Mr. Hanson Defines Wrong.

To the Editor of Liberty:

In your comment on my latter which you kindly publish in Liberty, No. 391, you ask: Why is an injury a wrong? My answer is as follows:

I am not able to give a precise definition of what constitutes an injury, but I will try to give a rough outline of the conditions under which an injury is considered to exist.

In general, an injury is a wrong if it results in harm to another person. This harm can be physical, emotional, or financial. The harm must be caused by the person who is alleged to have committed the injury.

Also, the harmful effect must be foreseeable. If the harm could not be reasonably anticipated, then it cannot be considered an injury.

In your case, if Mr. Hanson had reasonable cause to believe that his act would result in harm to you, then it cannot be considered an injury. However, if Mr. Hanson knew that his act would result in harm to you, then it can be considered an injury.

I hope this explanation is helpful. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]
The Lucky Three.

For the list of successful applicants for books see fourth page, it being forced out of its usual position by the necessities of the make-up.

Spencer and George.—I.

In beginning a few criticisms on the latest book by Henri: George, entitled "A Perplexed Philosopher," it will be useful to state the purpose of the argument. The introduction offers as a reason that Herbert Spencer—the philosopher in the case—enjoys a great reputation that in his work on "Justice" he has changed his conclusion on private property in land, now affirming that it should continue; that people are led away by a great reputation: but George will restrict his discussion to Spencer's views related to the subject of landholding. It will be seen that the relation referred to is elastic. Thus George discusses as much as he sees fit of Spencer's views related to theology in order to force into some sort of relation with the land question the question of Spencer's moral obligation to truthfulness and self-sacrifice, or loss thereof by aegosticism. Then at the end of the book in the "moral" of the examination George hopes that the suit may be "to promote freedom of thought." How has he adhered to his introductory resolution?

One inference from this state of case may be that George's introduction was written the first thing; but it is generally understood that introductions are written after the books to which they belong. George's may be no exception after all, for his language on page 6 is:

I do not propose to discuss Mr. Spencer's philosophy or review his writings, except as embraced in or related to his teachings on one subject.

Writings related to "teachings" on a subject would be writings related to the subject, but George's purpose finds another relation. What then is the sense of the proposition that the discussion shall be confined? There is a grave flourish of method about it, but the proposition, George, by not taking what Spencer calls related to one subject, but by taking what the proposition, George, relates to in any way in his own mind, reserves the facility of making a point anywhere against his foe to weaken his influence. He could have done that frankly, unless his nature is of another kind; but then he could not consistently use that profession that he did not purpose, etc.

George's work is on this plan. first to show by extracts from Spencer's earlier writings that Spencer was zealous at the outset in assuring that land belongs to society and not to individuals, and inviting society to assert its ownership through the State as the general landlord; that Spencer was then uncompromising in tone and eager to see the interest of the individual sacrificed to the will of God, making a virtue of this sentiment in the individual in common with all other sentiments; how, however, when Spencer had become a famed philosopher and substituted the unknowable and force for God, and evolution for religion, and when the land question was no longer one which the privileged classes could regard as harmless to their interest, however, discussed, Spencer avowed that he had reconsidered his earlier views. By degrees he changed until he became a defender of the established order of things landed in Great Britain, and regarded the L.W. of equal liberty as being compromised by accused claims in the matter of landed property.

George says, says a good deal against Spencer's moral degeneracy, and devotes some effort to showing his shiftness and cowardice.

George also dips into the godless philosophy and gives his readers a few specimens of the way he regards the argument. He does not mention Paley and the watch, but views the wonders of organic life as a steam engine or a telephone. If there is not intelligence visible in the user to account for all he sees, he infers that there was such intelligence in the mechanic.

George does not go into any inducements to offset the observations by which the theory of evolution may be supported. He makes a flying excursion into this domain and gets back to the land question. He winds up with a racy burlesque on Spencer's latest and lamentable position on landowning and the compensation question, taking for comparison the imagined case of a northern abolitionist who had gone South, become comfortable among slaveholders, and been compelled to make his peace with them or take the consequences of their displeasure.

As Mr. Yarros some weeks ago anticipated, George makes a pitiable mess of attempting to discuss the Synthetic Philosophy—that is, if one has regard to science, cogency of subject, and enduring reputation; but the performance may be otherwise viewed if the aim is to make a popular book. It is not clear to my mind that George is of sufficient understanding to be set down as an unmixed humbug in this matter. I am willing to assume that it never occurred to him to think what would be his speculation on design if he found a machine with a contrivance inside operating to destroy the machine or frustrate its normal action.

Having given some account of Henry George's book, I will next present such arguments as strike me in reading certain passages. I shall accuse both Spencer and George of serious oversights, Spencer especially, in his earliest land doctrine, and shall point out that George has said the words necessary to essential corrections, but has failed to follow them up; also that George in this last work has made certain glaring mistakes.

Tak. Kan.


