On Picket Duty.

Hugh O. Pentecost has been indicted by the grand jury for grand larceny in the first degree.

I have once more in stock the pamphlet, "Love, Marriage, and Divorce," by Greeley, James, and Andrews.

Judge Barrett, the author of the aristocratic jury plan, said to Inspector McLaughlin, while passing sentence, that he should not, at that time, add to his humiliation by a single harsh expression. How magnanimous! Where did Judge Barrett get the authority to use harsh expressions to convicted men? As Howard observes, "some men imagine that lectures and sentences are synonymous." Judge Barrett ought to devote some attention to reforming the manners of the judges.

I am in receipt of a letter from Mr. Arthur Kimton, in which he meets by a flat and circumstantial denial the claim of Mr. William A. Whittick, made in the latter's letter in the last issue of Liberty, that the credit given to Mr. Whittick in the preface to Mr. Kimton's book does not adequately express the degree of his collaboration, and sets up a counter-claim that this credit does not Mr. Whittick more than justice and that Mr. Whittick has more than once admitted and asserted this. Since the letter cannot be printed in full before the issue of August 10, I print this paragraph to inform the readers that Mr. Kimton does not accept Mr. Whittick's statement.

Because Governor Altgeld has called a special session of the legislature to do some of the work which that worthy body neglected during the regular session, the venomous Chicago "Journal" and the atrocious New York "Evening Post" are insinuating that he must be "insane." Evidently the trick of denouncing him as an Anarchist is played out, and something more terrifying is needed. But really, Godkin is becoming altogether too reckless in his lying. Those who see the Chicago papers know that, when he says that the special session "is universally pronounced unnecessary and unjustifiable," he lies either wantonly or ignorantly. All that his bitterest enemies have to say against his act is that it was somewhat premature,—that he should have waited until September; the necessity of the extra session has one question.

Dana is growing incoherent. When the supreme court, by a majority of one, saved the intoxicating from the income-tax, he threw his sensible readers into convulsions by the Quixotic declaration that the court stood "like a rock" in its championship of liberty and equality. Now he tells us that the decision of Judge Brown declining to order his removal to Washington for trial on a charge of libel is a glorious victory for a free press and individual rights, when, as a matter of fact, it was as technical a decision as was ever rendered. The indictment was technically defective, and the statute under which the removal was attempted had been held, in a number of cases, to have no application to libel. Decisions on such grounds have never been hailed as great victories for general liberty, and Dana's inexact congratulations constitute a sad sign of mental decay. His sense of congruity and appropriateness is disappearing, and his bad breaks are painfully frequent.

The law in regard to debt discriminates in favor of women. Creditors can have "body execution" against men, but they cannot seize the body of a woman for debt. In view of this inequality, suggestions have been made looking to the abolition of the privilege enjoyed by women, but the New York "World" protests against any change in that direction. The remedy, it says, lies in extending the exemption to men, not in taking it away from women. Assuming that imprisonment for debt in any form is undesirable, the "World" is clearly right. The point which all clamorers for the equality of women should ponder is that there are, in every case, two ways of securing equality, and that it is necessary to know which way is the right one. The justice of woman suffrage, for example, is not demonstrated by pointing to man suffrage, for it is possible to secure equality by depriving men of it as well as by bestowing it on women. Will the more intelligent of the woman-suffragists ever understand that the first task is to prove that majority rule through the suffrage is desirable?

Nym Crinkle, the New York "World's" critic, finds fault with George Bernard Shaw for drawing comparisons between Sarah Bernhardt and Eleonora Duse, and calls him the most eccentric of English critics. The wise Nym thinks that these two actresses "do not belong to the same realm of art any more than do Hugo and Pascoal." Seeing that they produce the same plays and appear in the same parts before the same audiences, it would seem that comparisons are not only legitimate, but inevitable, and the critic who should fail to comment on the differences of their methods and conceptions would ipso facto write himself down an incompetent usurper of the critic's function. But Nym's chief objection to Shaw is that he has neither the time or the liberal education which are requisite for the due comprehension of the two actresses referred to. 'The impudence and coarseness of this scribe are simply stupefying. Only an all-around ignoramus is capable of such recklessness.' Does Nym imagine that the "Saturday Review" employs men of his own caliber?

There are two classes of fools in the world,—the ordinary fools and the pseudo-scientific fools. About the former few sensible men trouble themselves, but the latter are capable of serious mischief and constantly need watching. Spencer states in a recent letter that he is greatly irritated by the assertion that his views sanction State Socialism. Such assertions, it is needless to say, emanate, not from ordinary fools, but from pseudo-scientific fools. Spencer alludes to the pretentious nonsense of that Italian scientific Marxite, Professor Enrico Ferri, whose book on "Socialism and Modern Science" has unfortunately attracted some attention. I learn from a review in the "Open Court" that Ferri's book is an elegant and brilliant exposition of the trend of modern biological and social science as initiated by Darwin and Spencer and culminating in the Socialist theories" of Marx. The reviewer continues: "The doctrine of Karl Marx, Professor Ferri contends, is the only Socialist theory which possesses scientific method and importance, and which unanimously guides and inspires the Socialist parties of the whole world. In his opinion, it is neither; more or less than the practical and natural fruitage in the province of sociology of that scientific revolution which began with the renaissance of modern science in Galileo and has received its highest modern perfection in the works of Darwin and Spencer. The last-mentioned authors hesitated to draw the sociological conclusions which logically flowed from their scientific premises, but left that work to Marx, who with them forms the brilliant stellar triad of modern scientific thought. In Socialism, as reared upon the scientific foundations of Marx, the world shall surely find, our author thinks, a panacea for the evils which now threaten what is noblest and best in its life. It cannot be denied that the little book is written with fervor and understanding. Such ignorance, both in author and reviewer, is simply paralyzing. It is obviously useless to protest and argue against such stupid perversion of fact, for what ground is there for believing that your protests will be less idiotically treated than your original expositions? No, against the learned fools there is no protection. The minimum of irritation lies in ignoring them.
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The appearance in the editorial column of articles over other signatures than the editor's makes it evident that the editor approves their general nature, and general tenor, though he does not hold himself responsible for every phrase of word. But the appearance in other parts of the paper of articles by the same or other writers by no means indicates that he disapproves them in any respect, such disposition of them being governed largely by motives of convenience.

