Problems of Anarchism.

LABOR.

1. — The Meaning of the Labor Question.

This is a living question; its interest lies not in the past, not in other lands among unknown peoples, or even in the dim and distant future, but is of the age, the hour, here and now. Neither is it a question of abstractions, of metaphysical ideas, of academic teaching or belief, for it supremely concerns living, thinking, toiling men and women, the generation of today. The life of the people is bound up in it; their morals, happiness, social progress, are all interwoven with the conditions of the labor problem. Here it matters not what books that have been written, thinkers have thought and studied, agitations and movements have arisen to reconcile the conflicting interests and adjust economic forces to better conditions, only to demonstrate the multiplicities of opinion, dogma, and conjecture in which the issues are enwrapped; the matter is still fresh, still needing more light, still inviting closer study, intelligent exposition, and a clear solution. Only the thoughtless, the unsympathetic, the unobserving person can its discussion seem useless and unattractive. In our day great achievements have become quite common, rapid progress the rule, and it is easy to point to the wonders of science, industry, and commerce, the mighty strides, the unbelievable advantages that mark the age, the growing power of man over nature, the increase of wealth and facilities for enjoyment.  But the need to deny the benefit that all classes derive from these signs of change or to attempt to belittle it were stupidity and folly. The growth and concentration of wealth, we often hear, are evils indicating a diseased society, an approaching and overwhelming crash. Yet in this very increase of wealth we can see the evidence of greater stability, easier and more certain life for society. And here as in other instances we see that what may tend to the security and happiness of the individual is necessarily identical with the immediate welfare of the individual. Many indeed are crushed and suppressed that the aggregate may live and advance. While admitting so much, it must also be said that such facts in no wise justify the result, they but point to an undeveloped, conflicting, and transitional stage, the sooner over and out of the better. Let us look a little closer. Among the working classes today could be paraded some of the worst phases of human suffering and degradation that the past can furnish. Even chattel slavery would appear an improvement on some features of modern wage slavery. The assured life of society as a whole is hardly compensation for the unceasing, precarious, and unsuccessful lives which many individuals must inevitably lead. Increased productive power, machinery, mechanical and scientific improvements, are in many ways beneficial and essential to the progress of the race. Labor-saving inventions cannot increase too fast. Wealthy capitalists and great corporate enterprises seeking their own interests are impelled to improve in the supply and price of a commodity, the demand for the commodity to the wage slaves; and so on. To the capitalist and professional classes are as a rule better off and more secure, both in income and accumulated wealth, as they grow older, and so pass on their possessions to their children; while the wage workers, though none the less industrious and essential in the social machinery, from the start receive less remuneration, are seldom able to accumulate wealth, and in the declining years of life suffer loss of income as wage-workers, and, if they reach old age at all, are without property, dependent on their children or on society for support, and of course to their offspring leave no legacy but the poverty and necessity to sell their labor which was their own birthright. And mark that this result is not due to any inherent demerit in the workers, nor to the fact that they are less capable of performing the work than the others; it is not the virtue, industry, or ability of the one, the vice, indolence, or improvidence of the other, which produce such opposite effects, but these results are the inevitable and unavoidable consequences of the existing economic system. If the laboring classes would live on half their earnings, work three hundred and sixty-five days a year, and in the surplus they would not attain the circumstances of the classes above, who enjoy life, deny themselves nothing, and yet, when they die, leave a patrimony to their children. No change affecting only the habits and personal conduct of the workers can remove economic evils. The tendency of the time is to intensify the class distinctions just pointed out. Generally it is true that the offspring of the well-to-do retain their status in society, and wealth remains practically in the hands of a class passing on from generation to generation. And, except in a few instances, where great talent or special opportunity makes a workingman wealthy, — instances greatly overrated, — the children of the wage-workers simply replace their parents in the labor market. While this is approximately correct of present conditions in America, it is bound to be more apparent in time.