Rio de Janeiro has municipal meat-markets,—a fact which Nationalist papers, for valid reasons, forbear to thrust on our attention in the same way in which other municipal enterprises are held up to our admiration. The Rio de Janeiro meat-market is conducted at a loss, of course, but this signifies nothing. Our own Socialistic post-office is run at a loss, yet the circumstance does not prevent the State Socialists from pointing with pride to it as a beautiful practical lesson in collectivism. Then, although the city is heavily taxed for its meat, it fails to get the meat. This, too, is not altogether incongruous with governmental traditions and usages. We are heavily taxed for our letters, which, though they eventually reach their destination, by no means get regularly and promptly delivered, especially if such delivery happens to interfere with the needful distribution of campaign circulars. The meat-markets are in the hands of incompetent officials, and the system threatens to break down. Ditto with our post-office. The combination of business and politics and spoils has given us a postal service equal to any of the badly-conducted concerns and superiors that we have none of them. You can read further that "none of the executive authorities have brought about the conduct of the business, so that there is no regularity about the shipping of cattle to the slaughter-houses or the distribution of meat to the markets; the consequence is that there are days when the city is brought to the verge of famine, though the cattle ranges of the interior are well stocked, and nothing is lacking save an organizing faculty able to get the desired product to the hands of the deserving consumer." All this is familiar. It is the organizing faculty which politicians cannot supply and which makes government a wretched business agency. As the business is made a monopoly by the municipality, no private initiative is allowed to come to the rescue of the distressed inhabitants. You surely don't expect government to undertake to run a business of any kind without interfering competition and making the attempt of private enterprise to engage in that business a criminal offence! To permit competition would manifestly detract from its dignity and endanger its future as a wonderful business manager. "One individual shipper ventured to bring in 370 head of cattle on his own account, but they were promptly confiscated by the city authorities. What commendable zeal and efficiency in enforcing the just and beneficial laws, and punishing shameful law-breakers! The people may suffer some trifling inconvenience from irregular supplies of meat, but the satisfaction of having excellent laws and honest officials must be immense. "Resort has been had to frozen meat imported from the River Plate, as it seems foreign trade of the kind can set the municipal monopoly at defiance." This is the only alarming feature of the whole situation. The evil must be remedied at once. Foreign trade is bad enough when it does not undermine some of the blessings of municipal monopoly, but, when it does, its restriction or total prohibition becomes an imperative necessity. Municipal Socialism is bound to succeed—in something or other; and neither domestic nor foreign trade can be allowed to place the least impediment in its way.
Merlino’s Little Argument.

Merlino writes in “Solidarity” that he does “not care to resent the indirect attacks of such consummate sophists and intolerant libertarians as Mestra, Tucker and Yarros.” Manifestly he intends to say that he does not care to repel our attacks, since, if he deems them unfair, he cannot but “resent” them. But he wishes “to point out to bona fide Individualists that the main issue between us [does Merlino mean between himself and the bona fide Individualists, or between himself and Liberty?] seems to be whether we shall advocate an organized, systematic, compulsory cooperation, or a hap-hazard, a half-and-half one.” I warmly congratulate Merlino on this first symptom of intelligence. He is turning in the right direction at last. It is undoubtedly true that the difference, not indeed between his position and that of bona fide Individualists, but between his position and ours, is that he advocates an organized, systematic, compulsory cooperation, while we are entirely willing to put up with what he styles a hap-hazard cooperation.

“Give us liberty,” the Individualist says, “and cooperation is sure to come,” continues Merlino. “Well, I say, the history of the United States disproves the assertion. The people [this sentence is given the emphasis of italics] there started in many cases from liberty, nay, from a condition of equality or equal liberty, and see the consequences!” More blunders could not well be forced into such a narrow compass; Merlino has certainly put every inch of his space to the maximum economic use. In the first place, either loose thinking or artful dodging is hidden behind the ambiguous words, “in many cases.” To say that the people here started in many cases from liberty is to utter words without any meaning. Merlino does not mean that the people had more freedom—enjoyed a greater number of separate freedoms—at the outset than they can boast of to-day, because he immediately corrects himself by speaking of “a condition of equality or equal liberty”; and no other meaning is possible. Either the people here started from equal liberty, or they did not. If they did not start from equal liberty, then the history of the United States does not disprove the assertion that cooperation would follow the observance of the principles of equal liberty. If they did, then it is pertinent to call upon us to account for the “consequences.” But did they? No man who comprehends the true significance of equal liberty would ever venture to advance the claim that the people here at any time enjoyed equal liberty. Merlino’s indiscriminate use of terms shows that he confounds equal liberty with equal slavery. The scientific and technical import of the term equal liberty eludes him. The subjects of a despotic government may be said to have equal amounts of liberty, in the sense that no one individual subject is allowed more liberty than any other of his fellow-slaves. In the sense, however, of the highest individual liberty, “compatibly with equality of liberty, equal liberty has never yet found recognition. The people here were freer at the start than other peoples, somewhat nearer to a condition of equal liberty, but equal liberty they never possessed. It follows that the history of the United States does not negative the assertion that cooperation would find equal liberty an admirable soil for its growth. Perhaps all this will appear sophistry to Merlino, but bona fide Individualists will cheerfully undertake to disabuse his mind of that notion. By all means, let him sit at the feet of bona fide Individualists and learn the import of equal liberty and the lesson the history of this country teaches. The consummate sophists will possess their souls in patience. v. v.

