity gradually evolves above actual application of its savage principles. But these revolts against savagery, when led by emotion, often result nearly as disastrously as savagery itself.

Reason must be the basis of all enduring social growth.

When reason shall have learned to rebel against inequalities in liberties, and when this mental rebellion shall have become quite general, then will people have passed beyond danger of relapse into savagery.

Then parent and child shall not be master and slave, a relation distasteful to reasoning people, but they shall be friend and friend. There will be no restraints imposed except such as are absolutely necessary, and these will not take the form of blows and will be removed as early as possible.

Examples of such restraints as I mean are: Detention from the brink of a precipice or an open well or the track of a coming locomotive, or of one child from striking another.

Parents who recognize the fundamental principle of happiness through freedom and intelligence will, generally speaking, achieve results proportionate to the degree of their success in harmonizing their lives with this principle. The greater their intelligence the higher perfection will they reach in the interpretation and application of the law of equal freedom, and in preparing their children to attain harmonious relations with their environment.

Henry Dixon Cowell was born March 11, 1897; Clara was 46 years old.

actually synonymous, almost inseparable companions.

Where equal freedom is rendered impossible by disproportion in degrees of development, the hope of the higher unit lies in the education of the lower.

Children, because of their ignorance, are elements of inharmonious hindrances to equal freedom. To quicken the processes of their growth is to contribute toward the equilibration of social forces.

Then, liberty being essential to growth, they must be left as free as is compatible with their own safety and the freedom of others.

Just here arises my difficulty, which I freely admit. For the enunciation of this principle is the opening of a Pandora's box, from which all things fly out excepting adult judgment.

Who shall decide upon the permissible degree of freedom? Who shall adjust the child's freedom to its safety so that the two shall be delicately, flawlessly balanced?

The fecundity of these questions is without limit. Of them are born controversies that plague all the unregenerate alike, whether they be philosophers or the humblest truth-seekers.

Christians escape this tollsome investigation. Their faith in rulership simplifies all the relations of life.

I have been admonished to say nothing of the value of the lower animals as being as the human animal is injured and enslaved.

This does not seem logical to me. I wish to educate people toward a state of mind which will lead them to find their happiness in being free and unaggressive. While they are learning the lesson that invasion gives ultimate pain to the invader, I see no reason why it should not be studied in its entirety. If I say:

You may properly kill a calf but not a baby, enslave a horse but not a man, kick a dog but not a boy, injure a fish but not a woman," any philosophic mind, though it be the mind of a child, must inevitably ask:

Why the exceptions? And can I give any good reasons for them? Can I say:

"God gave us the beasts for food and for slaves?"

For aught we know, the Bengal tigers may claim that the human animal was created on purpose to supply them with palatable food.

To assign a God and then cast the responsibility for our savagery into the clouds that surround him, is cowardice. I think it is wiser to learn as quickly as possible that we must bear the responsibility of our own acts, and be done with vicarious atonement and punishments. The decree of ever so big a god cannot render less cruel the hands that lay a knife to a throat that is pleading for life. I care not whether it pleads with the beat of a lamb or the wail of a human voice.

Recently I heard a "reformer," while discussing the color line, say: "Fred Douglas is a very intellectual and good man, but I would not want him for a personal friend, on account of his color." This is very sad for Mr. Douglas.

C. D. D.

A cow that had been trained to be milked while tied to a post by a rope which was fastened round her horns, afterward refused to be milked unless the rope was tied round her horns, but she would stand perfectly still while the rope was being adjusted, and was afterward quite indifferent as to whether or not it was fastened to the post.

Those people who admit the beauty of the Anarchistic philosophy, but still cry out in terror:

"We must have government! We must have law!" remind me of this cow. They are used to the rope and imagine that being tied with it is a necessary part of the regular business of life.

A nervous cock used to scream and cackle and call away his obedient following of hens when their friend came into the poultry-yard to give them food, but at night he slept soundly while a raccoon carried off a part of the flock.

Those quasi-reformers who make a great outcry against Anarchism without knowing what it is, while the real enemies of social harmony go unrebuked, remind me of this cock.

