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**a collection of introductory writings**

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The ANARCHISMS series is an attempt to collect a wide range of personal statements and introductory accounts regarding anarchism. They are presented without regard to tendency and without editorial comment. No reader is likely to find everything collected to their taste, but most readers will be likely to encounter some new perspectives.

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# AN ANARCHIST ON ANARCHY

Elisée Reclus

1884

*"It is a pity that such men as Elisée Reclus cannot be promptly shot." —  
Providence Press*

To most Englishmen, the word *Anarchy* is so evil-sounding that ordinary readers of the *Contemporary Review* will probably turn from these pages with aversion, wondering how anybody could have the audacity to write them. With the crowd of commonplace chatterers we are already past praying for; no reproach is too bitter for us, no epithet too insulting. Public speakers on social and political subjects find that abuse of Anarchists is an unailing passport to public favor. Every conceivable crime is laid to our charge, and opinion, too indolent to learn the truth, is easily persuaded that Anarchy is but another name for wickedness and chaos. Overwhelmed with opprobrium and held up with hatred, we are treated on the principle that the surest way of hanging a dog is to give it a bad name.

There is nothing surprising in all this. The chorus of imprecations with which we are assailed is quite in the nature of things, for we speak in a tongue unhallowed by usage, and belong to none of the parties that dispute the possession of power. Like all innovators, whether they be violent or pacific, we bring not peace but a sword, and are nowise astonished to be received as enemies.

Yet it is not with light hearts that we incur so much ill-will, nor are we satisfied with merely knowing that it is undeserved. To risk the loss of so precious an advantage as popular sympathy without first patiently searching out the truth and carefully considering our duty would be an act of reckless folly. To a degree never dreamt of by men who are born unresistingly on the great current of public opinion, are we bound to render to our conscience a reason for the faith that is in us, to strengthen our convictions by study of nature and mankind, and, above all, to compare them with that ideal justice which has been slowly elaborated by the untold generations of the human race. This ideal is known to all, and is almost too trite to need repeating. It exists in the moral teaching of every people, civilized or savage; every religion has tried to adapt it to its dogmas and precepts, for it is the ideal of equality of rights and reciprocity of services. "We are all brethren," is a saying repeated from one end of the world to the other, and the principle of universal brotherhood expressed in this saying implies a complete solidarity of interests and efforts.

Accepted in its integrity by simple souls, does not this principle seem to imply as a necessary consequence the social state formulated by modern socialists: "From each according to ability, to each according to needs"? Well, we are simple souls, and we hold firmly to this ideal of human morality. Of a surety

there is much dross mixed with the pure metal, and the personal and collective egoisms of families, cities, castes, peoples, and parties have wrought on this groundwork some startling variations. But we have not to do here with the ethics of selfish interests, it is enough to identify the central point of convergence towards which all partial ideas more or less tend. This focus of gravitation is justice. If humanity be not a vain dream, if all our impressions, all our thoughts, are not pure hallucinations, one capital fact dominates the history of humanity – that every kindred and people yearns after justice. The very life of humanity is but one long cry for that fraternal equity which still remains unattained. Listen to the words, uttered nearly three thousand years ago, of old Hesiod, answering beforehand all those who contend that the struggle for existence dooms us to eternal strife. “Let fishes, the wild beasts and birds, devour one and other – but our law is justice.”

Yet how vast is the distance that still separates us from the justice invoked by the poet in the very dawn of history! How great is the progress we have still to make before we may rightfully cease comparing ourselves with wild creatures fighting for a morsel of carrion! It is in vain that we pretend to be civilized, if civilization be that which Mr. Alfred R. Wallace has described as “the harmony of individual liberty with the collective will.” It is really too easy to criticize contemporary society, its morals, its conventions, and its laws, and to show how much its practices fall short of the ideal justice formulated by thinkers and desired by peoples. To repeat stale censures is to risk having called mere disclaimers, scatters of voices in the market-place. And yet so long as the truth is not heard, is it not our duty to go on speaking it in season and out of season? A sincere person owes it to themselves to expose the frightful barbarity which still prevails in the hidden depths of a society so outwardly well-ordered. Take, for instance, our great cities, the leaders of civilization, especially the most populous, and, in many respects, the first of all – the immense London, which gathers to herself the riches of the world, whose every warehouse is worth a king’s ransom; where are to be found enough, and more than enough, of food and clothing for the needs of the teeming millions that throng her streets in greater numbers than the ants which swarm in the never-ending labyrinth of their subterranean galleries. And yet the wretched who cast longing and hungry eyes on those hoards of wealth may be counted by the hundred thousand; by the side of untold splendors, want is consuming the vitals of entire populations, and it is only at times that the fortunate for whom these treasures are amassed hear, as a muffled wailing, the bitter cry which rises eternally from those unseen depths. Below the London of fashion is a London accursed, a London whose only food are dirt-stained fragments, whose only garments are filthy rags, and whose only dwellings are fetid dens. Have the disinherited the consolation of hope? No: they are deprived of all. There are some among them who live and die in dampness and gloom without once raising their eyes to the sun.

What boots it to the wretched outcast, burning with fever or craving for bread, that the Book of the Christians opens the doors of heaven more widely to

them than to the rich! Besides their present misery, all these promises of happiness, even if they heard them, would seem the bitterest irony. Does it not appear, moreover, – judging by the society in which the majority of preachers of the Gospel most delight, – that the words of Jesus are reversed, that the “Kingdom of God” is the guerdon of the fortunate of this world, – a world where spiritual and temporal government are on the best of terms, and religion leads as surely to earthly power as to heavenly bliss? “Religion is a cause for preferment, irreligion a bar to it,” as a famous commentator of the Bible, speaking to his sovereign, said it ought to be.

When ambition thus finds its account in piety, and hypocrites practice religion in order to give what they are pleased to call their conscience a higher mercantile value, is it surprising that the great army of the hopeless should forget the way to the church? Do they deceive themselves in thinking that, despite official invitations, they would not always be well received in the “houses of God”? Without speaking here of churches whose sittings are sold at a price, where you may enter only purse in hand, is it nothing to the poor to feel themselves arrested on the threshold by the cold looks of well-clad men and the tightened lips of elegant women? True, no wall bars the passage, but an obstacle still more formidable stops the way, – the dark atmosphere of hatred and disgust which rises between the disinherited and the world’s elect.

Yet the first word uttered by the minister when he stand stands up in the pulpit is “Brethren,” a word which, by a characteristic differentiation, has come to mean no more than a sort of potential and theoretic fraternity without practical reality. Nevertheless, its primitive sense has not altogether perished, and if the outcast that hears it be not stupefied by hunger, if he be not one of those boneless beings who repeat idiotically all they hear, what bitter thoughts will be suggested by this word “brethren” coming from the lips of men who feel so little its force! The impressions of my childhood surge back into my mind. When I heard for the first time an earnest and eager voice beseech the “Father who is in heaven” to give us “our daily bread,” it seemed to me that by a mysterious act a meal would descend from on high on all the tables of the world. I imagined that these words, repeated millions of times, were a cry of human brotherhood, and that each, in uttering them, thought of all. I deceived myself. With some, the prayer is sincere; with the greater part it is but an empty sound, a gust of wind like that which passes through the reeds.

Governments at least talk not to the poor about fraternity; they do not torment them with so sorry a jest. It is true that in some countries the jargon of courts compare the Sovereign to a father whose subjects are his children, and upon whom he pours the inexhaustible dews of his love; but this formula, which the hungry might abuse by asking for bread, is no longer taken seriously. So long as Governments were looked upon as direct representatives of a heavenly Sovereign, holding their powers by the grace of God, the comparison was legitimate; but there are very few now that make any claim to this quasi-divinity. Shorn of the sanctions of religion, they no longer hold themselves

answerable for the general weal, contenting themselves instead with promising good administration, impartial justice, and strict economy in the administration of public affairs. Let history tell how these promises have been kept. Nobody can study contemporary politics without being struck by the truth of the words attributed alike to Oxenstierna and Lord Chesterfield: "Go, my son, and see with how little the world is governed!" It is now a matter of common knowledge that power, whether its nature be monarchic, aristocratic, or democratic, whether it be based on the right of the sword, of inheritance, or of election, is wielded by individuals neither better nor worse than their fellows, but whose position exposes them to greater temptations to do evil. Raised above the crowd, whom they soon learn to despise, they end by considering themselves as essentially superior beings; solicited by ambition in a thousand forms, by vanity, greed, and caprice, they are all the more easily corrupted that a rabble of interested flatterers is ever on the watch to profit by their vices. And possessing as they do a preponderant influence in all things, holding the powerful lever whereby is moved the immense mechanism of the State – functionaries, soldiers, and police – every one of their oversights, their faults, or their crimes repeats itself to infinity and magnifies as it grows. It is only too true: a fit of impatience in a Sovereign, a crooked look, an equivocal word, may plunge nations into mourning and be fraught with disaster for mankind. English readers, brought up to a knowledge of Biblical lore, will remember the striking parable of the trees who wanted a king [Judges 9:8]. The peaceful trees and the strong, those who love work and whom man blesses; the olive that makes oil, the fig-tree that grows good fruit, the vine that produces wine, "which cheereth God and man," refuse to reign; the bramble accepts, and of that noxious briar is born the flame which devours the cedars of Lebanon.