A "Liberal" Comstock.

It is not agreeable to pass harsh judgment upon our friend, so especially good a friend of Liberty and its editor as Dr. E. B. Foote, Jr., has been and is; but, since he forces upon our notice his view of the State's attitude toward Oscar Wilde, I do not see that I can well avoid the necessity of saying that the letter from him which is printed in another column seems to me the most intolerant, fanatical, and altogether barbarous utterance that has come from a professed ultra-liberal since I have been engaged in reformatory work. Even were the claim made out that Oscar Wilde has been guilty of invasive conduct, the mere expression of the opinion that he were to spend twenty years, instead of two, at treadmill service or at oakum picking, would still betray such an inability to distinguish between the varying degrees of interference with liberty as is generally due to the fanatic's hatred of sin rather than to the sane man's desire to protect against crime. To exhibit ferocity in this degree a man must be as ready to punish for indirectly and theoretically harmful consequences as was the Catholic Church when it burned men at the stake for what it considered the most pernicious of all practices, the teaching of heresy.

But the claim of invasive conduct is not made out. In the first place, I believe Dr. Foote to be entirely mistaken in his conception of the crime of which Wilde was convicted. I have nowhere seen it stated that he was tried for "seducing others to his evil ways." It is true that the absurdly squamish public opinion which has forced upon a press that usually shrinks from even then when it sees no money in it a certain degree of circumspection in its accounts of this affair has left us all a good deal in the dark, not only as to the seduction, but as to the "evil ways" themselves. Still it is my understanding that Wilde was found guilty of illegal practices, not of inducing others to participate in them. This view is borne out by the remark of the foreman of the jury, made in the court-room, that, if Wilde were guilty of the charge preferred against him, then Lord Alfred Douglas was guilty also.

Such a remark conveys the idea that the charge was not seduction, for the law does not consider mutual seduction a possibility in such a case. If any of my English comrades can inform me definitely what the charge was, I would be glad to have him do so. Meanwhile, unless Dr. Foote can show that the charge was seduction, I adhere to my view that seduction did not enter into the case, even legally; and, if this be so, then Dr. Foote's entire argument falls to the ground. For he seems to admit, though with numerous "ifs" and "buts" and an evident reluctance that is significant of the authoritarian spirit with which he wishes to maintain that mature and responsible persons who simply "teal in their own debasement" are entitled to be let alone.

In the second place, supposing the charge to have been seduction and the facts to have been as claimed by the prosecution, the indictment, in a court of equal liberty instead of ordinary law, would have been promptly dismissed on the ground that the alleged victims (not only Lord Douglas, but the others) were themselves mature and responsible persons and, as such, incapable of any seduction of which justice can properly take cognizance. Dr. Foote cannot maintain that there is anything sacred and God-appointed about the age of twenty-one which certain men have undertaken to fix as the age of maturity and responsibility? In the eyes of an Anarchist every person is mature and responsible who can assert and maintain his self-sovereignty. Every such person has a right to do as he chooses, provided his conduct is non-invasive; and no one can rightfully be punished for persuading such a person to perform an act not in itself invasive and punishable. All of Oscar Wilde's associates, so far as known, were in this sense mature and responsible, and therefore it is entirely unjust to charge him with seducing them. Dr. Foote, in treating these persons as irresponsible minors, is simply paralleling the absurd and outrageous agitation of the "Arenas" people for a high-age-of-consent régime. He desires to force upon boys, as they desire to force upon girls, a condition of infancy unnaturally prolonged, — and with even less excuse, because under present conditions boys are able to assert and maintain their self-sovereignty at an earlier age than girls. This being the diagnosis of Dr. Foote's case, I am not the proper party to attend to it. I commend him to the attention of Mrs. Lillian Harman.

Dr. Foote is not an Anarchist, and has never claimed to be one; though not adhering consistently to any political philosophy, for some years he has seemed to me State Socialist in his tendencies. But I did suppose that he had arrived at a degree of understanding of what Anarchism means. I now see, however, that equal liberty is a complete mystery to him. This is shown conclusively by the following sentence: "If the position in this matter, it will also have to let alone the marquis who uses a gun against his son's uncle." It is obvious that Dr. Foote here uses the word State not in accordance with the Anarchistic definition, but as covering voluntary association for defense; and his declaration, then, is that, if associated citizens may not punish Oscar Wilde, then the Marquis of Queensberry may. Now, it directly follows from the doctrine of equal liberty that what one individual may rightfully do a number of individuals voluntarily associated may rightfully do, and, conversely, that whatever such associated individuals may not rightfully do, no one of them may rightfully do. Applying this to the case in point, we see that, if the Marquis of Queensberry is entitled to punish Oscar Wilde, then the community of which the marquis is a member is equally entitled so to do; and that, if the community has no such right, then neither has the marquis. Assuming that Oscar Wilde is not an invader, it would be incumbent upon the defensive association to punish the Marquis of Queensberry, who should assume to treat him as such. How absurd is Dr. Foote's misconception of Anarchism when he declares that it must allow an individual to assaul a non-invader!