The reality of the class division is well illustrated in the attitude of political authority when labor troubles arise. Why is it that the power of the State, police, militia, soldiery, is always used in one way and for a single purpose when the conflicting interests of the wage-workers and their masters take an acute form? In spite of democracy and workers' suffrage, the economically superiors, the part of society having permanent economic advantage through its monopoly of wealth and privilege, never fails to control the coercive machinery of government in its own interest. Strikers are rebels against existing economic arrangements, which the capitalists believe to be for their benefit and are therefore determined to maintain. And as government in its merely political capacity suppresses every attempt at rebellion against its authority, so in its capacity of upholding economic authority, the power of the capitalists, it is ever ready to mete out the same penalty upon the industrial rebel, the wage-worker on strike. The analogy between the British government suppressing a rebellion in India or Ireland and the American State or Federal government putting down an industrial revolt at Homestead or Buffalo is no fanciful similitude, but has a significant meaning. Remembering also what the Klier said to the Westphalian soldiers who were on strike, and how the French republican government acted, only with the Communards, but in recent days with the working-men at Decaturville, Pournelle, and other places, to say nothing of the fate of the Chicago martyrs, we may conclude that political power will show more virulence and less mercy in dealing with economic rebels than with those who revolt against its political authority.

These considerations should prove to the labor worker that something more than a change of power is required to make the workers free. It is true that governmental coercion maintains existing conditions by forcibly preventing any radical attempt at change, but the evil exists in the economic arrangements, which themselves must be reformed to effect an improvement. If the Cadwells had not an advantage over the wage-workers by means of their monopoly of capital and opportunities for producing wealth, — a superiority inherent in the conditions making the laborers dependent upon the monopolists, — then the working classes would have nothing to fear from a refusal to accede to the demands of the laborers. If they were independent, they are doubly enslaved both by monopoly of the means of labor and by the governmental power which the capitalists have at their command to enforce submission. It is not control of the militia that the workers would rule on half their earnings, work three hundred and sixty-five days a year, and in the surplus they would not attain the circumstances of the classes above, who enjoy life, deny themselves nothing, and yet, when they die, leave a patrimony to their children. No change affecting only the habits and personal conduct of the workers can remove economic evils. The tendency of the time is to intensify the class distinctions just pointed out. Generally it is true that the offspring of the well-to-do retain their status in society, and wealth remains practically in the hands of a class passing on from generation to generation. And, except in a few instances, where great talent or special opportunity makes a workingman wealthy, — instances greatly overrated, — the children of the wage-workers simply replace their parents in the labor market. While this is approximately correct of present conditions in America, it is bound to be more apparent in time.

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Liberty.

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NEW YORK, N. Y., MAY 13, 1893.

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tioner, the axe thatfreqquented the portals of the government, the stand-up knife of the department clerk, all those insignias of office, which young Liberty [print a left-hand corner]...

Facey.

"The appearance in the editorial column of arti-
cles on other signatures than the editor’s initial indi-
cates that the editor has grown in central purpose and

generall ton, though he does not hold himself respon-
sible for every argument or point. But the appearance in
other parts of the paper of articles by the same or other
writers by no means indicates that he disapproves in
any respect such disposition of them being governed
largely by motives of convenience.

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Below is given the result of the tenth award of books under Liberty’s plan of giving away three books a week:

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title of the book he desires (the applicant may choose

any one book on the list of books). Each applicant receives one book at a time. No second requests will be granted, unless a new

publication is received. Each book is sent to the applicant

without charge, and the applicant is not required to pay

for it. Each application is considered a separate request.

Why Not Circulate a Million?

As an excellent and effective method of propa-
gandism, and as a means of advertising “In-

stead of a Book,” Liberty, and my publications in

general, I contemplate issuing the first chap-
ter of “Instead of a Book,” entitled “State So-
cialism and Anarchism,” as a small sixteen-page

pamphlet, printed on paper of light weight, with

a colored cover. The cover pages will be used

for the advertising above referred to. It is be-

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clever weapon for Anarchism and against State

Socialism, and, if distributed as sample pages

of “Instead of a Book,” which is the staple of

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opportunity for those desiring either to sell or
to give away Anarchist literature. Liberty’s

readers are invited to send in their orders as soon

as possible and to make them as large as possible.