But these depositaries of power who are charged, whether by right divine or universal suffrage, with the august mission of dispensing justice, can they be considered as in any way more infallible, or even impartial? Can it be said that the laws and their interpreters shows towards all people the ideal equity as it exists in popular conception? Are the judges blind when there come before them the wealthy and the poor – Shylock, with his murderous knife, and the unfortunate who has sold beforehand pounds of their flesh or ounces of their blood? Hold they always even scales between the king's son and the beggar's brat? That these magistrates should firmly believe in their own impartiality and think themselves incarnate right in human shape, is quite natural; everyone puts on – sometimes without knowing it – the peculiar morality of their calling; yet, judges, no more than priests, can withstand the influence of their surroundings. Their sense of what constitutes justice, derived from the average opinion of the age, is insensibly modified by the prejudices of their class. How honest soever they may be, they cannot forget that they belong to the rich and powerful, or to those, less fortunate, who are still on the look-out for preferment and honor. They are moreover blindly attached to precedent, and fancy that practices inherited from their forerunners must needs be right. Yet when we

examine official justice without prejudice, how many inequities do we find in legal procedures! Thus the English are scandalized – and rightly so – by the French fashion of examining prisoners, those sacred beings who are in strict probity ought to be held innocent until they are proven guilty; while the French are disgusted, and not without reason, to see English justice, through the English Government, publicly encourage treachery by offers of impunity and money to the betrayer, thereby deepening the degradation of the debased and provoking acts of shameful meanness which children in their schools, more moral than their elders, regard with unfeigned horror.

Nevertheless, law, like religion, plays only a secondary part in contemporary society. It is invoked but rarely to regulate the relations between the poor and the rich, the powerful and the weak. These relations are the outcome of economic laws and the evolution of a social system based on inequality of conditions.

*Laissez faire!* Let things alone! have said the judges of the camp. Careers are open; and although the field is covered with corpses, although the conqueror stamps on the bodies of the vanquished, although by supply and demand, and the combinations and monopolies in which they result, the greater part of society becomes enslaved to the few, let things along – for thus has decreed fair play. It is by virtue of this beautiful system that a *parvenu*, without speaking of the great lord who receives counties as his heritage, is able to conquer with ready money thousands of acres, expel those who cultivate his domain, and replace people and their dwellings with wild animals and rare trees. It is thus that a tradesman, more cunning or intelligent, or, perhaps, more favored by luck than his fellows, is enabled to become master of an army of workers, and as often as not to starve them at his pleasure. In a word, commercial competition, under the paternal aegis of the law, lets the great majority of merchants – the fact is attested numberless medical inquests – adulterate provisions and drink, sell pernicious substances as wholesome food, and kill by slow poisoning, without for one day neglecting their religious duties, their brothers in Jesus Christ. Let people say what they will, slavery, which abolitionists strove so gallantly to extirpate in America, prevails in another form in every civilized country; for entire populations, placed between the alternatives of death by starvation and toils which they detest, are constrained to choose the latter. And if we would deal frankly with the barbarous society to which we belong, we must acknowledge that murder, albeit disguised under a thousand insidious and scientific forms, still, as in the times of primitive savagery, terminates the majority of lives. The economist sees around them but one vast field of carnage, and with the coldness of the statistician they count the slain as on the evening after a great battle. Judge by these figures. The mean mortality among the well-to-do is, at the utmost, one in sixty. Now the population of Europe being a third of a thousand millions, the average deaths, according to the rate of mortality among the fortunate, should not exceed five millions. They are three times five millions! What have we done with these ten million human beings killed before

their time? If it be true that we have duties, one towards the other, are we not responsible for the servitude, the cold, the hunger, the miseries of every sort, which doom the unfortunate to untimely deaths? Race of Cains, what have we done with our brothers and sisters?

And what are the remedies proposed for the social ills which are consuming the very marrow in our bones? Can charity, as assert many good souls – who are answered in chorus by a crowd of egoists – can charity by any possibility deal with so vast an evil? True, we know some devoted ones who seem to live only that they may do good. In England, above all, is this the case. Among childless women who are constrained to lavish their love on their kind are to be found many of those admirable beings whose lives are passed in consoling the afflicted, visiting the sick, and ministering the young. We cannot help being touched by the exquisite benevolence, the indefatigable solicitude shown by these ladies towards their unhappy fellow creatures; but, taken even in their entirety, what economic value can be attached to these well-meant efforts? What sum represents the charities of a year in comparison with the gains which hucksters of money and hawkers of loans oftentimes make by the speculations of a single day? While Ladies Bountiful are giving a cup of tea to a pauper, or preparing a potion for the sick, a father or brother, by a hardly stroke on the Stock Exchange or a successful transaction in produce, may reduce to ruin thousands of British workers or Hindu coolies. And how worthy of respect soever may be deeds of unobstantations charity, is it not the fact that the bestowal of alms is generally a matter of personal caprice, and that their distribution is too often influenced rather by political and religious sympathies of the giver than by the moral worth of the recipient? Even were help always given to those who most need it, charity would be none the less tainted with the capital vice, that it infallibly constitutes relations of inequality between the benefited and the benefactor. The latter rejoices in the consciousness of doing a good thing, as if they were not simply discharging a debt; and the former asks bread as a favor, when they should demand work as a right, or, if helpless, human solidarity. Thus are created and developed hideous mendacity with its lies, its tricks, and its base, heart-breaking hypocrisy. How much nobler are the customs of some so-called “barbarous countries” where the hungry person simply stops by the side of those who eat, is welcomed by all, and then, when satisfied, with a friendly greeting withdraws – remaining in every respect the equal of their host, and fretting under no painful sense of obligation for favors received! But charity breeds patronage and platitudes – miserable fruits of a wretched system, yet the best which a society of capitalists has to offer!

## II.

Hence we may say that, in letting those whom they govern – and the responsibility for whose fate they thereby accept – waste by want, sink under exposure, and deteriorate by vice, the leaders of modern society have committed

moral bankruptcy. But where the masters have come short, free individuals may, perchance, succeed. The failure of governments is no reason why we should be discouraged; on the contrary, it shows us the danger of entrusting to others the guardianship of our rights, and makes us all the more firmly resolved to take our own cause into our own care. We are not among those whom the practice of social hypocrisies, the long weariness of a crooked life, and the uncertainty of the future have reduced to necessity of asking ourselves – without daring to answer it – the sad question: “Is life worth living?” Yes, to us life does seem worth living, but on condition that it has an end – not personal happiness, not a paradise, either in this world or the next – but the realization of a cherished wish, an ideal that belongs to us and springs from our innermost conscience. We are striving to draw nearer to that ideal equality which, century after century, has hovered before subject peoples like a heavenly dream. The little that each of us can do offers an ample recompense for the perils of the combat. On these terms life is good, even a life of suffering and sacrifice – even though it may be cut short by premature death.

The first condition of equality, without which any other progress is merest mockery – the object of all socialists without exception – is that every human being shall have bread. To talk of duty, of renunciation, of eternal virtues to the famishing, is nothing less than cowardice. Dives has no right to preach morality to the beggar at his gates. If it were true that civilized lands did not produce food enough for all, it might be said that, by virtue of vital competition, bread should be reserved for the strong, and that the weak must content themselves with the crumbs that fall from the feasters’ tables. In a family where love prevails things are not ordered in this way; on the contrary, the small and the ailing receive the fullest measure; yet it is evident that dearth may strengthen the hands of the violent and make the powerful monopolizers of bread. But are our modern societies really reduced to these straits? On the contrary, whatever may be the value of Malthus’s forecast as to the distant future, it is an actual, incontestable fact that in the civilized countries of Europe and America the sum total of provisions produced, or received in exchange for manufacturers, is more than enough for the sustenance of the people. Even in times of partial dearth the granaries and warehouses have but to open their doors that every one may have a sufficient share. Notwithstanding waste and prodigality, despite the enormous losses arising from moving about and handling in warehouses and shops, there is always enough to feed generously all the world. And yet there are some who die of hunger! And yet there are fathers who kill their children because when the little ones cry for bread they have none to give them.

Others may turn their eyes from these horrors; we socialists look them full in the face, and seek out their cause. That cause is the monopoly of the soil, the appropriation by a few of the land which belongs to all. We Anarchists are not the only ones to say it: the cry for nationalization of the land is rising so high that all may hear it who do not willfully close their ears. The idea spreads fast,

for private property, in its present form, has had its day, and historians are everywhere testifying that the old Roman law is not synonymous with ethanol justice. Without doubt it were vain to hope that holders of the soil, saturated, so to speak, with ideas of caste, of privilege, and of inheritance, will voluntarily give back to all the bread-yielding furrows; the glory will not be theirs of joining as equals their fellow-citizens; but when public opinion is ripe – and day by day it grows – individuals will oppose in vain the general concourse of wills, and the axe will be applied to the upas tree's roots. Arable land will be held once more in common; but instead of being ploughed and sown almost at hazard by ignorant hands, as it has hitherto been, science will aid us in the choice of climate, of soils, of methods of culture, of fertilizers, and of machinery. Husbandry will be guided by the same prescience as mechanical combinations and chemical operations; but the fruits of their toil will not be lost to the laborer. Many so-called savage societies hold their land in common, and humble though in our eyes they may seem, they are our betters in this: want among them is unknown. Are we, then, too ambitious in desiring to attain a social state which shall add to the conquests of civilization the privileges of these primitive tribes? Through the education of our children we may to some extent fashion the future.