The question of Oscar Wilde's sanity I do not propose to discuss, though I will allow myself the remark that, comparing Wilde's writings with Dr. Foote's present letter, I find Dr. Foote the less sane of the two. But we have no occasion to consider the matter of sanity. All non-invasive persons are entitled to be let alone, whether sane or insane, only after invasion has been established, and it arises then only to determine the manner in which the invader shall be treated.

The claim that there is no possibility of useful life on the part of Wilde after he comes out of prison (putting aside, of course, the fact that the imprisonment itself may cripple him forever) is best met by the statement that, even if everything alleged against Wilde be true, he has been from the beginning of his career one of the most useful of men. Not only are his writings a permanent addition to the world's literature that cannot be offset by his personal views, but even his enemies admit that he has been perhaps the most influential factor in the achievement of that immense advance in decorative art which England and America have witnessed in the last decade. Now, unless it be true, as some foolish persons think, that art is a matter of little or no importance, Wilde has here contributed to the world's welfare a great, broad, far-reaching, and long-enduring force beside which the influence of his personal habits, however objectionable, must appear only as dust in the balance. If Wilde's two sons, "who look like him, learn out to be really like him, think he will be forgiven for fathering them. The impertinence of authoritarianism reaches its climax in this proposition of the Foote family, father and son, that the State shall decide who may procreate. Moreover, it tends to verify my prophecy, in "State Socialism and Anarchism," regarding the culmination of governmentalism.

Answering now the questions put to me in Dr. Foote's concluding paragraph, I will say that, if the "little girls" seduced by the librarian in Prospect Park were as big as the "victims" of the "Oscar Wilde" cases Dr. Foote finds so interesting, then the persons who "caught" the librarian ought to be deprived of their liberty for a period long enough to enable them to learn what equal liberty means; that, if, on the other hand, the girls had not reached an age of responsibility (as defined above), a similar deprivation of liberty should be inflicted upon the librarian; and that...
Jack-the-Ripper should be treated precisely as any other murderer. Upon the varied assortment of sexual perversion ranging between the librarian and Jack-the-Ripper I must premise that sex is the usual mode of escape into the stamp. Sexual perversion per se is not a crime, and I refuse to sentence any sexual pervert until I know precisely what he has done.

And now, if I may apply the argumentum odi hominem, let me ask Dr. Foote, Jr., if he is aware that his own father, Dr. Foote, Sr., by the unorthodox attitudes that he has taken in his public and medical career (and I refer to them for my part only to his credit), has "so conducted himself as to give his sons a public stamp of opprobrium."] If his sons are so sensible as to accept this stamp as an honor rather than a shame, the fact is accidental; perhaps, too, Oscar Wilde's sons may not be ashamed of their father. Of course, I must not be misunderstood as instigating any intrinsic analogy between the course of Dr. Foote, Sr., and the acts of Oscar Wilde, but the necessities of the argument justify me in reminding Dr. Foote, Jr., that, in the eyes of the public, to be convicted by Comstock is scarcely a less disgrace than that which has fallen upon Oscar Wilde, and that, if to bring opprobrium on one's family is in itself a crime, then Oscar Wilde and Dr. Foote, Sr., are a crime themselves.

It is within my knowledge that there are not a few people in this community (some of them radicals, too) who look upon Dr. Foote and his son as leading lives, if not of vil any, of something bordering upon it. I hope it is needless to say that I do not agree with them, and that I hold, in fact, precisely the opposite opinion. In referring to this, my sole purpose is to warn Dr. Foote, Jr., of the tyrannical attitude which he takes when he advocates the imprisonment of non-invasive persons whom he happens to consider dangerous. The letter which he has just written might have been penned by Anthony Comstock himself; even its phraseology is Comstockian. It forces me to look upon its author, much to my regret, as another Comstock, not yet in power. —

The Abuse of Free Speech.

Is it an "abuse" of free speech to use harsh, stinging expressions in criticism of an act deemed pernicious or teaching deemed false? Is it wrong to use invective, call hard names, or indulge in bitter and fiery denunciation? In a recent issue of Liberty I asked Mrs. Ellen Battelle Dietrick to justify her characterization of intemperate speech (on the part of prohibitionists and religious fanatics) as an "abuse of free speech," and, as a believer in equal liberty, she advocates the perfect freedom of speech. In defence of her position, Mrs. Dietrick argues as follows in a private letter, from which she allows me to quote.

"Abuse" is literally "wrong use." There is as much social necessity for the distinctive epithets "right" and "wrong" as there is for the epithets "inch" and "ell." Of course, if one is entirely alone upon an island, no distinction between right use and wrong use of freedom in speech is needed. But in society such distinction serves as an oil to the wheels of thought-exchange.

The only object human beings can have in exchange of ideas is to obtain mutual profit or pleasure. The person who conceives that his ideas are superior (and this is every person) is naturally impelled to impose these ideas on others; and, when his conceptions are really a help to the public, great profit ensues to society when these obtain a wide hearing and acceptance. But, as the human mind is exactly like an oyster in one respect, great tact is essential in establishing legitimate exercise of freedom of speech. Each person mentally separates himself from his business or occupation, probably as the oyster mentally distinguishes himself from his shell. If he be a moderately well-instructed person, he will often consent to listen while you point out to him the anti-social tendencies in his business or occupation, or even in his political and religious principles, though here you approach extremely sensitive ground.