The cash should be remitted with the order.

Before proceeding with the work I shall wait a week or two to see how the responses come in.

T.

Didn’t Know It Was Loaded.

A good many editors have said a good many foolish things about the recent decision of Judge

Riggs relative to the railroad engineers.

And these foolish things are not confined to those

who look with favor on the decision. Either in

judged, some of the most foolish and illogical

come from so-called liberal editors. From the

light I have on the subject I do not see how the
decision could have been otherwise and be logi-
cal. It was, it seems to me, very much in har-

mony with the Inter-State commerce law.

The people clamored for the law until they got it,

and because the engineers got a black eye from

it, the same people are calling the poor judge all

kinds of hard names for being too logical and low-

ing down the law. You see, they didn’t know

the things they were loaded to discharge never did.

The whole crew that are crying for government

care of this and government control of that seem

not to comprehend that all the laws looking to

that end are loaded so as to be most dangerous
to the fellow who is doing the shooting, so to

speak.

But this decision has several good things in it withal, the most important of which is to

make the people hesitant about resorting to law

for the redress of grievances. Besides this, it

brings prominently to the front the question of

the right of employees to quit their work when they feel

the law is loaded to discharge when the wain strikes them. I hold to the

opinion that employees have no right to strike

until the contract existing between them and the

employer has been fulfilled, whether the contract

be written or implied, and that the employer has no right to discharge until the contract has

been fulfilled. If I am working by the week

for any one, he has no right to discharge me

before the week is up if I do the work agreed upon

in the manner agreed upon; but at the same
time I have no right to quit my work until the week

is completed. The idea that employees have a

right to strike at any time carries with it the

right of the employer to do the bounce act at

will. The side that gets the worst of that sort

of an arrangement shouldn’t play the baby act

cry. However, we poor “fool anarchists” can

afford to wait; things are coming our way.

JOSEPH A. LABADIE.

Press Opinions of “Instead of a Book.”

In pursuance of my announced purpose, ap-

proved by all the readers of Liberty from whom

I have heard, I begin the publication of the

newspaper notices of “Instead of a Book,”

heading the list with that of the “Daily Mer-
cury,” published at New Bedford, Mass. This

was one of the first notices that the volume re-
cently issued, and it will stand as one of the fairest

and best,—a fact the more remarkable because

New Bedford was for many years my home and

the city of all others, in accordance

with the usual experience of men who think for

themselves, where I am most misunderstood.

The voice of Benjamin T. Tucker is mostly, it must be

confessed, as of a crying in a wilderness of doubt

as to his sanity or of misgiving as to his honesty. We

fancy that a good many people who know of

Mr. Tucker as an Anarchist, and who have occasionally

kept to seize a few eyes on a sentence from

his pen, regard him as a queer old gentleman, not

to be taken seriously or not, but rather as a pecu-

liarily fantastic freak in the world museum of sociologi-

cal curios.

Really, Mr. Tucker is a man with ideas which pos-

sess our heart and soul, and which he expounds in a

very inclusive and charming, and sometimes convic-

ting way. We dare-say he is not himself always consist-

ent though he is peculiarly fond of pointing out the in-

consistencies of his adversaries and of exposing,

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clear and luminous, as a rule; and while he is often sharp and sarcastic, he is still good-natured. We do not look for the least of his faults where we think that much which he says is worthy of attentive consideration.

Much less intelligent than the foregoing, though perhaps no fairer and liberal in intent, is the following from the Lowell (Mass.) "Times," which reviewed the book in connection with Gary's article in the "Century":

The "Century" for April contains a paper which may be read with great interest, not so much because it seems of a very unusual order, as "The Chicago Anarchists of 1896—the Crime, the Trial, and the Punishment," an exhaustive account of the whole subject, written by Hon. Joseph E. Gary, who was the judge presiding at the trial. The paper will be welcomed as a dissertation on the subject of society and of the still subtle power of the doctrines which led to such a culmination; yet in the minds of many will be found a regret that the judge should in any degree appear to put himself on the defensive for a verdict which is fully accorded with the ideas of justice and of necessity held almost unanimously by those who believe in the existing order of things.

