Confession and Criticism.

Dear Tucker,

I too have been wondering what you have been doing all along, and have felt "moved" to express myself clearly, if possible. For instance, I did not understand the significance of the capital "I" in "Individualism," as I thought you were really making distinctions that had neither fact nor "aura" of logic to support them. But now I know for the first time that there is a body of persons somewhere known as "Individualists" with a platform that "includes compulsion in its future." So it is plain enough that those "Individualists" are disposed to reach their desired ends by means that must be described as "compulsory." The moral is on offense; it is my duty, and my right, to let it stand untested, since you have not thought the matter out soberly and carefully — that you were very much mixed over the notion of "right," your way, as you put it, into your own mind.

I do not, however, despair. You may remember my once saying to you years ago, when you were young and positive, that I could easily enough answer you if you had the time. You laughed, of course. But there was a deal of sense in my remark, and I am inclined to — not as a drowning man to a straw, please take note, but as an embattled and never-dying principle. I am sure that there are rights which are absolute, inalienable, coeval with individual existence; independent of the chances of bargains or patched-up contracts; moral rights, implying obligation to respect them on the part of every human being; and, if he does not, then let him take himself out of the way. I shall say that an injury is wrong because it is injury; not only because it is an assault and damage to one's self, but for the further reason that it is an assault and damage to one's own sense of what ought to be to make the social peace secure. One may well look on the "social peace" or prosperity as whatever else in nature is beautiful and so to be held. There is the obligation to his own nature; or, to the better nature of him; to that which separates and elevates him above the others; to that which distinguishes him as Man. The obligation, in short, is to his manhood.

And now you smile again, I doubt not; smile as of old. But I have this for your consolation with the wise Shakespearian (apparently for my "safety." — A man may smile and smile and be — without a scar."

And then again, and this the worst of all — I was about ready to say a few words to you concerning "goodness." But, lo, now, here in Liberty today appear before me, I have written, and my own very lines quoted as verification of your assertion. What do I not? I can go back on the "lines," and I am only too glad if we are, as I am, in atonement, to return old Union-carriage words.

But you see I thought you were holding some other kind of views: that you espoused and sapped your finger at goodness per se; that you hated, spit on it, and all that sort of thing. How I came by this notion I know not, except that I had found my way into my fear, too easy-going careless brains, because of recent imperfect readings of your Liberty-editorials. Now the scales fall, and my eyes see clearly that you have gone into too much presuppositional undertaking. I consider myself fortunate that my张先生ed productions have allowed Mr. Lloyd to precipitate himself, and that on his head has descended the punishment that might have fallen first on me. I confess I am not a little surprised to find both Mr. Lloyd and myself in the wrong. Yet I should be even more surprised now, after your deliberate assertion that your "opposition to the gospel of goodness" is not opposition to "goodness itself," to find that we were in the right. That you are not right in your own interpretation of yourself. I cannot for a moment suppose. So certain am I of this that I wish to "retract all I was going to say," and assure you that I am quite of your opinion. You open me mightily in the use you make of my lines that assume the goodness of the world to be in excess of its evil. I have encountered so many "good" people who didn't know enough even to attend to their own business that I am all the time desirous of celebrating Knowledge as being now (and for a long time yet likely to be) the one thing needful. I am unable to believe that it is the depravity of the race and not its stupidity that keeps so much that seems to be desirable for all the world's well-being in abeyance. I can call up no great "burning issue" that is not either strained or in some manner retarded by the popular current. But I am pretty sure that, broad out, the light shall break. See Smith's Point, "from break between the hills of your Bible." His prophecy has been fulfilled. And there are yet rays of light in those old Jewish records which even the heretical Smiths and Briggesses have not as yet permitted to fall astir their newly-windowed souls. And what is more and better, out of the whole world's experience light is continually breaking; which reason the world is more and more in a throb of a mental agitation — its funny brain striving to readjust and fashion better and better conditions, which evidences that a disposition of goodness is not lacking where Intelligence opens the portals and beckons the people all to move on.

Here ends my rambling confessional sort of note to you, — too long for Liberty's few and, for the most part, well-equipped columns. You need not encroach on another matter for its sake. The spirit moved me; the spirit is satisfied; and I shall remain... semper.