After we have bread for all, we shall require something more – equality of rights; but this point will soon be realized, for an individual who needs not incline themselves before their fellows to crave pittance is already their equal. Equality of conditions, which is in no way incompatible with the infinite diversity of human character, we already desire and look upon as indispensable, for it offers us the only means whereby a true public morality can be developed. An individual can be truly moral only when they are their own master. From the moment when they awaken to a comprehension of that which is equitable and good it is for them to direct their own movements, to seek in the their conscience reasons for their actions, and to perform them simply, without either fearing punishment or looking for reward. Nevertheless their will cannot fail to be strengthened when they see others, guided like themselves by their own volition, following the same line of conduct. Mutual example will soon constitute a collective code of ethics to which all may conform without effort; but the moment that orders, enforced by legal penalties, replace the personal impulses of the conscience, there is an end to morality. Hence the saying of the Apostle of the Gentiles, “the law makes sin.” Even more, it is sin itself, because, instead of appealing to humanity's better part, to it's bold initiative, it appeals to it's worst – it rules by fear. It thus behooves every one to resist the laws that they have not made, and to defend their personal rights, which are also the rights of others. People often speak of the antagonism between rights and duties. It is an empty phrase; there is no such antagonism. Whoso vindicates their own rights fulfills at the same time their duty towards their fellows. Privilege, not right, is the converse of duty.

Besides the possession of an individual's own person, sound morality involves yet another condition – mutual goodwill, which is likewise the outcome

of equality. The time-honored words of Mahabarata are as true as ever: "The ignorant are not the friends of the wise; the man who has no cart is not the friend of him who has a cart. Friendship is the daughter of equality; it is never born of inequality." Without doubt it is given to some people, great by their thoughts, by sympathy, or by strength of will, to win the multitude; but if the attachment of their followers and admirers comes otherwise than an enthusiastic affinity of idea to idea, or of heart to heart, it is speedily transformed either into fanaticism or servility. Those who are hailed lord by the acclamations of the crowd must almost of necessity attribute to themselves exceptional virtues, or a "Grace of God," that makes them in their own estimation as a predestined being, and they usurp without hesitation or remorse privileges which they transmit as a heritage of their children. But, while in rank exalted, they are morally degraded, and their partisans and sycophants are more degraded still: they wait for the words of command which fall from the master's lips; when they hear in the depths of their conscience some faint note of dissent, it is stifled; they become practiced liars, they stoop to flattery, and lose the power of looking honest individuals in the face. Between those who command and those who obey, and whose degradation deepens from generation to generation, there is no possibility of friendship. The virtues are transformed; brotherly frankness is destroyed; independence becomes a crime; above is either pitying condescension or haughty contempt, below either envious admiration or hidden hate. Let each of us recall the past and ask ourselves in all sincerity the question: "Who are the individuals in whose society we have experienced the most pleasure?" Are they the personages who have "honored" us with their conversation, or the humble with whom we have "deigned" to associate? Are they not rather our equals, those whose looks neither implore nor command, and whom we may love with open hearts without afterthought or reserve.

It is to live in conditions of equality and escape from the falsehoods and hypocrisies of a society of superiors and inferiors, that so many men and women have formed themselves into close corporations and little worlds apart. America abounds in communities of this sort. But these societies, few of which prosper while many perish, are all ruled more or less by force; they carry within themselves the seed of their own dissolution, and are reabsorbed by Nature's law of gravitation into the world which they have left. Yet even were they perfection, if humans enjoyed in them the highest happiness of which their nature is capable, they would be none the less obnoxious to the charge of selfish isolation, of raising a wall between themselves and the rest of their race; their pleasures are egotistical, and devotion to the cause of humanity would draw back the best of them into the great struggle.

As for the Anarchists, never will we separate ourselves from the world to build a little church, hidden in some vast wilderness. Here is the fighting ground, and we remain in the ranks, ready to give our help wherever it may be most needed. We do not cherish premature hopes, but we know that our efforts will not be lost. Many of the ignorant, who either out of love of routine or

simplicity of soul now anathematize us, will end by associating themselves with our cause. For every individual whom circumstances permit to join us freely, hundreds are hindered by the hard necessities of life from openly avowing our opinions, but they listen from afar and cherish our words in the treasury of their hearts. We know that we are defending the cause of the poor, the disinherited, the suffering; we are seeking to restore to them the earth, personal rights, confidence in the future; and is it not natural that they should encourage us by look and gesture, even when they dare not come to us? In times of trouble, when the iron hand of might loosens its hold, and paralyzed rulers reel under the weight of their own power; when the "groups," freed for an instant from the pressure above, reform themselves according to their natural affinities, on which side will be the many? Though making no pretension to prophetic insight, may we not venture without temerity to say that the great multitude would join our ranks? Albeit they never weary of repeating that Anarchism is merely the dream of a few visionaries, do not even our enemies, by the insults they heap upon us and the projects and machinations they impute to us, make an incessant propaganda in our favor? It is said that, when the magicians of the Middle Ages wanted to raise the devil, they began their incantations by painting his image on a wall. For a long time past, modern exorcists have adopted a similar method for conjuring Anarchists.

Pending the great work of the coming time, and to the end that this work may be accomplished, it behooves us to utilize every opportunity for rede and deed. Meanwhile, although our object is to live without government and without law, we are obliged in many things to submit. On the other hand, how often are we enabled to disregard their behest and act on our own free will? Ours be it to let slip none of these occasions, and to accept tranquility whatever personal consequences may result from doing that which we believe to be our duty. In no case will we strengthen authority by appeals or petitions, neither shall we sanction the law by demanding justice from the courts nor, by giving our votes and influence to any candidate whatsoever, become the authors of our own ill-fortune?. It is easy for us to accept nothing from power, to call no one "master," neither to be called "master" ourselves, to remain in the ranks as simple citizens and to maintain resolutely, and in every circumstance, our quality of equal among citizens. Let our friends judge us by our deeds, and reject from among them those of us who falter.

There are unquestionably many kind-hearted individuals that, as yet, hold themselves aloof from us, and even view our efforts with a certain apprehension, who would nevertheless gladly lend us their help were they not repelled by fear of the violence which almost invariably accompanies revolution. And yet a close study of the present state of things would show them that the supposed period of tranquility in which we live is really an age of cruelty and violence. Not to speak of war and its crimes, from the guilt of which no civilized State is free, can it be denied that chief among the consequences of the existing social system are murder, maladies, and death. Accustomed order is maintained

by rude deeds and brute force, yet things that happen every day and every hour pass unperceived; we see in them a series of ordinary events no more phenomenal than times and seasons. It seems less than impious to rebel against the cycle of violence and repression which comes to us hallowed by the sanction of ages. Far from desiring to replace an era of happiness and peace by an age of disorder and warfare, our sole aim is to put an end to the endless series of calamities which has hitherto been called by common consent "The Progress of Civilization." On the other hand, vengeance is the inevitable incident of a period of violent changes. It is the nature of things that they should be. Albeit deeds of violence, prompted by a spirit of hatred, bespeak a feeble moral development, these deeds become fatal and necessary whenever the relations between people are not the relations of perfect equity. The original form of justice as understood by primitive peoples was that of retaliation, and by thousands of rude tribes this system is still observed. Nothing seemed more just than to offset one wrong by a like wrong. Eye for an eye! Tooth for a tooth! If the blood of one person has been shed, another must die! This was the barbarous form of justice. In our civilized societies it is forbidden to individuals to take the law into their own hands. Governments, in their quality of social delegates, are charged on behalf of the community with the enforcement of justice, a sort of retaliation somewhat more enlightened than that of the savage. It is on this condition that the individual renounces the right of personal vengeance; but if they be deceived by the mandatories to whom they entrust the vindication of their rights, if they perceive that their agents betray their cause and league themselves with the oppressors, that official justice aggravates their wrongs; in a word, if whole classes and populations are unfairly used, and have no hope of finding in the society to which they belong a redresser of abuses, is it not certain that they will resume their inherent right of vengeance and execute it without pity? Is not this indeed an ordinance of Nature, a consequence of the physical law of shock and counter-shock? It were unphilosophic to be surprised by its existence. Oppression has always been answered by violence.

Nevertheless, if great human evolutions are always followed by sad outbreaks of personal hatreds, it is not to these bad passions that well-wishers of their kind appeal when they wish to rouse the motive virtues of enthusiasm, devotion, and generosity. If changes had no other result than to punish oppressors, to make them suffer in their turn, to repay evil with evil, the transformation would be only in seeming. What boots it to those who truly love humanity and desire the happiness of all that the slave becomes master, that the master is reduced to servitude, that the whip changes hands, and that money passes from one pocket to another? It is not the rich and the powerful whom we devote to destruction, but the institutions which have favored the birth and growth of these malevolent beings. It is the medium which it behooves us to alter, and for this great work we must reserve all our strength; to waste it in personal vindications were merest puerility. "Vengeance is the pleasure of the gods," said the ancients; but it is not the pleasure of self-respecting mortals; for

they know that to become their own avengers would be to lower themselves to the level of their former oppressors. If we would rise superior to our adversary, we must, after vanquishing them, make them bless their defeat. The revolutionary device, "For our liberty and for yours," must not be an empty word.

The people in all times have felt this; and after every temporary triumph the generosity of the victor has obliterated the menaces of the past. It is a constant fact that in all serious popular movements, made for an idea, hope of a better time, and above all, the sense of a new dignity, fills the soul with high and magnanimous sentiments. So soon as the police, both political and civil, cease their functions and the masses become masters of the streets, the moral atmosphere changes, each feels themselves responsible for the prosperity and contentment of all; molestation of individuals is almost unheard of; even professional criminals pause in their sad career, for they too, feel that something great is passing through the air. Ah! if revolutionaries, instead of obeying a vague idea as they have almost always done, had formed a definite aim, a well-considered scheme of social conduct, if they had firmly willed the establishment of a new order of things in which every citizen might be assured bread, work, instruction, and the free development of their being, there would have been no danger in opening all prison gates to their full width, and saying to the unfortunates whom they shut in, "Go, brothers and sisters, and sin no more."