That there are many, a great number of people in our country who do not believe in the existing order of things and with whom Judge Gary has no possible common ground from which to argue, is sufficiently evidenced by the fact that the "Century" is not a journal of the "Times." The office comes from a place called Boston "Instead of a Book, by a Man Too Busy to Write One," Benj. R. Tucker. Here is a closely printed book of over 500 pages, filled with a mass of Mr. Tucker's article as printed by his compiler. Being too busy to write a book, Mr. Tucker has arranged, with some degree of classified order, extracts from Liberty, the paper which he has published since 1881. The aim and object of this work is to assist in the dissolution of government in the economic organism. It is the organ of Anarchism, which Mr. Tucker himself defines as "the doctrine that all the affairs of men shall be managed, regulated, or voluntary associations, and that the State shall be abolished." The Anarchist looks for the abolishing of all constituted authority as the cure for all evils; he boldly avows his belief that the code of morals should be formed upon the individual, that all taxes and tariffs should be abolished, that "mind your own business" should be the only moral law, that "the drunkard, the rake, and the harlot" shall be free to live their lives "until they choose to abandon them," and that all rights and responsibilities should be abolished, that the sexes should be allowed to intermingle at their own free will. Mr. Tucker asserts his belief that the martyrs of Chicago did fame those "thirty-two of our gallows" than they had ever been able to do in their lives.

Here are the two extremes in political economy set forth by able exponents, Judge Gary on the one hand, Mr. Tucker on the other, one an exponent of constituted Authority, the other of Anarchism, one denouncing Spies and his fellows as murderers, the other extolling them as martyrs in the Anarchistic cause of the future. "Neither we have come," and the believer in progress and the right of the individual to be an authority to himself may well "set up his Ebenezer" and thank God (if he acknowledge one) for the literary work that is at least to study social problems all along this vast line and to choose for himself with what extreme he will identify himself, or when in the long line between these remote antipodes he will attempt to fix his feet. It is useless to ignore the fact that people are thus choosing in vast multitudes, notwithstanding the traditions of the fathers.

Aside from its inexcusable failure to discriminate between Anarchists and Communists, it is to be noted that the "Times," in disadvantageous contrast to the "Mercury," which thoughtfully laid the emphasis on the Anarchist claim that liberty will cure all the vices, dwells with special stress on the Anarchistic claim of liberty for the vicious. We have here an excellent illustration of the contrast between the sensational critic and the critic who is above sensationalism. "But, not to be unfair to the "Times," I will contrast its remarks, on the other hand, with a bit of pure Philistineism from the New Orleans "Picayune":

The title page calls this "A Fragmentary Exposition of Philosophical Anarchism Collected from the Writings of various men."

The same is, as I suppose, an accurate statement; but, as the preface is signed with the initials B. R. T., it is fair to suppose that it was the author himself. The book seems to have only one chapter, and that the first, that was written for the "Century," the rest of the pages are filled with a lot of essays, speech, and editorials from Liberty, of which publication the author is the editor. It sets forth the principles of Anarchism with no uncertain sound. These principles seem to be that every individual is to do just what he pleases, not what he thinks right, but what he pleases. No man has a right to constrain his neighbor in any thing. Foul play, if not lawful, is written in the hearts of men, such a state of society is an absolute impossibility. If it could be carried out, desolation and destruction would rule the earth.

With which dismal Picayune prophecy ends the first loccuso.