Yours truly,

S. H. NOBLE.

[This good-humored, beautiful, and thoroughly delightful letter has my warmest appreciation. It comes to me like a breath of "nuld lang syne." For its admirable reinforcement of my view of goodness I am thankful. For the writer's previous misunderstanding of my position I am not disposed to chide him, since he does not claim that his misunderstanding was my fault. He generously places all the blame upon himself, and I selflessly allow it to remain where it properly belongs. When he has "time" to set me right on rights, I shall have time to listen. What he gets time to say on the subject in the present letter I have listened to before and have frequently "dispensed" of in these columns. I note simply that his defence of moral obligation is, like Mr. Hanson's, fatal to moral obligation. Moral obligation is universal — that is, incumbent upon all without exception — or it is nothing. To lift it from the fellow who does not care for society is to place it upon the social fellow for the very reason that he does care for society, — in other words, to make it no longer a moral obligation, a but a course of conduct chosen from expedience for the satisfaction of desire. Whichever way Mr. Morse may turn, he will find this satisfaction of desire at the bottom of his ought. Now, the satisfaction of desire is the opposite of the performance of duty, although outwardly the two may look very much alike. But enough. May the spirit move Mr. Morse again! My old friend's letter whets my appetite, and I am sure it will have the same effect on all who read it. The literary editor of Josiah Warren cannot do his "duty" better than by continuing regularly to the foremost organ of Josiah Warren's doctrines. — *Editor Liberty.*]

An Angelic Quality.

[Demoiselle.]

"Since you have matrimonial inclinations, why shouldn't you marry this charming Marguerite, your sister's friend? She is an angel."

"I agree, but she paints."

"Oh! see, now, my dear fellow, tell me, with your hand upon your conscience, did you ever see an angel that wasn't painted?"
The Good Law That Failed.

New York papers congratulated themselves that the legislature which recently adjourned failed to pass most of the objectionable bills that the people were threatened with, but in enumerating the pernicious measures they include one which, so far from being innocuous, is very creditable to the person responsible for its introduction and to the branch which gave a majority in its favor. The denunciation of this bill, and its classification with reckless and quack legislation, may be taken as evidence of the untrustworthiness of newspaper moralists. In form, the bill is an amendment of the provisions of the Penal Code relating to "conspiracies," and it was designed to legalize what is called "boycotting." It declared that it should not be unlawful for persons employed in any calli g, trade, or handicraft to unite, combine, or bind themselves by oath, agreement, alliance, or otherwise to persuade, advise, or encourage, by peaceful means, any person or persons to enter into any combination for or against leaving or entering into the employment of any person, firm, or corporation; or to persuade, advise, or encourage, by peaceful means, any person, firm, or corporation to withhold custom, patronage, or employment from any person, firm, or corporation.

This bill further declared that no one in the Penal Code should be so construed to prevent any one from using lawful means to induce employers to grant favorable terms, or to induce any person or firm to withhold custom or patronage from any person or firm.

If this bill was actually demanded by organized labor, it is a great satisfaction to find that in one case at least labor's demand was grounded in justice and common sense. There is no rational objection to such a bill. The need of it shows how antiquated and confused conspiracy laws are. What is right and legitimate when done by one person cannot possibly be wrong when done by a voluntary combination of several persons. The bill sought to legalize that which never ought to have been under the cloud of illegality. To read the provisions of the bill, as given above, is to be converted to its support. The English government has been induced to introduce a similar bill, extending to combinations other than trade the provisions of an act applicable to certain trade combinations which declares that an act done by two or more persons shall not be punishable unless legally wrong if done by one person.

To urge, as some do, that such an act would increase the difficulty of preventing distinctly unlawful attacks upon person and property is tantamount to pretending that, in order to prevent wrong conduct, it is necessary to prescribe certain kinds of right conduct. It is certainly palpable nonsense to say that we cannot deprive a man of the freedom to use his liberty which he has no right to do unless we also deprive him of his freedom to do a lot of things which he has a perfect right to do. It is true that labor contests are apt to be characterized by indefensible interference with persons and property; but such tendencies cannot and may not be checked by prohibiting interferences with persons and property that are morally defensible. It is an unheard-of proposition to compel laborers to be just and discriminating by being unjust and discriminating in dealing with them.

The Larger Anarchism.

Dear Tucker:

And so it is "a gross blunder" or my way when lectured for preaching goodness, to arrive at the natural conclusion that my lecturer objects to goodness itself, or else to the use of the word. (1) (And all that I did to draw down the rebuke for preaching was to claim that character was a necessary part of Anarchism.) (2)

It is very illogical in me, is it, if I attempt to steal a man's purse and get knockd down and delivrd to the policeman, to infer it he objects to being robbed per se? Were I more "mathematically accurate" in thought, I would see that I had no right to suppose anything except that my personal attentions in that line were offensive, or, (3)

Go to, counsel: logic is a beautiful thing and dogging a dexterous art, but there is a way of using both not always creditable, as our enemies, the lawyers, illustrate.