The clergyman has no more right than the clown to marry people. The judge has no more right than the jail-bird to sentence people. The policeman has no more right than the pauper to arrest people. The tax-collector has no more right than any other thief to filch people's property. The legislator has no more right than the lackey to make laws.

## THE LABOR ENQUIRER

out more labor. Without labor every wheel of every factory would be motionless, commerce be only a name and agriculture a lost art. Weaving clothes would stop, eating would stop, life would stop without labor—without you, laborer!

Can you not, then, understand your power? Can you not see that justice must come if you will only band yourselves together and demand, *aye, take it!*

What you need, then, is union. Let nothing blind your eyes to this necessity. Let no groveling fear of threatened penalties prevent you from banding yourselves together. Who but one of your own number executes penalties?

Let me say again what cannot be repeated too often, "Workingpeople of the world, unite; you have only your chains to lose, you have a world to gain."

CLARA DIXON DAVIDSON.



### Some Queries.

Clara Dixon Davidson of Kirkville, Iowa writes me the following letter:

I want to preface some questions I am going to ask by saying that I am not a fault-finder but a learner. I dare trespass on your well-used space only because I believe others would be benefitted by your replies and grateful for them, too.

In the Socialistic ideal state there would be, I understand, no rent, no interest and no ownership of land, there could, then, be no income. What provision does the plan make for the aged, the sick and the invalid? Should we all become charges upon the community, or upon our friends, as soon as we were incapacitated for labor? And how would the artist, the scientist, and the writer, whose powers can only be thoroughly developed by years of experiment, get food and clothing during their long apprenticeship? I know this class is smaller than that of wage-workers, and I recognize that the social motto of so many—"the greatest good to the greatest number"—is better than smoothing the pathway for one by driving a hundred barefoot over red-hot iron, but I would gladly find some one advocating a system that would bless all and destroy none. If you have found such a one, make it plain as you can to those who cannot understand generalities, but must hear of examples, either real or ideal.

Kirkville, Iowa, Sept. 1884.

The staunchly decentralized organization of the Black IWPA, privileging local group autonomy, did not mesh easily with the San Francisco body's call for a tightly centralized, albeit secretive, pyramid structure. Many in the two groups nevertheless believed they fought towards the same ends and as 1885 rolled into 1886, discussions about merging were top of the agenda.

The wrench in these plans was forged from a tremendously important question of principle: was "The International" open to all, regardless of race or nationality? Both organizations paid affirmative lip-service, but the anarchistic IWPA took it far more seriously, even as many of its members waffled on the premise.

### FOR LIFE OR DEATH?

When the Day of Deeds shall Come, where, Oh, Comrade, wilt thou stand?

The tide sets outward, flowing—flowing,  
Joining the swift gale's riverless blowing,  
And sends all tiny crafts a-rowing.

Well for the sail close-reefed and ready,  
Well for the hard ship safe and steady  
Anchored close while the storm is blowing!

Derveless cowards, and coward's spawn,  
Drifting loose till the calm is gone,  
Where will you be when the gale falls on?

Well for them with the souls unquailing,  
Divining the truth and never failing,  
—Ah well for them when that day shall dawn!

CLARA DIXON DAVIDSON.

The two Internationals took up parallel campaigns of escalation, focusing on issues they hoped could convert popular outrage into social revolution. For the anarchists in the East, this was the struggle for the "Eight Hour Day." The western Red International planted its feet on much grimmer ground: expelling the Chinese laborers many white settlers felt undermined their standards of living and ability to organize. Many IWPA anarchists were shamefully willing to overlook this as a minor disagreement, or worse sympathized with the drive. But enough viewed this as an obvious betrayal of their global emancipatory vision to effectively halt merger talks.

On the 11th of November 1887 a wave of horror ran round the world and the words, "Black Friday" were dated afresh. People who had vaguely hated Anarchists without knowing what Anarchism meant, seeing that, in this case, at least, Anarchists were not aggressors, but victims of an almost inconceivable malice, began to study the new philosophy. The consequence has been that steps which were taken with the object of crushing the truth and covering it with infamy have resulted in spreading a knowledge of it.