It will be remembered that, on the eve of the frightful torture applied not long ago to a Texas criminal burned at the stake by a mob of fiends, J. W. Sullivan indulged himself in an untruthful prophecy of the humane treatment that offenders would receive under the régime of the Referecodn. He based this prophecy on no solid moral law, but rather on a piece of capital punishment in Switzerland, where the Referecodn is enjoyed. The Texas horror promptly gave this prophecy a very black eye, and now an absolutely fatal blow has been dealt it by the progress of events in Switzerland, as may be seen from the following extract from the editorial columns of the New York "Sun" of May 2: "Switzerland is apparently about to return to the death penalty. The increase of crime and the horrible character of some of the butcheries perpetrated by the assassins have brought a considerable number of the voters to the same conclusion that the condition of the country will be benefited by the reappeareance of the scaffold. In 1874 an amendment to the Federal constitution, proclaiming the abolition of the death penalty throughout the entire territory of the Confederation, was adopted. In 1879, just five years afterward, this amendment was abolished. The vote which wiped it out, however, did not precisely restore the executions to their old functions. It simply gave power to the cantons to reintroduce the death penalty, in their penal codes, if they chose to do so. The voters who voted for the revision of the law of 1874 were not all desirous to return to the old method. The majority of them, in all probability, wished to record their hostility to centralization. But since 1879 eight cantons have availed themselves of the privilege granted by the revision, and have reintroduced the death penalty. These cantons are Appenzell, Obwalden, Uri, Valais, Zug, Saint-Gall, Lucerne, and Schwyzer. In addition to the above, Schaffhausen has just wheeled into line, and the other cantons are expected to follow in short order. This may be a melancholy retrograde movement; but, such as it is, it is." It's Great is the Referecodn, immense is the Initiative, and huge is their Prophet!

Mr. Morrison I. Swift of Boston invites me to give half a column of Liberty's space to a document which he has sent to numerous labor pa-

*Since this was written we have had examples in the Ann Arbor, New Orleans, and other cases of the true function of the bench in administering the law between labor and capital. Even the brave men armed with dunwells of trumpets and dagger of repression's venge against capital in the interest of the people are with their usual impatience interfered with by legal processes to the utter damnation of the workmen.***

Healthy Self-Assertion.

To the Editor of Liberty:

I greatly admire your statement that Liberty is "a journal edited to suit its editor, not its readers." Some of us who should be Anarchists but the name, accuse you and Victor Yarros of "big head." Well, your big head is all right. It is just what is needed among radical reformers, and not the so-called reformers or pagans. When Duse says: "He is the strongest man on earth who stands alone." A. A. SORENG.

Marvin, S. Dak., April 26, 1893.

Problems of Anarchism.

....(excerpt from page 3)

need; it is control of their own labor and the opportunities to employ it. The latter will not be obtained by securing the former. Hence democracy, or the popular control of political power, being a purely negative aim, is no longer the goal of wage slavery. If it does not even lead to the remodelling, and is not an indispensable weapon.

We have seen that the workman's right to vote does not prevent the capitalist from wielding the machinery of authority in his own hands. He should also make use of the weapon of capital punishment in Switzerland, where the Referecodn is enjoyed. The Texas horror promptly gave this prophecy a very black eye, and now an absolutely fatal blow has been dealt it by the progress of events in Switzerland, as may be seen from the following extract from the editorial columns of the New York "Sun" of May 2: "Switzerland is apparently about to return to the death penalty. The increase of crime and the horrible character of some of the butcheries perpetrated by the assassins have brought a considerable number of the voters to the same conclusion that the condition of the country will be benefited by the reappearance of the scaffold. In 1874 an amendment to the Federal constitution, proclaiming the abolition of the death penalty throughout the entire territory of the Confederation, was adopted. In 1879, just five years afterward, this amendment was abolished. The vote which wiped it out, however, did not precisely restore the executions to their old functions. It simply gave power to the cantons to reintroduce the death penalty, in their penal codes, if they chose to do so. The voters who voted for the revision of the law of 1874 were not all desirous to return to the old method. The majority of them, in all probability, wished to record their hostility to centralization. But since 1879 eight cantons have availed themselves of the privilege granted by the revision, and have reintroduced the death penalty. These cantons are Appenzell, Obwalden, Uri, Valais, Zug, Saint-Gall, Lucerne, and Schwyzer. In addition to the above, Schaffhausen has just wheeled into line, and the other cantons are expected to follow in short order. This may be a melancholy retrograde movement; but, such as it is, it is." It's Great is the Referecodn, immense is the Initiative, and huge is their Prophet!

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*Wm. BAILEY.
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