But I am well content. There is an impression abroad that Benj. R. Tucker is, as a lady friend puts it, "a sort of intellectual Mephistopheles." This I have always opposed.

I have never desired to believe that my friend was any other than a man of character and a believer in character, however paradoxical his utterances on the matter might appear. (4) And behold my justification! Here are admissions worth a gold mine to me.

You say I have inferred from your "opposition to the gospel of goodness" that you are "opposed to goodness itself." Which of course does not follow and is not the case. (Italics are mine, but never mind.)

Furthermore you call this mistake a "gross blunder." This admission contains, too, something that amounts to personal confession, maintained that for certain facts in nature, usually designated as moral, we had no better descriptive terms than those contained in the vocabulary of morality. Here, for the first time, we have you use the term which is a part of that terminology. If there is a high and more scientific term, why not use it?

Again I had somehow got the idea that you held that doctrine that we must have external liberty before we could have character, that character was not a necessary force in the attainment of liberty. I was wrong and that is clear, for now you say, in referring to a previous article: "Is that article it was implied that we already have the amount of character necessary to the securing of liberty." Again: "If, contrary to my view, the supply of character for the purpose of liberty is still insufficient, it will increase, if at all, by further developing under conditions, not of talk, but, as Mr. Lloyd himself says of tyranny."

You do well to rebuke such "gross blunders," and I offer a thousand apologies. But I would willingly have made a dozen more if I could secure these admissions, had that been necessary. (5)

I would call your attention, too, to the fact that the word "character," as here used, is also a part of the terminology of morality. (6)

I made your argument about the amount of character, because I know no way by which such amount can be proved or disproved except by the "logic of events." (7)

Had you been more "mathematically accurate," you would have implied to me that I thought that "goodness" came "to any important extent by preaching." Goodness is a product of growth and experience, like intellectual comprehension. I do not suppose people can become good because they are told to be so, any more than I suppose they can be logical when ordered. But when you say logic is important, you are stating a fact; even so I when I declare the necessity of goodness and character in the free and happy life. (8)

Preaching is ccevally valuable to those already good and logical to those already wise.

I am writing this under the greatest difficulties of time, place, and opportunity, and you can be surprised at that, if you please, at that which I shall ignore certain questions you propose.

I only deem it necessary or have time to say that, while I believe the true Anarchism is somewhat larger, I believe that that which you teach, I do not therefore, of necessity, exclude anything that you teach. (9)

I believe that the instinctive spirit of liberty, which many illogical people possess, is higher than the logical faculty, which many intellectuals possess, to perfection. I believe there are right reasons inherent in the nature of things superior to the rights of contract, and I believe character affords a better foundation for the propulsion of any external machine, like the Mutual Bank, than anything that I shall oppose.

J. W. LLOYD.

Apr. 19, 1883.

(1) The conclusion which Mr. Lloyd jumped at and which I criticized was coupled with no alternative. It was single and absolute. From
my objection to his preaching of goodness he inferred that I object to goodness itself. He did not infer, as he now would have us understand, that I object to goodness itself "or else to the use of the word." The phrase quoted is an addi-
tion, an afterthought, awkwardly inserted to an effort to get out of a corner. It is an ex-
ample of "dodging," but it is then not "dexterous" enough to be Mephistopelian. Mr. Lloyd’s "use of the word"—that is, his constant dwelling on the necessity of goodness—is precisely what I mean by his "preaching of goodness." Now, if he had inferred from my objection to his preaching of goodness that I object to goodness itself or else to the preaching of goodness, this would not have been a "gross blunder." It simply would have been the sill-
est tautology, and would have laid no foundation for his article charging me with "kicking against the pricks." (3) Mr. Lloyd’s claim was not simply that character is a necessary part of Anarchism, but that a lack of character today is what prevents the realization of Anarchism. This is one of those plumb-line, "hair-splitting" distinctions which the mathematical mind sees and which the non-mathematical mind does not see.

(3) Truly this is the only inference that logic warrants; and, if the illustration had arisen in the course of a discussion of Jean Valjean’s con-
duct in giving his purse to the man who tried to steal it, it would have been a gross blunder to assume any other inference than that which logic justifies.

(4) After charging me with dodging, Mr. Lloyd in the very next paragraph states that there is an impression abroad that I am an intel-
lectual Mephistopheles and that he believes the impression to be erroneous. Suppose I were to print such a statement as this: "John Smith has just taken advantage of a legal technicality to get possession of property which he knows to be mine. There is an impression abroad that John Smith is a thief, but I don’t believe this. In such a case I think I might be called with truth a Mephistopheles." (5) Mr. Lloyd is evidently willing to pay a very high price for commodities so plentiful that they are to be had for the asking. These admissions of mine which fill him with such joy are old assertions of mine. Fancy Mr. Lloyd, after being distinctly wronged in discussion of a problem in the higher mathematics, flinging his hat in the air and shouting: "Ha, ha! What a vic-
tory I have won!" My opponent admits that two and two make four. This is a perfect gold mine. To discover another such, I would willingly commit unutterable stupidities.