Power often defeats its own purpose by repressive measures. Galileo imprisoned, Bruno burned, libraries destroyed, books condemned—was thought imprisoned? Was truth burned?

The last words of August Spies were: "Our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today."

The words were prophetic. Knowing,



In May, 1886, hundreds of thousands struck demanding the Eight Hour Day across much of the United States. IWPA sections played a significant agitational role in the uprising that witnessed intense clashes between strikers and armed state forces. Most infamously, police murdered several workers outside the McCormick harvester factory in Chicago. Local anarchists responded by calling a mass-meeting at "The Haymarket."

Cops ordered the rally disperse, someone threw a bomb, and the cops responded with gunfire. Seven anarchists were sentenced to death afterwards, including the chief-editors of Chicago's anarchist papers. Four were hanged, one killed himself before the state could.

# ENFANT TERRIBLE

THE FORCE OF REASON VIVIFIES. THE FORCE OF ARMS KILLS.

Both surviving issues of *Enfant Terrible* lead with a poem by Clara before alternating between long sections written by Clara and Harry. Reading from a 21<sup>st</sup> century vantage it comes off almost like a radical couples blog. Short fables and clever little anecdotes provoke little mental challenges to authority or expose societal hypocrisy. Brief commentary on current events like a proposed law closing business on Sunday reveals Clara and Henry's distaste for intertwined capital, government, and organized religion.

*Enfant Terrible* was relatively short-lived, its last available issue on December 20, 1891 was only the 6<sup>th</sup>. The February issue of another local individualist anarchist paper, *Egoism*, announced its cessation and that subscribers would receive their paper. *Egoism's* May issue noted the couple's participation in debates at the "People's Free Lyceum" over the meaning of "Philosophical Anarchy." Cowell argued that "majority rule is inexpedient and a social failure because it defeats equal freedom, whereupon it follows that Anarchism is the correct social principle." Clara delivered her own "sharp hits."

***Enfant Terrible* was relatively short-lived, but its free-love-minded editors remained together for another decade.**

In February, 1893 the literary pair married and Clara took Cowell's name.

Ah Sing receives ten year's imprisonment for perjury. Ten years for one lie! If ordinary business men and society women were awarded in like ratio the majority of them would need to live a thousand years in order to make expiation for one day's record.

But Ah Sing is yellow, and perhaps the lie was yellow, too. It makes such difference whether a lie be white or not.

Then, too, this lie was peculiarly odious because it offended the "Majesty of the law."

Rebuked.

I thought I saw a beggar, who had come  
To crave some trifle, which, bestowed, would  
bring  
Tumultuous words of gratitude, maybe  
A kiss to burn and shine upon my hand,—  
My hand outstretched in gracious gentleness  
To meet this welcome opportunity  
To prove itself a noble, helpful thing,  
My mind ran forth in greeting. I was sure  
She came to ask. Instead, she came to give.  
No gift that I could urge upon her palms,  
No kiss that I could lay upon her hair.  
Was it reward for that she brought; a thought  
That seemed to fill, like sunlight, all the  
room.  
I stood afraid before its brilliancy;  
Glad and afraid I stood; and then she said:  
"Not what men think I am, but what I am  
Makes me a joy or sorrow to myself."

C. D. D.



In 1890, Clara's twenty-year marriage to George Davidson ended in an apparently amicable separation and later divorce. Their son already lived on his own. Determined to escape the "stifling atmosphere of rural Midwestern fundamentalism," Clara set off alone on a train for San Francisco at the age of 39.

Clara was drawn to San Francisco's bohemian literary milieu, and her articles and poems from the following decades appear frequently in publications from the *Overland Monthly* to *The Nation*. But Clara didn't rely solely on the good grace of other editors to publish her work.

In 1891, she joined Sigismund Danielewicz as *The Beacon's* assistant editor. Under their guidance the paper notably spoke out for the rights of San Francisco's Chinese residents, unique among the San Francisco radical press in a time where trade unions explicitly advertised their products being made with "white labor."