It is always to the nobler part of humanity that we should address ourselves when we want to do great deeds. A general fighting for a bad cause stimulates their soldiers with promises of booty; a benevolent individual who cherishes a noble object encourages their companions by the example of their own devotion and self-sacrifice. For them, faith in their idea is enough. As says the proverb of the Danish peasants: "His will is his paradise." What matters is that he is treated like a visionary! Even though his undertakings were only a chimera, he knows nothing more beautiful and sweet than the desire to act rightly and do good; in comparison with this vulgar realities are for him but shadows, the apparitions of an instant.

But our ideal is not a chimera. This, public opinion well knows; for no question more preoccupies it than that of social transformation. Events are casting their shadows before. Among individuals who think is there one who in some fashion or another is not a socialist – that is to say, who has not their own little scheme for changes in economic relations? Even the orator who noisily denies that there is a social question affirms the contrary by a thousand propositions. And those who will lead us back to the Middle Ages, are they not also socialists? They think they have found in a past, restored after modern ideas, conditions of social justice which will establish for ever the brotherhood of man. All are awaiting the birth of a new order of things; all ask themselves, some with misgiving, others with hope, what the morrow will bring forth. It will not come with empty hands. The century which has witnessed so many grand

discoveries in the world of science cannot pass away without giving us still greater conquests. Industrial appliances, that by a single electric impulse make the same thought vibrate through five continents, have distanced by far our social morals, which are yet in many regards the outcome of reciprocally hostile interests. The axis is displaced; the world must crack that its equilibrium may be restored. In spirit revolution is ready; it is already thought – it is already willed; it only remains to realize it, and this is not the most difficult part of the work. The Governments of Europe will soon have reached the limits to the expansion of their power and find themselves face to face with their increasing populations. The super-abundant activity which wastes itself in distant wars must then find employment at home – unless in their folly the shepherds of the people should try to exhaust their energies by setting the Europeans against Europeans, as they have done before. It is true that in this way they may retard the solution of the social problem, but it will rise again after each postponement, more formidable than before.

Let economists and rulers invent political constitutions or salaried organizations, whereby the worker may be the friend of their master, the subject the brother of the potentate, we, “frightful Anarchists” as we are, know only one way of establishing peace and goodwill among women and men – the suppression of privilege and the recognition of right. Our ideal, as we have said, is that of the fraternal equity for which all yearn, but almost always as a dream; with us it takes form and becomes a concrete reality. It pleases us not to live if the enjoyments of life are to be for us alone; we protest against our good fortune if we may not share it with others; it is sweeter for us to wander with the wretched and the outcasts than to sit, crowned with roses, at the banquets of the rich. We are weary of these inequalities which make us the enemies of each other; we would put an end to the furies which are ever bringing people into hostile collision, and all of which arise from the bondage of the weak to the strong under the form of slavery, serfage, and service. After so much hatred we long to love each other, and for this reason are we enemies of private property and despisers of the law.

# WHY I AM AN ANARCHIST

## Voltaireine de Cleyre

1897

*(A lecture delivered in Hammond, Ind.)*

IT was suggested to me by those who were the means of securing me this opportunity of addressing you, that probably the most easy and natural way for me to explain Anarchism would be for me to give the reasons why I myself am an Anarchist. I am not sure that they were altogether right in the matter, because in giving the reasons why I am an Anarchist, I may perhaps infuse too much of my own personality into the subject, giving reasons sufficient unto myself, but which cool reflection might convince me were not particularly striking as reasons why other people should be Anarchists, which is, after all, the object of public speaking on the question.

Nevertheless, I have been guided by their judgment, thinking they are perhaps right in this, that one is apt to put much more feeling and freedom into personal reasons than in pure generalizations.

The question "Why I am an Anarchist" I could very summarily answer with "because I cannot help it," I cannot be dishonest with myself; the conditions of life press upon me; I must do something with my brain. I cannot be content to regard the world as a mere jumble of happenings for me to wander my way through, as I would through the mazes of a department store, with no other thought than getting through it and getting out. Neither can I be contented to take anybody's dictum on the subject; the thinking machine will not be quiet. It will not be satisfied with century-old repetitions; it perceives that new occasions bring new duties; that things have changed, and an answer that fitted a question asked four thousand, two thousand, even one thousand years ago, will not fit any more. It wants something for to-day.

People of the mentally satisfied order, who are able to roost on one intellectual perch all their days, have never understood this characteristic of the mentally active. It was said of the Anarchists that they were peace-disturbers, wild, violent ignoramuses, who were jealous of the successful in life and fit only for prison or an asylum. They did not understand, for their sluggish temperaments did not assist them to perceive, that the peace was disturbed by certain elements, which men of greater mental activity had sought to seize and analyze. With habitual mental phlegm they took cause for effect, and mistook Anarchists, Socialists and economic reformers in general for the creators of that by which they were created.

The assumption that Anarchists were one and all ignoramuses was quite as gratuitously made. For years it was not considered worth while to find out whether they might not be mistaken. We who have been some years in the

movement have watched the gradual change of impression in this respect, not over-patiently it is true; we are not in general a patient sort—till we have at length seen the public recognition of the fact that while many professed Anarchists are uneducated, some even unintelligent (though their number is few), the major portion are people of fair education and intense mental activity, going around setting interrogation points after things; and some, even, such as Elisee and Elie and Paul Reclus, Peter Kropotkin, Edward Carpenter, or the late Prof. Daniel G. Brinton, of the University of Pennsylvania, men of scientific pre-eminence. Mental activity alone, however, would not be sufficient; for minds may be active in many directions, and the course of the activity depends upon other elements in their composition.

The second reason, therefore, why I am an Anarchist, is because of the possession of a very large proportion of sentiment.

In this statement I may very likely not be recommending myself to my fellow Anarchists, who would perhaps prefer that I proceeded immediately to reasons. I am willing, however, to court their censure, because I think it has been the great mistake of our people, especially of our American Anarchists represented by Benj. R. Tucker, to disclaim sentiment. Humanity in the mass is nine parts feeling to one part thought; the so-called "philosophic Anarchists" have prided themselves on the exaggeration of the little tenth, and have chosen to speak rather contemptuously of the "submerged" nine parts. Those who have studied the psychology of man, however, realize this: that our feelings are the filtered and tested results of past efforts on the part of the intellect to compass the adaptation of the individual to its surroundings. The unconscious man is the vast reservoir which receives the final product of the efforts of the conscious—that brilliant, gleaming, illuminate point at which mental activity centers, but which, after all, is so small a part of the human being. So that if we are to despise feeling we must equally despise logical conviction, since the former is but the preservation of past struggles of the latter.

Now my feelings have ever revolted against repression in all forms, even when my intellect, instructed by my conservative teachers, told me repression was right. Even when my thinking part declared it was nobody's fault that one man had so much he could neither swallow it down nor wear it out, while another had so little he must die of cold and hunger, my feelings would not be satisfied. They raised an unending protest against the heavenly administration that managed earth so badly. They could never be reconciled to the idea that any human being could be in existence merely through the benevolent toleration of another human being. The feeling always was that society ought to be in such a form that any one who was willing to work ought to be able to live in plenty, and nobody ought to have such "an awful lot" more than anybody else. Moreover, the instinct of liberty naturally revolted not only at economic servitude, but at the outcome of it, class-lines. Born of working parents (I am glad to be able to say it), brought up in one of those small villages where class differences are less felt than in cities, there was, nevertheless, a very keen perception that certain

persons were considered better worth attentions, distinctions, and rewards than others, and that these certain persons were the daughters and sons of the well-to-do. Without any belief whatever that the possession of wealth to the exclusion of others was wrong, there was yet an instinctive decision that there was much injustice in educational opportunities being given to those who could scarcely make use of them, simply because their parents were wealthy; to quote the language of a little friend of mine, there was an inward protest against "the people with five hundred dollar brains getting five thousand dollar educations," while the bright children of the poor had to be taken out of school and put to work. And so with other material concerns.

Beyond these, there was a wild craving after freedom from conventional dress, speech, and custom; an indignation at the repression of one's real sentiments and the repetition of formal hypocrisies, which constitute the bulk of ordinary social intercourse; a consciousness that what are termed "the amenities" were for the most part gone through with as irksome forms, representing no real heartiness. Dress, too,—there was such an ever-present feeling that these ugly shapes with which we distort our bodies were forced upon us by a stupid notion that we must conform to the anonymous everybody who wears a stock-collar in mid-summer and goes *décolleté* at Christmas, puts a bunch on its sleeves to-day and a hump on its back to-morrow, dresses its slim tall gentlemen in claw-hammers this season, and its little fat gentlemen in Prince Alberts the next,—in short, affords no opportunity for the individuality of the person to express itself in outward taste or selection of forms. An eager wish, too, for something better in education than the set program of the grade-work, every child's head measured by every other child's head, regimentation, rule, arithmetic, forever and ever; nothing to develop originality of work among teachers; the perpetual dead level; the eternal average. Parallel with all these, there was a constant seeking for something new and fresh in literature, and unspeakable ennui at the presentation and re-presentation of the same old ideal in the novel, the play, the narrative, the history. A general disgust for the poor but virtuous fair-haired lady with blue eyes, who adored a dark-haired gentleman with black eyes and much money, and to whom, after many struggles with the jealous rival, she was happily married; a desire that there should be persons who should have some other purpose in appearing before us than to exhibit their love-sickness, people with some other motive in walking through a book than to get married at the end. A similar feeling in taking up an account of travels; a desire that the narrator would find something better worth recounting than his own astonishment at some particular form of dress he had never happened to see before, or a dish he had never eaten in his own country; a desire that he would tell us of the conditions, the aspirations, the activities of those strange peoples. Again the same unrest in reading a history, an overpowering sentiment of revolt at the spun-out details of the actions of generals, the movements of armies, the thronement and dethronement of kings, the intrigues of courtiers, the gracing or disgracing of favorites, the place-hunting of republics, the count