(6) Must I, then, cease to talk about the sun because that word was a part of the Ptolemaic terminol-
ogy? I favor discarding only so much of the terminology of morality as is in my view inesci-
onsistent with Egoism.

(7) Which is an excellent reason for having no more to say about the necessity of character, and for seeing to it that facts and events accord with the principles of contract and mutualism; because in the absence of such accord even the logic of ethical art prove nothing regarding the necessary amount of character. But, given such accord followed by social failure, perhaps we may then infer that character is lacking.

(8) But in using logic in the exposition of truth I do more than state a fact; I convince others. It was this idea that I thought to con-
vey in my last article, when I said that, though goodness seldom comes by preaching, truth often does. I bow to the justice of Mr. Lloyd’s re-
proof when he declares that he has said nothing to indicate a belief that goodness comes by preaching. My inference was unwar-ranted. But why, then, does Mr. Lloyd continually preach goodness? For more love of preaching? Well, if that is the sort of thing he likes, I can understand his course. But I do not see how it serves Anarchism. Anarchism needs exegesis, the preaching of truth; not mere homilies, the preaching of goodness.

(9) My questions were very direct and simple, requiring no answers beyond a plain "Yes" or a plain "No." But for Mr. Lloyd they were also very easy to answer, because he might have answered them, he would have left himself in a ridiculous position. Few of us have "time to do that.

(10) The word "higher" is often used in what seems to me a meaningless fashion. It would be difficult to prove that Mr. Lloyd’s con-
cent is higher than his hat, though he probably could more easily dispose with the latter. On the other hand, it is perfectly obvious that his hat is higher than his head, though less essential,—at least, to him. Whether the spirit of liberty is higher or lower than the logical faculty I do not know and do not care to discuss. What I want to know is whether it conflicts with the logical faculty. This Mr. Lloyd prudently refused to tell me. His refusal blocks our discussion.

State Socialists will probably continue to "point with pride" to the government Post Office as an object-lesson in State management, whether the facts should justify it or not. The State Socialists have use for facts only when they favor their theories; when they happen to clash with such theories, references to such facts give place to general remarks on a kind of a subject not easy to state upon and dispose of. But the following extract from the budget speech of Sir William Harcourt may be interesting to others than irresponsible government officials: "The Post Office yields no more than the estimate, a very unsatis-
factory return considering the great growth of the expenditure. The telegraphs are £80,000 less than the estimate, a bad revenue. They are £15,000 less than the actual working expendi-
ture, setting aside the payment of the inter-

Art and the State.

"Freedom" closes a report of a recent lecture (Octave Mirbeau in Le Journal).

The art period in which we live is hideous. It is on every hand the triumph of the ugly. No longer is it known what a beautiful form is, what a beautiful ma-
terial is. It is impossible today for a man of taste to find in France an acceptable stuff for decoration, a harmo-
nous piece of tapestry, a piece of furniture of deli-
crate workmanship, a picture pleasing to the eye. The little utilities which serve us in our daily needs, and into which the workman of former times knew how to put emotion, proportion, and beauty to become dismally commonplace. All that we manufacture is horrible. Not only does it lack style, but it oversteps all conceivable limits of hideous-
ess. Nor could it be otherwise in a social organiza-
tion like ours, where the State is everything and the individual nothing. This deep fall into the ugly is the necessary consequence of universal suffrage, by which mediocrity dominates.

I beg the painters not to hate me. I have no feeling of animosity against them. Many I know, are worthy people, and some had natural gifts, quickly wasted. In a different social organization they undoubtedly would have given us beautiful works. I do not even reproach them with the subject of their work. One has not always the moral force or even the right to resist the evil solicitations of the epoch, the temptations of money and vanity. But it is with the State that I find fault. Last year I accused this impious art, of having in a sense legalized it, by its infam-
ous lessons, by the fatal direction which it gives to minds, by the negative and unjust rewards with which it favors, to the detriment of all other things. This is an abominable work, for art has powerful reactions, for good as well as evil, upon national life.

If some have freed themselves from these detestable influences, they should be admired as exceptions and heroes. All are not endowed with the energy necessary for such struggles, with the courage which alone can keep one from yielding to suffering and homicidal in-
justice.

Art is what it must be: artist, who are men, are what they must be. Before they can really become the good workers of former days, a new era must dawn.
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