Now, there seems to be no longer room to doubt that the use of strong intonations is a constant menace to the human brain. If people living in the physically weakening and mentally dulling environment of modern life are to use stimulants at all, it is manifest that these should be made milder in quality and be consumed more moderately. To point out these facts to both dealers in strong liquors is a legitimate use of freedom of speech, because it conduces to the establishment of better ideas than now prevail among toper and liquor dealers. But a volley of vituperation directed against the liquor-dealer himself is like a blow from one oyster to another oyster. He merely mutters into his shell, angry and resentful. You have misused, or abused, speech, because your use of speech has defeated your object in speaking, weakening the improvement in the liquor business. But not only does such abuse concentrate upon the liquor dealer fail to leave him with better ideas; it does still more harm by diverting public attention from the real culprit,—the toper,—and by turning it upon the innocent ministers to the toper's appetite.

All "education" is a living proof that human beings can be persuaded to generally desire better things than thoughtless know it is possible to attain. All attempt to force human beings into better things is monumental failure of such effort at human improvement. Abuse of freedom of speech is force. A word often has the physical effect of a blow. The great libertarian would hardly intentionally advocate such a use of words as would simply so cut a person's self-respect that physical suffering could then, the mind to further desire to argue, or to listen to arguments, in behalf of reasonableness.

When a word causes the heart to beat quickly, the blood to rush to the head painfully, the throat to contract convulsively, and even has power to wring tears out of the eyes, we designate the use of such words as "poisonous," but to convince others. When fair words convince us that we have been in the wrong, our own self-respect and we are then justified. Abusive speech merely makes us suffer what we feel to be injustice.

It seems to me that this argument fails to draw the important distinction between abuses of freedom of offense and offenses against propriety or taste. Even if I could subscribe to everything that Mrs. Dietrick asserts, I should not admit the conclusion that "the pouring forth of a vituperative volume of hatred" upon a given class of persons is an abuse of free speech; for in this phrase I use the term "abuse" as indicative of invasion. He alone is guilty of an abuse of freedom who oversteps the bounds fixed by the principle of equality of freedom and infringes the right of some other man. So long as one's acts do not amount to breaches of the peace, one must be recognized and described as entirely legitimate exercises of his rightful powers. To abuse free speech is to use it illegitimately and invasively; and, as we are entitled to proscribe and punish all invasive acts, it follows that those against whom the charge of abusing free speech is preferred are liable to be declared transgressors of equal liberty. I do not think Mrs. Dietrick means to go to such lengths. I think she will agree with the statement I made in my previous article that "we have a right to blame and condemn anything we deem pernicious, and no one may dictate to us the language to be used in our expressions of disapprobation or alarm." The right of criticism would be very shadowy indeed, if society could employ censors to regulate our modes of expression and prescribe legal "forms" for use in discussions. It would be absurd to say that, while a man ought to be allowed to call an opponent an ignoramus, he ought not to be allowed to call him a fool. Yet, if Mr. Dietrick were not to advocate such an abridgment of freedom of speech and criticism, what force and pertinence are there in her remark that "abuse of freedom of speech is force" (italics mine), and that a word often has the same physical effect as a blow? Force, a blow, we are agreed, can only be justified by the use of force in some form; and, if abuse of free speech is force, then it is to be interdicted and punished in all cases except those in which a prior use of force warranted it. If to call a man a fool, for example, is force, then the offender ought to be tried and punished, unless he can show that he used it in self-defence and not for any other purpose. No, words are not force, no matter what, in given cases, their effect may be. Boycotting often has the same effects as force, but it is not force. If effects are to be taken as the test, all distinctions between force and suasion, between coercion and passive resistance, are obliterated. There can be no abuse of free speech in the strict sense of the term, except, possibly, in case of libel or slander, on which differences of opinion still exist among libertarians. More criticism and denunciation, however harsh, cruel, biting, or undeserved, are not abuse, but legitimate exercise, of the freedom of speech.

Whether it is wise and profitable to indulge in intemperate and sweeping denunciation or "volumes of vituperative hatred" is another question,—a question which is as old as controversy and as far from settlement today as it ever was. In my opinion, it is useless to attempt to settle it on any general principle. So many factors enter into the problem, and so much allowance has to be made for the personal equation, that all generalizing must be dismissed as unsafe. Many have agreed in favor of moderate and mild methods, of the milk of human kindness, of self-restraint and charity, but few, I may say none, have ever been able to live up to these abstract propositions. There are times when argument is useless and invective appropriate and necessary. There are men who are impervious to logic and appeals, and who can be reached only by a word which has the effect of a blow. There are men with whom one's self-respect forbids to enter into argument, but who need to be called down in some effective way. There are occasions for the exhibition of wrathful indignation and our own contempt. Each must judge for himself, and mete his blows with the result that, on the whole, when the differences in our respective opportunities, temptations, and provocations are taken into account, we are all equally prone to "sin." Even those who have posed as meek and lowly moral non-resistants, like Tolstoi, have belied their professions by systematic and wholesale use of
downright abuse and vituperation. It's in human nature, and you cannot indict the human race.

As for Mrs. Dietrick's contention that abuse inevitably defeats the very object of all human intellectual commerce, because it excites passion and prejudice, the obvious rejoinder is that very few disputants ever hope to produce any effect on their active opponents. Controversies hardly ever lead to agreement between those engaged in them, but the interested outsiders, the by-standers, frequently derive real instruction from the discussion, and the idea of arriving at settled opinions. It is chiefly, if not wholly, for the benefit of these listeners or readers that controversies are entered upon.