of elections, the numbering of administrations! A never-ending query, "What were the common people doing all this time? What did they do who did not go to war? How did they associate, how did they feel, how did they dream? What had they, who paid for all these things, to say, to sing, to act?" And when I found a novel like the "Story of An African Farm," a drama like the "Enemy of the People" or "Ghosts," a history like Green's "History of the People of England," I experienced a sensation of exaltation at leaping out from the old forms, the old prohibitions, the old narrowness of models and schools, at coming into the presence of something broad and growing. So it was with contemplation of sculpture or drawing, —a steady dissatisfaction with the conventional poses, the conventional subjects, the fig-leaved embodiments of artistic cowardice; underneath was always the demand for freedom of movement, fertility of subject, and ease and non-shame. Above all, a disgust with the subordinated cramped circle prescribed for women in daily life, whether in the field of material production, or in domestic arrangement, or in educational work; or in the ideals held up to her on all these various screens whereon the ideal reflects itself; a bitter, passionate sense of personal injustice in this respect; an anger at the institutions set up by men, ostensibly to preserve female purity, really working out to make her a baby, an irresponsible doll of a creature not to be trusted outside her "doll's house." A sense of burning disgust that a mere legal form should be considered as the sanction for all manner of bestialities; that a woman should have no right to escape from the coarseness of a husband, or conversely, without calling down the attention, the scandal, the scorn of society. That in spite of all the hardship and torture of existence men and women should go on obeying the old Israelitish command, "Increase and multiply," merely because they have society's permission to do so, without regard to the slaveries to be inflicted upon the unfortunate creatures of their passions.

All these feelings, these intense sympathies with suffering, these cravings for something earnest, purposeful, these longings to break away from old standards, jumbled about in the ego, produced a shocking war; they determined the bent to which mental activity turned; they demanded an answer,—an answer that should coordinate them all, give them direction, be the silver cord running through this mass of disorderly, half-articulate contentions of the soul.

The province for the operation of conscious reasoning was now outlined; all the mental energies were set to the finding of an ideal which would justify these clamors, allay these bitternesses. And first for the great question which overrides all others, the question of bread. It was easy to see that any proposition to remedy the sorrows of poverty along old lines could only be successful for a locality or a season, since they must depend upon the personal good-nature of individual employers, or the leniency of a creditor. The power to labor at will would be forever locked within the hands of a limited number.

The problem is not how to find a way to relieve temporary distress, not to make people dependent upon the kindness of others, but to allow every one to be able to stand upon his own feet.

A study into history,—that is a history of the movements of peoples,—revealed that, while the struggles of the past have chiefly been political in their formulated objects, and have resulted principally in the disestablishment of one form of political administration by another, the causes of discontent have chiefly been economic—too great disparity in possessions between class and class. Even those uprisings centred around some religious leader were, in the last analysis, a revolt of the peasant against an oppressive landlord and tithe-taker—the Church.

It is extremely hard for an American, who has been nursed in the traditions of the revolution, to realize the fact that that revolution must be classed precisely with others, and its value weighed and measured by its results, just as they are. I am an American myself, and was at one time as firmly attached to those traditions as any one can be; I believed that if there were any way to remedy the question of poverty the Constitution must necessarily afford the means to do it. It required long thought and many a dubious struggle between prejudice and reason before I was able to arrive at the conclusion that the political victory of America had been a barren thing; that a declaration of equal rights on paper, while an advance in human evolution in so far that at least it crystallized a vague ideal, was after all but an irony in the face of facts; that what people wanted to make them really free was the right to things; that a "free country" in which all the productive tenures were already appropriated was not free at all; that any man who must wait the complicated working of a mass of unseen powers before he may engage in the productive labor necessary to get his food is the last thing but a free man; that those who do command these various resources and powers, and therefore the motions of their fellow-men, command likewise the manner of their voting, and that hence the reputed great safeguard of individual liberties, the ballot box, becomes but an added instrument of oppression in the hands of the possessor; finally, that the principle of majority rule itself, even granting it could ever be practicalized—which it could not on any large scale: it is always a real minority that governs in place of the nominal majority—but even granting it realizable, the thing itself is essentially pernicious; that the only desirable condition of society is one in which no one is compelled to accept an arrangement to which he has not consented.

Since it was a settled thing that to be free one must have liberty of access to the sources and means of production, the question arose, just what are those sources and means, and how shall the common man, whose right to them is now denied, come at them. And here I found a mass of propositions, by one school or another; all however agreed upon one point, viz.: that the land and all that was in it was the natural heritage of all, and none had a right to pre-empt it, and parcel it out to their heirs, administrators, executors, and assigns. But the practical question of how the land could be worked, how homes could be built upon it, factories, etc., brought out a number of conflicting propositions. First, there were the Socialists (that is the branch of Socialism dominant in this

country) claiming that the land should become the property of the State, its apportionment to be decided by committees representing the majority of any particular community directly concerned in such apportionment, the right to reapportion, however, remaining perpetually under the control of the State, and no one to receive any more advantage from an extra-fine locality than others, since the surplus in production of one spot over another would accrue to the State, and be expended in public benefits. To accomplish this, the Socialist proposed to use the political machinery now in existence—a machinery which he assures us is in every respect the political reflex of the economics of capitalism; his plan is the old, familiar one of voting your own men in; and when a sufficient number are in, then by legal enactment to dispossess the possessors, confiscate estates, and declare them the property of all.

Examination of this program, however, satisfied me that neither in the end nor the accomplishment was it desirable. For as to the end, it appeared perfectly clear that the individual would still be under the necessity of getting somebody's permission to go to work; that he would be subject to the decisions of a mass of managers, to regulations and regimentations without end. That while, indeed, it was possible he might have more of material comforts, still he would be getting them from a bountiful dispenser, who assumed the knowledge of how to deal them out, and when, and where. He would still be working, not at what he chose himself, but at what others decided was the most necessary labor for society. And as to the manner of bringing into power this new dispenser of opportunities, the apparent ease of it disappeared upon examination. It sounds exceedingly simple—and Socialists are considered practical people because of that apparent simplicity—to say vote your men in and let them legalize expropriation. But ignoring the fact of the long process of securing a legislative majority, and the precarious holding when it is secured; ignoring the fact that meanwhile your men must either remain honest figure-heads or become compromising dealers with other politicians; ignoring the fact that officials once in office are exceedingly liable to insensible conversions (being like the boy, "anything to get that 'ere pup"); supposing all this overcome, Socialists and all legislative reformers are bound to be brought face to face with this,—that in accepting the present constitutional methods, they will sooner or later come against the judicial power, as reforms of a far less sweeping character have very often done in the past. Now the judges, if they act strictly according to their constitutional powers, have no right to say on the bench whether in their personal opinion the enactment is good or bad; they have only to pass upon its constitutionality; and certainly a general enactment for the confiscation of landholdings to the State would without doubt be pronounced unconstitutional. Then what is the end of all the practical, legal, constitutional effort? That you are left precisely where you were.

Another school of land reformers presented itself; an ingenious affair, by which property in land is to be preserved in name, and abolished in reality. It is based on the theory of economic rent;—not the ordinary, everyday rent we are

all uncomfortably conscious of, once a month or so, but a rent arising from the diverse nature of localities. Starting with the proposition that land values are created by the community, not by the individual, the logic goes as follows. The advantages created by all must not be monopolized by one; but as one certain spot can be devoted to one use only at a given time, then the person or business thereon located should pay to the State the difference between what he can get out of a good locality and a poor locality, the amount to be expended in public improvements. This plan of taxation, it was claimed, would compel speculators in land either to allow their idle lands to fall into the hands of the State, which would then be put up at public auction and knocked down to the highest bidder, or they would fall to and improve them, which would mean employment to the idle, enlivening of the market, stimulation of trade, etc. Out of much discussion among themselves, it resulted that they were convinced that the great unoccupied agricultural lands would become comparatively free, the scramble coming in over the rental of mines, water-powers, and—above all—corner lots in cities. I did some considerable thinking over this proposition, and came to the conclusion it wouldn't do. First, because it did not offer any chance to the man who could actually bid nothing for the land, which was the very man I was after helping. Second, because the theory of economic rent itself seemed to me full of holes; for, while it is undeniable that some locations are superior to others for one purpose or another, still the discovery of the superiority of that location has generally been due to an individual. The location unfit for a brickyard may be very suitable for a celery plantation; but it takes the man with the discerning eye to see it; therefore this economic rent appeared to me to be a very fluctuating affair, dependent quite as much on the individual as on the presence of the community; and for a fluctuating thing of that sort it appeared quite plain that the community would lose more by maintaining all the officials and offices of a State to collect it, than it would to let the economic rent go. Third, this public disposing of the land was still in the hands of officials, and I failed to understand why officials would be any less apt to favor their friends and cheat the general public then than now.