### Not long after Clara joined *The Beacon's* staff,

Sigismund stepped down from his post and turned over the paper's type, printing equipment, and subscription list to her. Perhaps reflecting the differences in their sentiments, she chose to rename the paper. Clara teamed up with her new boo, the Irish Anarchist immigrant Harry (H.C.B.) Cowell to edit *Enfant Terrible*. Sigismund remained an advocate for dynamite politics long after the Haymarket tragedy; Clara called for a more "evolutionary" than "rev-olutionary" transformation, privileging education and cultivation of individual freedom over insurrection.

### VIVE LIBERTY.

A way of life, more holy,  
More full, more free,  
When earth shall have no lowly,  
Must sometimes be.  
The gleams of light that dimly  
On prophets fall,  
Shall shine at last sublimely,  
And shine for all.  
Shall martyrs be the leaven,  
To lift the mass  
Up to that coming heaven,  
Where men shall pass  
From glory unto glory;  
When wrong shall be  
Remembered but in story?  
Vive Liberty!

CLARA DIXON DAVIDSON.

State Repression following the 1886 strike wave was intense, and not just in Chicago. Politicians, business owners, and mainstream newspaper publishers railed against anarchism, which they argued was a foreign subversion bordering on insanity. Yet Clara argued that 'Repression Breeds Resistance,' channeling Haymarket martyr August Spies final declaration that "our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today." A whole new wave of radicals awoke to the immense injustice in society following what many argued was a politicized frameup trial. Among these were a new generation of radical poets and publishers, like Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre.

Temporally parallel to the Eight Hour agitation was a brutal wave of anti-Chinese pogroms in the far-west. Entire Chinese communities were driven out of towns like Eureka, California and Tacoma, Washington. Dozens if not hundreds of Chinese people were massacred. At the forefront of this agitation was the "Red" IWA of San Francisco, whose members hoped to "convert the anti-Chinese storm into an anti-Capital storm" not by *diverting* attention but by riding full-speed ahead.

**One of the very few opponents was Sigismund Danielewicz, a tireless traveling organizer. Sigismund was the Red International's Secretary until he spoke out against the anti-Chinese violence, calling for a move to higher principles.**

A few years later, he launched a new anarchist paper in San Diego and later San Francisco: *The Beacon*. The paper drew readers and contributors from both the old networks around the *Chicago Alarm* as well as his own contacts on the West Coast, becoming a vital bridge between the anarchism of the Haymarket period and that of later years.

Clara first became a semi-regular contributor to *The Beacon* while still living in distant Kirckville.



*Expediency requires the adoption of the principle of non-aggression in all the relations of man.—Carl Gleaser.*

## Her Experiment.

Alice had just been converted to the Christian religion and thought it would be very Christlike to visit the poor and at least be miserable with them.

A family in wretched poverty grew not far from her father's door, grew, like other weeds, with little excuse or encouragement to exist.

Alice thought it well that her charity should begin as near home as possible, partly because of the old maxim and partly because she was a labor-saving machine, in one sense, that is, she was very indolent.

When she was admitted to the hut that sheltered the Reed family, her smile was intended to be most gentle and winning. Possibly it was attributable to her inexperience that it was made up of five parts condescension, four parts self-satisfaction and one part real friendliness.

"Ah there," was the greeting of a little fellow about three years of age. His exuberant welcome was promptly suppressed by a slap from an elder sister.

"Never mind their racket," said Mrs. Reed encouragingly, "just step inside, if you want to, and set on this chair."

Alice observed in time that the professed restingplace was covered with little finger marks artistically done in molasses and sweetly declared that she quite preferred standing.

"You are not very comfortable here, I presume," ventured the visitor.

"Well, do you care if we're not? You've lived up there on the hill all your life and I never seen you in this house before."

"But I am come now, at last, and it is my desire to do you good. Wouldn't you feel more comfortable, don't you

think, if everything about you, the wall the ceilings, the floors, the windows, the chairs, the children, everything, were perfectly clean?"

"Mabby, but what's the use of talk? They ain't clean and I can't clean 'em."