Of course, if it could be shown that abuse alienates and disgusts impartial outsiders, Mrs. Dietrick's case would be completely made out; but the evidence is against such a theory. For the most part, abuse is resentment and frowned upon by third persons only when it appears to them to be gratuitous and unjust, and what they resent in these instances is, not the abuse, but the injustice. Provided one feels thoroughly just being raised by the weapons of abuse and ridicule, there is no occasion to apprehend displeasure from the by-standers. He just and fear not, is the safest rule; and certainly Mrs. Dietrick will not contend that abuse or contemptuous treatment is necessarily unjust.

Generosity in controversy, like generosity in other things, is not always a virtue. It is not always wise to avoid giving pain and to suppress wrath or impatience. There is, alas! a good deal of ignorance, hypocrisy, and mendacity in the world, and with these every self-respecting man must be at war. V. V.

The Main Point First, Please.

It is noticeable that Mr. A. W. Wright, in replying in another column to my criticisms in No. 313 upon his financial views, pays absolutely no attention to the principal point that I made. Agreeing with him that public confidence is essential to the usefulness of paper money, I pointed out that nothing so tends to destroy confidence in redeemable paper money as to pledge its immediate redemption in coin, unless the ability to fulfill this pledge be guaranteed by the maintenance of a coin reserve equal to the paper issued, — a condition, of course, whose observance would cancel the principal motive for the issue of the paper, — and that confidence is only to be maintained by promising less, and satisfying the public that the promise will be kept; in other words, that people will more readily accept an adequately secured promise to pay at a time specified than an inadequately secured promise to pay on demand. In this lies the essence of my criticism upon Mr. Wright. He ignores it altogether.

He contents himself with saying that no money is as certainly redeemable as that which is immediately redeemable. Which, of course, is true if the money is, in fact, immediately redeemable. But if it is not; if it is only an inadequately secured promise to immediately redeem, — then it is not as certain of redemption as is a perfectly secured promise to redeem at maturity. Now, as I showed that paper professing to be immediately redeemable must be either inadequately secured — i.e., not necessarily immediately redeemable in fact — or else incapable of fulfilling its chief purpose, it is no answer at all to declare — what everybody knows — that no money is as certain of redemption as that which is immediately redeemable in fact.

It is just here that the issue lies between Mr. Wright and myself. It is incumbent upon him to prove that it is possible, otherwise than by maintaining a dollar-for-dollar coin reserve, to have a paper currency, professively redeemable in coin on demand, which will surely hold the public confidence in the face of evidence that coin is beingcornered. When he proves this, I will acknowledge that my criticism was without foundation, and with him I will favor the issue of demand notes only. If he fails to prove this, he, on the other hand, must abandon his theory that demand notes inspire public confidence. Then, but not before, I will discuss with him whether paper money redeemable at maturity can be guarded against the danger of unsecured issues; whether it would lead to a harmful redundancy of currency; and whether adequate security could be provided for it except at a cost that would outweigh the advantage. Two points, raised by Mr. Wright, have their importance and the argument considered until the main point is settled. I call him back to the question. Mr. Wright's article is an attack upon the sort of money that I favor. Such an attack is not in order prior to a successful defence against my attack upon the sort of money that he favors.

In his original paper Mr. Wright did not make it clear whether he favored a legal limitation of bank issues, and whether he denied the right of enforcement of contract to banker and borrower contracting upon a basis of the former's limited liability. He now makes it clear that he favors freedom in both of these particulars, so that here I have no further reason to complain of him.

Moreover, all that he says regarding the unfitness of the State for carrying on a banking business so thoroughly commands my approval that it is hardly worth while to discuss his distinction between the special and the general reasons that incapacitate the State. It is sufficient to remark that all the reasons which he classes as special I class as general. T.

From Single Tax to — ?

I am glad that Dr. Slobo-Yarros is disposed to force Mr. George A. Schilling to account for the muddled condition of his brain. Observation of his course for a year past has been a matter of much interest to me. A year ago, when I was in Europe, I saw in an American paper that at a national conference of labor bureau officials from the various States the Illinois representative had introduced a resolution providing for the appointment of a committee to investigate the advisability of laying a tax upon land values, and I said to myself: "Hello! what's up with Schilling?" It was but a few days later that I received a clipping from a Chicago paper, consisting of a letter written by Schilling in criticism of Liberty for presuming to criticize the Single Tax, and stating in plain terms that Liberty might be in better business. Then I knew what was up with Schilling. He had become a Single Taxer. And I made the further remark to myself: "Now we shall see what else he will become." And we have seen.

He has become a believer in the natural existence of the State apart from the creation of man (having divinely-ordained authority, I presume, since Schilling believes in God), and attributes to it rights which he denies to man himself, — for instance, the right to punish for invasion.

He has become a victim of the disease known as the banana-skin-terror, which is a generic term for obsession of the mind by perpetual e-cessiousness of the petty dangers that confront the individual in his daily life, accompanied by a believer's confidence (and Schilling is a famous believer) that these dangers vanish by a process of exorcism as soon as the State waves its magic wand.

He has become a prohibitionist, who tries to deceive himself into believing that he saves the doctrine of liberty by securing to towns the privilege of local option, forgetting — what he once would have remembered — that liberty can be saved only by localizing the option in the individual himself.