Lastly and mostly, the consideration of the statement that those who possessed large landholdings would be compelled to relinquish or improve them; and that this improvement would stimulate business and give employment to the idle, brought me to the realization that the land question could never be settled by itself; that it involved the settling of the problem of how the man who did not work directly upon the earth, but who transformed the raw material into the manufactured product, should get the fruit of his toil. There was nothing in this Single Tax arrangement for him but the same old program of selling himself to an employer. This was to be the relief afforded to the fellow who had no money to bid for the land. New factories would open, men would be in demand, wages would rise! Beautiful program. But the stubborn fact always came up that no man would employ another to work for him unless he could get more for his product than he had to pay for it, and that being the case, the inevitable course

of exchange and re-exchange would be that the man hazing received less than the full amount, could buy back less than the full amount, so that eventually the unsold products must again accumulate in the capitalist's hands; again the period of non-employment arrives, and my landless worker is no better off than he was before the Single Tax went into operation. I perceived, therefore, that some settlement of the whole labor question was needed which would not split up the people again into land possessors and employed wage-earners. Furthermore, my soul was infinitely sickened by the everlasting discussion about the rent of the corner lot. I conceived that the reason there was such a scramble over the corner lot was because the people were jammed together in the cities, for want of the power to spread out over the country. It does not lie in me to believe that millions of people pack themselves like sardines, worry themselves into dens out of which they must emerge "walking backward," so to speak, for want of space to turn around, poison themselves with foul, smoke-laden, fever-impregnated air, condemn themselves to stone and brick above and below and around, if they just didn't have to. How, then, to make it possible for the man who has nothing but his hands to get back upon the earth and make use of his opportunity? There came a class of reformers who said, "Lo, now, the thing all lies in the money question! The land being free wouldn't make a grain of difference to the worker, unless he had the power to capitalize his credit and thus get the wherewith to make use of the land. See, the trouble lies here: the possessors of one particular form of wealth, gold and silver, have the sole power to furnish the money used to effect exchanges. Let us abolish this gold and silver notion; let all forms of wealth be offered as security, and notes issued on such as are accepted, by a mutual bank, and then we shall have money enough to transact all our business without paying interest for the borrowed use of an expensive medium which had far better be used in the arts. And then the man who goes upon the land can buy the tools to work it."

This sounded pretty plausible; but still I came back to the old question, how will the man who has nothing but his individual credit to offer, who has no wealth of any kind, how is he to be benefited by this bank? And again about the tools: it is well enough to talk of his buying hand tools, or small machinery which can be moved about; but what about the gigantic machinery necessary to the operation of a mine, or a mill? It requires many to work it. If one owns it, will he not make the others pay tribute for using it?

And so, at last, after many years of looking to this remedy and to that, I came to these conclusions:—

That the way to get freedom to use the land is by no tampering and indirection, but plainly by the going out and settling thereon, and using it; remembering always that every newcomer has as good a right to come and labor upon it, become one of the working community, as the first initiators of the movement. That in the arrangement and determination of the uses of locations, each community should be absolutely free to make its own regulations. That there should be no such nonsensical thing as an imaginary line drawn along the

ground, within which boundary persons having no interests whatever in common and living hundreds of miles apart, occupied in different pursuits, living according to different customs, should be obliged to conform to interfering regulations made by one another; and while this stupid division binds together those in no way helped but troubled thereby, on the other hand cuts right through the middle of a community united by proximity, occupation, home, and social sympathies.

Second: – I concluded that as to the question of exchange and money, it was so exceedingly bewildering, so impossible of settlement among the professors themselves, as to the nature of value, and the representation of value, and the unit of value, and the numberless multiplications and divisions of the subject, that the best thing ordinary workingmen or women could do was to organize their industry so as to get rid of money altogether. I figured it this way: I'm not any more a fool than the rest of ordinary humanity; I've figured and figured away on this thing for years, and directly I thought myself middling straight, there came another money reformer and showed me the hole in that scheme, till, at last, it appears that between "bills of credit," and "labor notes" and "time checks," and "mutual bank issues," and "the invariable unit of value," none of them have any sense. How many thousands of years is it going to get this sort of thing into people's heads by mere preaching of theories. Let it be this way: Let there be an end of the special monopoly on securities for money issues. Let every community go ahead and try some member's money scheme if it wants; – let every individual try it if he pleases. But better for the working people let them all go. Let them produce together, co-operatively rather than as employer and employed; let them fraternize group by group, let each use what he needs of his own product, and deposit the rest in the storage-houses, and let those others who need goods have them as occasion arises.

With our present crippled production, with less than half the people working, with all the conservatism of vested interest operating to prevent improvements in methods being adopted, we have more than enough to supply all the wants of the people if we could only get it distributed. There is, then, no fixed estimate to be put upon possibilities. If one man working now can produce ten times as much as he can by the most generous use dispose of for himself, what shall be said of the capacities of the free worker of the future? And why, then, all this calculating worry about the exact exchange of equivalents? If there is enough and to waste, why fret for fear some one will get a little more than he gives? We do not worry for fear some one will drink a little more water than we do, except it is in a case of shipwreck; because we know there is quite enough to go around. And since all these measures for adjusting equivalent values have only resulted in establishing a perpetual means whereby the furnisher of money succeeds in abstracting a percentage of the product, would it not be better to risk the occasional loss in exchange of things, rather than to have this false adjuster of differences perpetually paying itself for a very doubtful service?

Third: - On the question of machinery I stopped for some time; it was easy enough to reason that the land which was produced by nobody belonged to nobody; comparatively easy to conclude that with abundance of product no money was needed. But the problem of machinery required a great deal of pro-ing and con-ing; it finally settled down so: Every machine of any complexity is the accumulation of the inventive genius of the ages; no one man conceived it; no one man can make it; no one man therefore has a right to the exclusive possession of the social inheritance from the dead; that which requires social genius to conceive and social action to operate, should be free of access to all those desiring to use it.

Fourth: - In the contemplation of the results to follow from the freeing of the land, the conclusion was inevitable that many small communities would grow out of the breaking up of the large communities; that people would realize then that the vast mass of this dragging products up and down the world, which is the great triumph of commercialism, is economic insanity; illustration: Paris butter carted to London, and London butter to Paris! A friend of mine in Philadelphia makes shoes; the factory adjoins the home property of a certain Senator whose wife orders her shoes off a Chicago firm; this firm orders of the self-same factory, which ships the order to Chicago. Chicago ships them back to the Senator's wife; while any workman in the factory might have thrown them over her backyard fence! That, therefore, all this complicated system of freight transportation would disappear, and a far greater approach to simplicity be attained; and hence all the international bureaus of regulation, aimed at by the Socialists, would become as unnecessary as they are obnoxious. I conceived, in short, that, instead of the workingman's planting his feet in the mud of the bottomless abyss of poverty, and seeing the trains of the earth go past his tantalized eyes, he carrying the whole thing as Atlas did the world, would calmly set his world down, climb up on it, and go gleefully spinning around it himself, becoming world-citizens indeed. Man, the emperor of products, not products the enslaver of man, became my dream.

At this point I broke off to inquire how much government was left; land titles all gone, stocks and bonds and guarantees of ownership in means of production gone too, what was left of the State? Nothing of its existence in relation to the worker: nothing but its regulation of morals.

I had meanwhile come to the conclusion that the assumptions as to woman's inferiority were all humbug; that given freedom of opportunity, women were just as responsive as men, just as capable of making their own way, producing as much for the social good as men. I observed that women who were financially independent at present, took very little to the notion that a marriage ceremony was sacred, unless it symbolized the inward reality of psychological and physiological mateship; that most of the who were unfortunate enough to make an original mistake, or to grow apart later, were quite able to take their freedom from a mischievous bond without appealing to the law. Hence, I concluded that the State had nothing left to do here; for it has never attempted to do more than

solve the material difficulties, in a miserable, brutal way; and these economic independence would solve for itself. As to the heartaches and bitterness attendant upon disappointments of this nature in themselves, apart from third-party considerations, – they are entirely a matter of individual temperaments, not to be assuaged by any State or social system.

The offices of the State were now reduced to the disposition of criminals. An inquiry into the criminal question made plain that the great mass of crimes are crimes against property; even those crimes arising from jealousy are property crimes resulting from the notion of a right of property in flesh. Allowing property to be eradicated, both in practice and spirit, no crimes are left but such as are the acts of the mentally sick – cases of atavism, which might well be expected occasionally, for centuries to come, as the result of all the repression poor humanity has experienced these thousands of years. An enlightened people, a people living in something like sane and healthy conditions, would consider these criminals as subjects of scientific study and treatment; would not retaliate and exhibit themselves as more brutal than the criminal, as is the custom today, but would “use all gently.”

The State had now disappeared from my conception of society; there remained only the application of Anarchism to those vague yearnings for the outpouring of new ideals in education, in literature, in art, in customs, social converse, and in ethical concepts. And now the way became easy; for all this talking up and down the question of wealth was foreign to my taste. But education! As long ago as I could remember I had dreamed of an education which should be a getting at the secrets of nature, not as reported through another’s eyes, but just the thing itself; I had dreamed of a teacher who should go out and attract his pupils around him as the Greeks did of old, and then go trooping out into the world, free monarchs, learning everywhere – learning nature, learning man, learning to know life in all its forms, and not to hug one little narrow spot and declare it the finest one on earth for the patriotic reason that they live there, And here I picked up Wm. Morris’ “News from Nowhere,” and found the same thing. And there were the new school artists in France and Germany, the literateurs, the scientists, the inventors, the poets, all breaking way from ancient forms. And there were Emerson and Channing and Thoreau in ethics, preaching the supremacy of individual conscience over the law, – indeed, all that mighty trend of Protestantism and Democracy, which every once in a while lifts up its head above the judgments of the commonplace in some single powerful personality. That indeed is the triumphant word of Anarchism: it comes as the logical conclusion of three hundred years of revolt against external temporal and spiritual authority – the word which has no compromise to offer, which holds before us the unswerving ideal of the Free Man.