"Surely you can."

"Tell me how."

Alice looked about and pondered. She had never soiled her dainty hands with any sort of drudgery. Her ideas on the subject were vague, but she attempted something in the way of generalization:

"Why, people take soap, do they not?—and mix water with it and—and—they have brushes and cloths and brooms to apply"—

She was interrupted by an ironical laugh, followed by a very unwarrantable interpolation, considering the facts that she was a philanthropist and Mrs. Reed was a dirty woman in a dirty house with all the probabilities pointing toward the desirability of reforming both herself and the house:

"You needn't teach me how to use soap and water and a scrub-brush; I knowed all that before you was born; what you might teach me, mabby, is how to buy things without money. I hain't any soap nor any brushes nor any broom nor any money; it's wanting soap not wanting to know how to use soap, that keeps us all in the dirt like a passel of tumble-bugs."

"Oh," ejaculated Alice, not knowing what else to say and feeling her courage on the wane. To be sure she might buy them some soap, but could she undertake to furnish a family like that with a perennial supply of the complex apparatus of cleanliness? Somehow she had never thought before of the necessity for apparatus. A vision of her own elegantly appointed suit of rooms on the hill in her father's house, of the bathroom near at hand, of the unlimited quantity of towels and soaps and brush-

es and all the facilities for cleanliness passed swiftly before her.

"There's the rent," Mrs. Reed said after a pause, "we pay your father enough every year for this miserable old she'll to buy us a many a thing needed, a fine sight more than soap."

Alice felt the red tide of shame mounting to her face. Were her delights and refinements purchased by such an outlay of misery as this? Was she clean and dainty only because others were dirty and coarse? Who, then, were the barbarians? They whose earnings contributed to her daintiness, or she who took from them the means of purchasing soap, the civilizer? She had learned long before that cleanliness was next to godliness, now she wondered if the maxim could have been a satire on that godliness which robs people and then calls it charity to return them a pittance from the spoils. Impelled by such thoughts Alice left her neighbor's house rather abruptly and went to her father's office. Fortunately for the success of her errand she found him alone.

"Father," she said, while her shapely hands rested lovingly on his shoulders, and her soft eyes looked appealingly into his, "Father, will you grant me a tremendous request to day?"

"Unto the half of my kingdom," he replied, playfully balancing his cane for a scepter.

"Rash father, I shall not ask for half of your kingdom, but I do, indeed, want a very large slice of it. I want you to let the Reeds live rent free for one year."

"A strange request, truly; what does it mean? An experiment in sociology?"

"Yes, father, I want to try the relative values of rent-paying and soap-buying as civilizers."

"Very well, my daughter, have your will, but try not to be too sanguine. Remember, where there are several

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mouths to feed and backs to cover, a little additional money to spend each month will make no perceptible difference in the condition of a family."

And so she found it. There are other robbers besides the rent robber. There was the profit fiend who took sixty per cent of Mr. Reed's earnings in the exercise of his sovereign right as employer of labor, and there were the thousand other profit-takers who took most of the remaining forty per cent in consideration of their offices as "middlemen." And Alice's experiment proved so discouraging that instead of peering deeper into the un-mysterious mysteries of sociology she gave up altogether and fell into the usual habit of surface-thinkers and beggar-livers: She subsisted by the toil of others and doled out, cautiously, suspiciously and grudgingly, infinitesimal charities to infinitesimal dots that had not intellect enough to be ungrateful.

C. D. D.

FOR THE BEACON.

## IN THE WATERS.

BY CLARA DIXON DAVIDSON.

Beneath the placid surface of the river,  
There breathe and strive a myriad living things:  
Seldom a sound, a ripple or a quiver  
Betrays to us their wildest frolics.

He'er their fiercest and their deadliest striving  
Provokes a ripple on the stream's clear face,  
The mighty waters, moving, changing, driving,  
Leave not a mark by which the spot to trace.

'Mid human seas the moaning and the laughter,  
Make scarce a ripple as the great throng strives,  
And time enfolds us all, before and after,  
And swallows up the records of our lives.