And, latest of all, though undoubtedly there are instances where the best proponents in the State have become an advocate of State suppression of obscene literature. This phase of his evolution was made apparent at the dinner of the Chicago Sunset Club on February 14, 1895, at which the subject of "Crusades against Vice" was discussed, the two leading disputants being Rev. Carlos Martyn and Mr. Victor Yarros. Mr. Yarros was not looking for support, in the discussion that followed, from any of those present except Mr. Schilling. To his surprise he received warm and abounding support from Mr. A. W. Wright and opposition from Mr. Schilling.

The subject of obscene literature having arisen, Mr. Schilling put this question to Mr. Yarros: "Has a father the right to prevent obscene books passing into the hands of his child?" Receiving an affirmative answer, he asked further: "Then have not all the fathers a similar right to come together in the munificence, or in the State, or as individuals in a society, and protest in the form of a law against any one practising the same thing that they each, individually, protect their children against?" This equals the error of logic in the matter of equal liberty of which I convict Dr. Foote Jr., in another column, with this at least in Dr. Foote's favor, — that he never was an Anarchist, while Mr. Schilling was (in belief, though not accepting the name). Mr. Yarros, in his answer, drew the distinction between the right to prohibit the child from reading certain books and the right to prohibit their sale, affirming the former and denying the latter. "It is a valid and important distinction, but does not, it seems to me, confront the exact point of Mr. Schilling's question as given in the official report of the discussion. Whatever the thought that lay in his mind, his question as reported implies the argument that, because an individual father has the right to prohibit his own children from reading certain books, all fathers collectively have a right to impose this prohibition upon all children — all ages and upon those who would supply the children. "Which, of course, is true, if we Grant the assumption which Mr. Schilling works into his second question, — that each father actually wishes to prohibit his own children from reading the
Mr. Trubel tells us in the "Conservator" that he would have "no competitions in trade, no elements divisional or compulsory operating anywhere." The mere absence of compulsory elements would not constitute a guarantee against competitions and divisional elements, and their existence is by no means an unmixed evil. No competitions in trade means perfect communism, and perhaps Mr. Trubel would have perfect voluntary communism. But, alas! he would not get rid of divisional elements even then, for intellectually and temperamentally men would be different and would think and act differently within very wide limits. Mr. Trubel also says that he would have all questions open until all men had closed them. Now, if this meant simply that he would grant people the freedom to discuss and question accepted doctrines without threatening to close anything in the sense in which tyrannical governments declare questions finally settled, there would be nothing original or striking in the statement. But it means more; it means that Mr. Trubel would regard no question settled in a scientific sense until all men had settled it in the same way, for he makes the remark in reply to a correspondent who regrets that Mr. Trubel has manifested a certain sympathy with anti-views, and who tells him that vivisection has passed the experimental stage and been firmly established. It is certainly no answer to such an assertion to say that some men still challenge vivisection, for there is hardly a scientific proposition which some men do not dispute. A question is not "open" in a scientific sense because some men have not solved it. Some men still believe that the earth does not move, but the question is not "open." To keep all questions and all victories of intellect a man's sense is to deny the possibility of scientific proof. He evidently confuses the political sense with the scientific. To punish men for heresy or ignorance would be a political closing of questions, which freedom forbids. To call a man a fool for holding absurd opinions is a scientific closing of questions against which liberty has nothing to say. The question whether water boils at a temperature of two hundred and twelve degrees is a closed question. Any one desiring to dispute the fact should be perfectly free to do so. But no individual's opinions should cause others to entertain the least doubt on the subject, and no one should be expected to turn aside from other matters in order to listen to this denial and weigh it. It must be admitted, on general grounds, that there is always the bare possibility that the individual making this or any other denial or affirmation may be right, and that the fools are those who accept the seemingly-established opinion. But where this happens once, the controversy happens thousands of times; and, "as the end of man is an action, not a thought," it will not do to bring all the steam-engines to a standstill in order that we may wonder whether the man who denies that water boils not be right, after all. There is only one rule to follow in this matter. Accept nothing unless it appeals to your reason, whether it be proclaimed by all or by one, by the expert or the tyro; but, having arrived at a conclusion by means of your reason, do not be unsettled merely because some one else doubts or denies. Force the innovator to bombard you with reasons in order to gain your attention; otherwise, heed him not.

Oscar Wilde's plays, it is reported, are about to make their reappearance in the London theatres, and the author's name is not to be omitted from the programmes or announcements. This is one of the most cheering and significant symptoms of progress that we "degenerate" have welcomed in recent years. To poor Nor-dau and his American admirers it must appear that the whole world is going to the devil. What! Wilde's plays and Wilde's name will be heard before the good and virtuous middle classes of England, in spite of jury, verdict, prison, and editorial curses, and in utter disregard of the feelings of the British matron, the young person, the innocent boy and girl, and the respectable shopkeeper! The audacity of the thing takes one's breath away.

A good deal of pith has been found by many in Mrs. Stanton's remark that "women are riding to suffrage on the bicycle." In a sense this is doubtless true. Bicycle and boomer women will not be influenced much more by the notion about the "sphere of women" and the danger of their unsexing themselves. But those who imagine that there is any analogy between the right to ride bicycles and the right to vote others by votes exhibit extreme superficiality, and the woman-suffragists may congratulate themselves on the certainty of only very trifling results, as no proposals of merely nominal benefit are encompassed by such explicit remarks as that of Mrs. Stanton.