# ON ANARCHY

Dyer D. Lum

1887

## I—WHAT IS ANARCHY.

The statesman, intent on schemes to compromise principles and tide over clamorous demands for justice, says it is disorder and spoliation. New taxes are then levied to defend the state, to repress incendiary talk, and protect privileged prerogatives. Or false and surface issues are prepared to distract attention, to embroil citizens in partisan quarrels, and furnish new offices for the spoils-hunter. The people pay the bills and the statesman remains.

The priest, intent on saving souls, and setting less value on temporal things—for others—says it is abolition of marriage, atheism, and draws a frightful picture of a state wherein his voice would be derided, yet ever careful to bring no testimony to corroborate his dismal forebodings of social chaos.

The financier, intent on new schemes for manipulating public credit to personal ends, says it means “a dividing up”; that the lazy and worthless want to share with the industrious and honest the fruits of industry; and thousands believe it and never think to ask whether any one ever saw an anarchist who believed in this fancied “divvy.”

The landlord, comfortably collecting toll for the use of land from those who have been placed upon this earth, says it is the destruction of the foundation and framework of society and removal of all incentive to progress and then proceeds to invest tolls received in fresh acres.

The merchant seeking by every means to obtain a monopoly of the market, says it is the negation of freedom, a gigantic despotism in which life would be burdened with prison rules and social intercourse regulated with clock-like regularity.

One and all incessantly dinning this into the public ear, their cry re-echoed by that social prostitute, the “able editor,” in whose sheet their respective callings are advertised, the timid shrink from the word, women grow pale, and children learn to believe an anarchist is a first cousin to Old Nick. And, laughing in their sleeves over their success, the statesman lays pipe for a re-election, the priest pictures another world where corner lots have no speculative value, the financier busies himself in cutting coupons and computing interest, the landlord in figuring how soon he may safely raise rents, the merchant in converting “surplus values” into profits.

In the tenement house human being are huddled like sheep in a pen; in the factories women and children crowd out husbands and fathers; in the potter's field trenches are continually opened and filled; in the cities vice and crime are spreading gaudy attractions for idle feet; in the country able bodied men vainly

seek employment; men grow disheartened and sullen, women overworked and cross, girls and boys dejected and lost. Yet while rent and interest are collected and profits amassed society is safe and law and order secure, though

Our fathers are praying for pauper pay,  
Our mothers with Death's kiss are white;  
Our sons are the rich man's serfs by day,  
And our daughters his slaves by night.

Yet anarchy will not down, but continues to gain adherents, and says to the statesman: Your surface issues are dead and party questions misleading. We ask justice, and would stop the spoliation from which we have so long suffered. Producing all, we too often lack food and warmth and clothing. Where all are prosperous the state must be so too, and until we are state interests are of secondary importance to us.

It says to the priest: There can be no healthful organization of the moral forces while poverty sets at our hearths and vice beckons our youth to gayer scenes than home can afford. Give us freedom from unrequited toil and enforced destitution and our emotional natures will warm into unity from higher aspirations.

It says to the financier: Your function in society should not be determined by monopoly, but under equal opportunities. Your privileges are our restrictions; your charters our disfranchisement. We demand freedom to co-operate in financial as in other matters; to co-operate for mutual banking as well as for mutual insurance; and when you are shorn of privileges we may co-operate to base credit upon all wealth as well as on that you would dictate, for equal opportunities would destroy your prerogative to fashion and control a medium of exchange. Justice would reign and interest cease, because it could not be exacted.

It says to the landlord: Equal opportunities give you no monopoly of the soil. Again, monopoly has conferred a chartered right and men are disinherited. Destroy this chartered privilege and strong arms will labor with joy and find in mutual credit new avenues to invade the province of nature. Co-operation would enlarge production, extend consumption, and equalize distribution. Overproduction and under-consumption would become myths, and demand would seek supply with unfailing regularity without other guarantee than absence of restriction.

It says to the merchant: Exchange is a social function, and, in the absence of the monopolies of money and land, labor, free from artificial restriction, free to co-operate in mutual banking to organize credit based on all products, thus free to connect use with possession of soil, free from the enforced payment of interest for monopoly money, free from enforced payment of rent for production, would through co-operation organize exchanges and leave you free to whistle for profits.

To them all it says: Gentlemen, we ask no privilege, we propose no restriction nor, on the other hand, will we permit it. We have no new shackles to propose, we seek emancipation from shackles. We ask no legislative sanction, for co-operation asks only for a free field and no favors; neither will we permit their interference.

It asserts that in freedom of the social unit lies the freedom of the social state.

It asserts that in freedom to the capitalization of the acquired wealth lies social advancement and the death of interest.

It asserts that in freedom to possess and utilize soil lies social happiness and progress and the death of rent.

It asserts that in freedom to co-operate the labor exchange will displace the penny-pinching tradesmen and prove the death of profits.

It asserts that in freedom from restriction co-operation will result, and in free co-operation capital will seek labor as well as provide guarantees for security.

It asserts that order can only exist where liberty prevails, and that progress leads and never follows order.

It asserts, finally, that this emancipation will inaugurate liberty, equality, fraternity.

## II.—WHAT ANARCHY OFFERS.

The world of activity is one of inducements. Why should I do thus or so? Because my highest interests are concerned. To follow a given course, to advocate certain measures, there must be sufficient inducement therein to satisfy my mind that such is for my interest to do so. We propose no change in human nature, we take it as we find it. and ask. Does anarchism offer any inducements superior to those of the present system? Can self-interest see any advantage in the change? It is a question of comparison, of weighing of advantages and disadvantages. Self-interest shall be umpire.

Let us see what are the inducements now offered, what are the prizes in the lottery of life, and the chances of winning them. We find men placed upon earth dependent upon labor for enjoyment of life. In our zone nature withholds her gifts and makes them the reward of exertion. Every faculty of individuality is thus aroused to exertion and self-reliance developed. We do not pluck and eat, but labor and develop natural resources, and hence provide. Herein lies the cause of progress, of civilization. Natural conditions must be accepted and our activity governed in accordance therewith.

But at the first glance we see that our efforts are limited by artificial regulations. Nature has placed us upon the earth, but we are denied its use for productive purposes. We find the source of all production resting in land, and on every lot we find the placard: "Taken." Nature's gift has been monopolized, and artificial conditions are first to be surmounted before access can be had to the use of soil. Held, not for use, but for sale, it assumes a speculative value. Have

you a lot, a homestead left to you? This speculative value extends over to it increases your taxes, places a fine upon all improvements, and where such are made requires increased exertions to meet new exactions. Society says that you have no natural right to the soil. The right to produce must be bought. You must first accumulate through production before you can have access to the source of production, hence you must crave employment. You must realize sufficient profits from the sale of time or products before you can purchase the right to produce for yourself. Therefore, you work for others, and from the values you create there is diverted one part to the owner of land, from whom you purchase the right to remain on earth, under the form of rent, and another portion to the employer as inducement for giving you employment, instead of starving, under the form of profits. After these requirements are met you receive wages. And were we studying political economy instead of glancing at some of its salient points, it would be seen that this applies as well to the farmer as to the laborer.

The laborer's wages are paid in the form of money, the current medium of exchange. Advancement lies in saving, in economy, in postponement of marriage, in accumulating money by which privilege may be purchased or capital secured. Possession of land is not enough; there must be joined to it ability to use. But labor saved is only wealth till turned to reproductive use, when it becomes capital. But here, again, artificial conditions are introduced. Society in its wisdom having privileged the landlord, now grants prerogatives to the capitalist. It limits the medium of exchange to a particular form of wealth. All credit must flow through a specified sluice. A, B, and C seek through co-operation to escape from the necessity of working for others. A has wealth saved in a house; B has wealth saved in machinery; C has wealth saved in products; all having equal exchangeable value. But their wealth had cannot be capitalized into wealth used, save by purchasing monopoly money. As a basis for mutual credit it is valueless; as a basis for sale or mortgage it can command money, be capitalized. Thus by this privilege conferred upon one form of wealth to constitute the sole medium of exchange and basis for credit another toll is laid upon industry in the form of interest.

All these artificial complications by which the surplus value of production is diverted from the producer into the coffers of the, so to speak, complicators of normal social relations require the support of the source of interference hence taxation claims its share before the residual sum is dealt out as wages. Therefore it is that, as under slavery and serfdom, the producer works for as little as may be necessary to support him. The competition of labor for privilege to live keeps the minimum of wages at the line of cost of subsistence, while taxation, profits, and rent have no determinable limit. Labor, lying under all these superimposed burdens, paving all these exactions, is necessarily remunerated by this iron law of wages. Anarchism must offer emancipation from this enforced subjection of labor to land and capital, and, logically, in proclaiming emancipation it must proclaim freedom to the oppressed—liberty!

Emancipation from the thralldom of man to land; the individual right to possession and use, carrying with it the right to co-operate for guaranteeing security and protection. Emancipation from the thralldom of man to capital, the individual right to utilize all wealth, and the right through co-operation to organize mutual credit with the same facility we are now graciously permitted in mutual insurance.

Emancipation from bondage to rent would base all titles upon occupancy and use; would open avenues of escape to the toiler, and in nowise limit the farmer's capacity to produce, nor his ability to enjoy the reward thereof. In increased production, application to labor would be lightened, the necessity for struggle lessened, an inflation of wealth would ensue, distribution be more equitably adjusted, and natural right to a footing on earth receive social sanction and, through co-operation, social guarantee.