How Liberty May Come.

Forecasts are dangerous; yet let us for once consider a little the trend of circumstances. Is it true that everything points to an intensification of authority as the next step of progress,—even a temporary intensification, as a by-path to liberty beyond? So I have sometimes myself thought that it would be; yet a more careful consideration has made me to an opposite conclusion.

The most noticeable characteristic of the present transitional period is the great variety of “reforms” that are agitated,—so great that anything like unanimity in active work has been impossible, scarcely even cooperation toward a common end by two factions.

On the other hand, observe the rally in the reactionary forces.

The churches have not been for many years so jubilant. The Catholic church grows beyond all knowledge. The closely allied Episcopal church tends steadily Romeward, in spite of a minority of liberal tendencies. The rank of Protestant bodies, without any ground of authority, ignoring dogmas and worshipping a vague idea of virtue, are bent more violently than the avowedly authoritarian churches upon forcing us all to “right.” Every Methodist conventicle in the land,—and the land is peppered black with them,—backs our old friend Wannaker in his aspirations for sanctity, backs Comstock in his holy activities. Through them we have our coins defaced with a religious inscription. They are never willing to let the religious question rest. They are the last to permit liberty, even liberty of thought or of conscience. Through them we shall shortly have some vile figment of their idolatrous fancy recognized in the Constitution. Through them we are enslaved by unnumbered Sunday laws, Parkhurst laws, recommending stoning the adulterous woman as the proper thing, and all the rest of it. Many even who are out of the churches, never go, believe none of their talk, yet weakly and blindly contribute money to support them, encourage their wives to go, like “she-cattle,” to be religious, because they say: “Oh, well, after all, the churches do a great deal of good,” not perceiving that the good they do is but an ablation of the misery which they are the main cause of.

Yet a change is impending.

The reaction is possible because the radical movement is not united. Always, as far as I can recall, before this, the liberal movement of each period has united for some one advance; that accomplished, the liberals, most of them, have opposed themselves to further advances. But within the churches, and in sympathy with them for awhile though outside of them, is a vast multitude of liberal tendencies and tradi- tions, even though hazy in their minds.

The revivalization of the churches, and associated reactions, will have this result: they will force a remanifesting of the liberal and reactionary hosts. Again it will be authority against do-as-you-please. The authoritarian proclivities of eclecticismism will be recognized; by the road of Unitarianism many of the more liberal bodies will disband; others Rome will absorb, by that time probably a State church, in fact if not in name, by virtue of school subsidies and the like. In every way the old struggle for liberty against authority seems likely to revive.

And for what can all reformers of whatever persuasion then fight but for liberty? With a State owning, let us say, the railroads, and refusing to employ any who have not a common-school course, in common schools where allegiance to the church will be informally fused, as allegiance to the flag and Bible is now even among authoritarian, Nationalists, and Communists will arise in protest and recalcitrancy.

United opinion means renewed tyranny when that opinion gains the upperhand: differences in opinion mean ultimate uniting to defend differences in opinion and the freedom of actions. The real lover of liberty is not inclined, as the profane suppose, to demand liberty for himself to tyrannize over others. The real lover of liberty dwells little upon the restraints from which he suffers; what inspires him is the desire for liberty for others, which he would be the last to infringe. In such a defence of liberty, all will be forced to stand together. The uninformal will have to understand, the vacillating will have to make up his mind, all, in defence of their own liberty, will have to unite against the renewed encroach- ment of authority.

No regret that radicals cannot unite upon a programme of action; in their differences lies the hope of liberty, in their union to defend their differences the probable accomplishment of it.

JOHN BRYERLEY ROBINSON.

Elliott F. Shepard is dead. And now there is no one left on earth sufficiently lacking in w-if-respect to debate with Dan DeLeon.

Problems of Anarchism.

(Continued from page 1.)

though called profit, is neither interest nor payment for services, but simply an unjust abuse of power. The United States Government, when its shut out all competitors and charges a rate for letters beyond the cost of that branch of the service and uses the accuring profit to make good the deficit caused by its unsound management of the newspaper and periodical branch, is a pertinent example. We could add also the English post-office and telegraph service, upon which the government raises a large income in the name of profits, but which is really, as a tax on the purely private and municipal authorities, who realize big profits on the gas monopoly which they use in “improvements,” whose principal effects are to enhance the value of real estate and increase rents. Unofficial capitalist monopolies by legislative edict were the same thing.

Therefore the one possible benefit which collectivism might be expected to accomplish,—namely, the saving to the producers of that portion of profits which is in- tended to be a tax on the monopolies over private property and capitalism. And that it has just been shown that the remaining portions would not be saved. Hence we arrive at the conclusion that the claim made on behalf of Socialism to return to the producers the profits now received by the capitalist class is without foundation. The analysis in this chapter harmonizes with the preceding by showing that collective ownership of property and compulsory industrial combination offer no advantage over private property and capitalism. So that, judging only by expediency, by the observed results and the possible benefits, collectivism as a solution of the social problem cannot be entertained.

W. BAILLIE.
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