A number of leading prohibitionists are in favor of abolishing all liquor license laws as a preliminary to a successful campaign against the saloon. The government's interest, in the revenue of the saloon they regard as the chief obstacle to prohibition. While Liberty would be glad to cooperate with them in securing the abolition of all restrictions upon free trade in rum, and would watch with considerable curiosity their subsequent endeavor to impose absolute prohibition on 10 people familiar with absolute freedom in that field, it must point out to them that their position is very illogical. Taxation as a restriction is simply incomplete prohibition, and, if complete prohibition is good, partial prohibition must be good. To tax is to prohibit; the higher the tax, the more prohibitive it is, and it is possible to secure the results aimed at by the theoretical prohibitionists by simply raising the tax on liquor to a point beyond anybody's ability to pay. Do they expect that they can induce the government to give up its revenue from liquor? If so, it is certainly easier to wipe out the saloon by raising the tax than by passing laws against it.

Anarchist Letter-Writing Corps.
The Secretary wants every reader of Liberty to send in his name for enrollment. Those who do so thereby pledge themselves to write, whether on every fortnight, on Anarchism or kindred subjects, to the "taker," assigned in local circles, and to notify the secretary promptly in case of any failure to write (which it is hoped will not often occur), or in case of illness or temporary withdrawal from the work of the Corps. All, whether members or not, are asked to lose no opportunity of informing the secretary of suitable targets.

Address, 376 Fifth Ave., New York City.
An Age of Law.
(Chapman Brown.)

The time is coming very soon when all affairs of life, from matters of importance to the little household strife, will be regulated on a plan without a flaw, and every thought and action be provided for by law.

By law we do our working, and by law we have to shave; by law we have to eat and drink, and by law we have to walk; by law the masters must have a problem vexed.

But, now that it is settled, why, the question is: What next?

It looks as if in time to come by law we'll have to read;

And, if we want to read a bit, the law will name the book;

In punning for vacations, too, by law we will be led;

By law we'll do our eating, and by law we'll go to bed;

By law we'll do our talking, as will, too, the person;

We'll bar all forms of learning, then, but what the law may teach;

By law we'll do our counting, and by law we'll even wish;

By law we'll live, and grow, and fight, and love, and even die.

The law will lay down rules for us for every little thing;

We'll have to see a lawyer, if we even want to sing;

And yet it may be possible — the thought must make us pause:

The trouble is at present that we have too many laws.

Liberty Run Wilde.

To the Editor of Liberty.

Your editorial on "The Criminal Jailer of Oscar Wilde" denounces his imprisonment as "an outrage that shows how thoroughly the doctrine of liberty is misunderstood.

Following this, you speak of his "sole offence" as a matter which concerned himself only. If so, I got a very wrong view of the case in court, and what he was tried for. As I understand it, he was not tried and convicted on any charge of committing an "unnatural crime," but on the charge of seducing others to his evil ways. One who may deprecate any interference with the liberty of a woman to dispose of her person as she chooses, for love or money, must equally deprecate criminal prosecution for a procurose, especially one who sought new victims among the very young.

This is the crime of Oscar Wilde, as I see it, and for which he is serving his term of two years, unless I am much mistaken. He confesses to being greatly attracted to youth, though denying any such serious accusation as he was indicted for; but one who has any knowledge of men of his class well knows that one of their worst points is in the disposition to seek out and make new victims of promising youth. This is made evident in their own confessions as quoted in Kraft-Ebing's "Psychopathia Sexualis." In it a long chapter is given to this "debauching," as the peculiarities and how they come to be. Some almost seem to be proud of their perversity, and as anxious to make converts as the advocates of the most innocent fads or fancies. In the story "The Picture of Dorian Gray," by Wilde himself, the same propensity forms a large element of the story, and offers a valuable moral lesson as to the danger of evil associations that corrupt good manners, while it further shows that the "hero" becomes more and more lost to all propriety and morality, and succumbs at last as a complete physical and moral wreck. One who reads this story since the fall of Wilde can hardly escape the belief that it is largely autobiographical. There is not much to subtract, so thinking, could even wish his sentence were twenty, instead of two, years.

Rev. Mr. Headlam, Hope Wilde may "yet recover his spirit and do good work for the world." To the H. this seems a high hope. - If Wilde be not a victim of incurable insanity, his record must bar the way to any reform. One can no more reasonably hope for reform and useful life in him than in Dorian Gray after he had slain his friend and victim. The story carried him along to the only possible end of such a life, the grave of death.

If the logic of equal liberty and personal freedom can sanction keeping hands off from such as Wilde and Taylor so long as they revel only in their own domain, it can hardly justify the let-alone policy when they set up an "art of life" of this sort of aesthetic culture; for they are not at all satisfied to find each other out (among too perverts of the same taste), but they are "hell bent" on discovering fresh, vital, honest, and moral modern young men of whom to make victims for vampires. You may say that youth should be so instructed and trained to be as safe against the wily, seductive attractions of Eve and Eve's children as the virgin and so on, but, if State interference is permissible anywhere, — is against this vicious invasion of the family, which forces to destruction the finest specimens of manhood, which the State is willing to let to its fate, and so it will, it must also have to let alone the moralist who uses a gun against b.'s son's "uncle." As to this particular son, very likely you can fairly retort that he was old enough to mind his own business, including his most private affairs, but men of the Taylor-Wilde type don't recognize any youthful age limit, and boys are their constant prey.

Those who admit any sphere for the State will also find good reason for letting the people "eat their own" and let bygones be bygones, and so on. Wilde and the other "sons" in such a family must not be allowed to marry and beget. So one of Wilde's greatest "sons" against his race was the "fathering of some boys who look like him, Parallelly only by his second crime against them of so conducting himself as to give them a public stamp of approbation. If such a type of a miscreant and deceiver is to be allowed to marry and beget,

Oscar Wilde's Imprisonment.

A few days ago "Le Gaulois" described the frightful daily torture which the unfortunate Oscar Wilde is forced to undergo in his prison. This account, not based on the official report, but on the wholesale disgust and impersonal abruptness of a legal document, has an about the same terror, aggravated by the knowledge that it is not a fabrication of libelous fiction, but a statement of the truth. Never did any crime do so much to convince me to shudder with horror as does this punishment. This account carries one back beyond the century, to a distant and barbarous time, — to those gloomy middle ages whose master-pieces have not been able to wipe out the red stain of torture or dissipate the odor of flesh roasting at the stake. The vision of this unfor-
admirable in his art, of superior integrity, of lucid intelligence. Well, in that brain he discovered profound lessons, such as are observed only in the most hardened criminals: he found unquestionable traces of a treble mind. Think of all the endless real money he was able to come by through his integrity! And it may yet be centuries and centuries before the reforms deemed necessary will be attempted and our judicial system be brought into conformity with the new conditions of life.

And as I asked him more particularly his opinion as to Oscar Wilde, the Englishman simply answered: "Oscar Wilde will serve his term, the whole of it. For what he has committed is not a crime, or even an offence; it is a sin."

Money and the Law.

To the Editor of Liberty:

I desire opportunity to answer a criticism of my paper on "Banking," which appeared in Liberty of May 18, and to which my friend Tucker takes some exceptions under the head of "Where Wright is Wrong."

The first exception is to my contention that it is of great importance that paper money should be subject to immediate redemption. Mr. Tucker says that "certainty of ultimate redemption" is an essential, but that immediate redemption is not. Now, it seems to me that the idea of making ultimate redemption sure is to insist upon immediate redemption in that medium which possesses in the highest degree all of the essential attributes of money. Without that condition, paper money would be like money upon which the mark of the beast was stamped, except that its only use would be to provide materials for the making of currency.

Second, my friend objects to the idea of the amount of bills that may issue, and for the redemption of which he has assumed liability, is necessary. Now, as to the unlimited liability of the banker, I think he must be so limited as to prevent his liability, because there would naturally be none. He is the self-appointed conservator of common funds, a self-appointed dealer in money and credit, and for his sevices he charges a fee and exacts interest and exchange. He performs no gratuitous service. While it is true that he usually furnishes some capital of his own, it is not necessary; for the bank is always in reality in line of depositors. So long as he conducts the bank upon sound banking principles, and only impossibly, inasmuch as nothing can go wrong unless the banker fails to properly perform his duties, he should be liable for and make good every loss. He charges a fee, and it is he who enjoys the long-term gain; he should therefore accept all the responsibilities incident to his actions. I am not denying the right of individuals limiting their liabilities in relation to each other, but I am very much opposed to the idea of the banker limiting his liability right, because it is natural, and can be avoided only by artificial device.

The third objection is to the idea of the freedom of the government to attempt in any way the promotion of the public welfare. The sole function of government is the protection of individuals from the aggressions of each other. Whenever the government attempts to do too many things, or too much of any one thing, it fails to properly perform the government function. It is possible that the State might engage in a banking business. It is possible that the State might engage in a banking business with the same result as national banks; but it is not at all probable that it would work so, and in the case of the United States there has most certainly been such invasion. Any business undertaken by the government, if not done entirely for the benefit of the government, must be more economically conducted by private enterprise than it can be through the exercise of governmental agencies. This fact alone is a sufficient reason why the State should not engage in a banking business. There would not and could not be exercised the discriminating intelligence on the part of governmental bank managers in the way of negotiating loans and always making the best business. There would be more reason for the same that is at all times absolutely essential to the sale and proper conduct of the business; but, too, there are innumerable political objections that might be urged against a government banking system, such as the giving of improper credit to political favorites or withholding credit from political opponents; it could be used to reward friends and to punish enemies of the officials connected with the bank.

No power, no true bank accepts or lends on the security of any amount of cumbersome metallic money and the changing of the same from hand to hand at the close of every transaction. To properly fulfill the office of money, paper bills of issue must be redeemable at once in that medium; that, in the estimation of the holder of such paper bills, comes the nearest nearest to possessing all of the attributes of the real money which can most certainly destroy an essential requisite. Real money is at all times instantly available. Paper promises to pay real money, to properly fill the office of a cheap substitute for money, must be redeemed and in a medium of current exchange. It is an essential condition, because it is a natural condition.

I did say that "banks should be permitted to issue paper money equal to their unimpaired capab." I did not mean that here. I pointed out, though I confess that it might be considered that such limitation was implied. A good banker will always insist upon the lerner and user of the credit depositing sufficient security to guarantee its reception at maturity, so that the ultimate redemption of the amount of bills that may issue, and for the redemption of which he has assumed liability, is necessary. Now, as to the unlimited liability of the banker, I think he must be so limited as to prevent his liability, because there would naturally be none. He is the self-appointed conservator of common funds, a self-appointed dealer in money and credit, and for his services he charges a fee and exacts interest and exchange. He performs no gratuitous service. While it is true that he usually furnishes some capital of his own, it is not necessary, for the bank is always in reality in line of depositors. So long as he conducts the bank upon sound banking principles, and only impossibly, inasmuch as nothing can go wrong unless the banker fails to properly perform his duties, he should be liable for and make good every loss. He charges a fee, and it is he who enjoys the long-term gain; he should therefore accept all the responsibilities incident to his actions. I am not denying the right of individuals limiting their liabilities in relation to each other, but I am very much opposed to the idea of the banker limiting his liability right, because it is natural, and can be avoided only by artificial device.

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A. W. Wright.
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