Emancipation from bondage to interest would join means to possession of the source of production. Co-operative effort would offer sanction to co-operative credit, and in freedom to capitalize all products interest would be abolished in the same sense as petroleum "abolished" candles.

Labor, free from the exactions of speculative rent, and released from necessity to buy a monopolized medium of exchange, would offer as inducements to exertion:

Opportunity to freely enjoy the fruits of industry without paying toll.

Opportunity to the endless increase of wants and means to wrest from nature their supply.

Opportunity to the use of all wealth had in the extension of productive activity.

Opportunity to freely co-operate to secure:

1. Protection and security from invasion of these natural rights.
2. Insurance against deprecation and risks.
3. A medium of exchange based upon wealth saved, having social sanction, discharging social functions, and serving social ends.
4. The organization of labor exchanges from which profits would have fled to join rent and interest.
5. The organization of all forms of activity, and thus release from enforced taxation.

In short, where capital seeks labor where supply waits upon demand, where order follows progress, where authority dissolves under the genial glow of liberty, and necessity for wage-labor disappears.

The present system offers government to defend privilege Anarchist-socialism offers co-operation to extend opportunities. The one, in making co-operation compulsory and fostering privilege, sets a premium upon greed and culminates in tyranny. The other, in removing privilege, places a premium upon voluntary co-operation, and tends to eliminate greed.

### III.—WHO SHOULD BE ANARCHISTS?

First, we might ask: Why should there be any? Are not our cities filled with evidences of ceaseless traffic? Is not capital ever on the alert for investment in profitable enterprises? Are not our western towns rivaling each other in "booms" in real estate, thus testifying to increasing revival of business? Is not the army of the unemployed steadily diminishing, and demand for labor increasing? Are not our public documents teeming with statistical columns showing national prosperity? The building trades find employment in building new and grander palaces; in their decoration and furnishing an army of skilled employes find remunerative labor; in the clothing and adornment of their inmates thousands are fed and clothed. On every hand new church spires arise, as if to serve as exclamation points to the astonishment which the voice of anarchy arouses.

Festive revelries were never more frequent; people marry and are given in marriage, and display to reporters the bridal gifts; luxury is creating new demands upon industry; salaries of officials and popular preachers are raised, and pews sell at a higher premium; in fact, everything goes as merry as a marriage bell were it not for the discordant note of frequent strikes.

Ah! Here is a depth which statistical compilations of productions and exports does not reach, it seems. Let us peer beneath the veneering of "national prosperity," and see if the structure be sound or worm-eaten. Let us see if the gilded rays of boulevard prosperity radiates into tenement-denized streets and "nigger alley;" whether the magic wand of the speculative genie of the business boom has transformed these humble homes.

Alas! to ask is to answer; the toiler still delves on in his weary tread-mill round, and finds advancing age but brings added cares and disquietudes. To him the business boom and national prosperity are only visible when seen recapitulated in the eloquent words which flow from the "able editor's" prostituted pen.

In his thinking moments the artisan dreams of a co-operative society in which freemen will combine to wrest from nature her hidden wealth, in which liberty to labor will no longer be restricted as a boon to crave, in which with manly independence, he may look forward to the calmer enjoyment of the fruits of industry in old age. Nor stands he alone. The farmer wonders if his mortgage will ever be paid. The tradesman asks whether life has no other aim than the constant necessity of counting pennies. The clerk thinks that there cannot be room at the top for all, and what if he should miss his hold on the ladder?

Through all grades of society unrest prevails, because in all success depends upon ability or craft to climb over the fallen forms of your associates; to rise out of the slough by using them as stepping-stones; though every upward step plunges them deeper into the abyss.

Modern society, monarchical, parliamentary, and republican alike cries with one voice: Law and order first and foremost, liberty and progress secondary and

resultant. Anarchy says: Not so; law must not deny liberty, order must not precede progress; they are causes, not results. It proclaims progress first, to which order must adapt itself; liberty at all times, over which law has no control.

It whispers to the artisan, the laborer, the miner, the factory hand, the farmer, the tradesman, the clerk, to all whose hearts have not been seared by the blighting hand of successful greed: Your happiness lies in freedom from artificial restrictions, not in strife for privilege.

Look over the broad fields teeming with golden grain and then at the numberless acres held by speculators to extort from human necessity an onerous toll as prerequisite condition to their use to further increase production. Look over the crowded human bee-hives where the toilers jostle each other and then at the vacant lots surrounding them, serving but as receptacles for broken crockery. Ask yourselves by what title deed has the landlord disinherited you from nature's estate? Has God set his seal to it? Is nature's sign-manual there? Have you surrendered your natural claim to a footing on earth? Whence, then, the privilege to him and the restriction upon you? There is but one answer: The law so ordains!

You dream of co-operation, but when you essay it you find rent and interest as firmly seated astride your shoulders as was the Old Man of the Sea upon Sinbad. Not only are you denied possession of the source of production—land—but monopoly also steps in to dictate upon what conditions you may have the means of production by conferring the privilege of capital on a certain form of wealth only. Your buildings, your machinery, your products, your possessions, the reward of honest industry, may be used, but not capitalized: they cannot be made the basis of credit except in the terms of the monopoly money furnished for the purpose of selling to you permission to utilize your own credit. To the question: Why is this so? again there is but one answer: The law so ordains!

Instead of praying: From rent and interest, good Lord, deliver us! strike down that which breathes vitality into their grasping tentacles, crush it, throttle it, damn it like freemen, and assert your right to co-operate in producing wealth without making terms with the land-robber, and to co-operate to furnish mutual credit without paying toll to the credit robber.

Anarchy is freedom from artificial regulation and restriction; and in freedom, the farmer, as well as the artisan and all the classes into which society is now divided, will find that wider scope to activity will bring increased comfort; and in freedom to use of land and to organize credit, rent, interest, and profits will disappear together like bats before the dawning light; and in co-operation find full security for wealth attained and opportunity for its application.

In anarchy labor and capital would be merged into one, for capital would be without prerogatives and dependent upon labor, and owned by it. The laborer would find that to produce was to enjoy and the nightmare of destitution banished. The artisan would find in co-operation that nature alone remained to be exploited. The tradesman would find that production offered greater

inducement than exchange, unless he accepted a position of competence and ease in the labor exchange which would supplant isolated stores. The clerk, no longer with his horizon bounded by a ribbon counter, would have full scope to display his talents in any direction. The farmer, above all, free from irksome care to meet interest, to dread foreclosure from enforced taxation, with his family growing up around him, and rendered secure by common title and mutual inter-dependence, or seeking in insurance indemnity for depredation, would find in anarchy release from useless drudgery, and his labor crowned with plenty and peace.

The only question then likely to arise would be: Who would not be an anarchist?

#### IV.—CO-OPERATION.

Now that questions of forms of faith in theology and government have ceased to divide men into hostile factions, that political as well as religious toleration has become firmly rooted as a social virtue, economic questions rise into greater importance. Here again we find the old struggle of past centuries under new standards; again liberty is arrayed against authority on other fields. Co-operation in religion has passed out of the field of strife and been declared victorious; our creed is no longer dealt to us. Co-operation in government has won its place in the world's history; our rulers no longer claim divine right to govern. The scaffolding of past centuries has brought mankind to the completion of the social structure. Reason and intelligence on the one hand and necessity and discord on the other are instructing them in its aims and preparing them for the application of the requisite means. It is the dream of the toiler, the hope of the thoughtful, and the goal of the progressive humanitarian.

How shall we substitute co-operation? Efforts have been made, satisfactory results few. Unforeseen obstacles are met to be overcome; artificial environments limit freedom of action; chartered privileges impede progress; restrictions hamper and clog activity.

Co-operation in the distribution of products sacrifices the producer to the consumer. Buying at the lowest competition price, and following current trade principles, it would swell profits for the benefit of customers. If it tends to lessen prices the consumer, so far as he is a producer, but gives from one hand what the other hand gains. An English writer indulges in the following criticism on the system:

The co-operative wholesale society is a gigantic middleman. In its workshops it pays the lowest of competition wages. In the language of one of the workers in one of the shoe factories: "The workmen have to work for what they can get; they know there is no true co-operation." In its transactions with other producers it pays the lowest of competition prices. The profits made out of the retail prices are distributed among the members: labor is depressed. In short, it is as far from displaying a single feature of real co-operation as any private

trader is who uses the weapons of competition and capitalism for his personal ends, regardless of the interests of others.

Even where success attends the enterprise it can hardly rank as even ameliorative. The few, the stockholders, the customers alone are its beneficiaries; the great mass are left, and further, so far as co-operation lifts a few out of the social slough it is at the expense of less fortunate fellow-creatures, who find their own fate more irrevocably fixed in becoming stepping-stones upon which the few mount to privileged enjoyment. Co-operation to eliminate the middleman and retaining rent and interest is but a sorry makeshift for the bright ideal our dreams had presaged.

Anarchy presents a wider and grander view of co-operation than that involved in joint stock or profit-sharing concerns—a view which requires no elaborate scaffolding to erect nor exercise of legislative authority to preserve. It seeks no charter, for it asks no privileges; it seeks no aid, for it contains within itself capacity to provide for all needs. All it asks is a free field—the removal of restrictions which limit its scope and deny it full exercise. And as it finds these restrictions in legislative sanction given to privileges, in chartered rights bestowed upon some, it demands their abrogation.

It claims for co-operation of freemen ability to discharge any social function, and as production and exchange are the principal directions in which modern activity manifests itself it imperatively demands as means of industrial emancipation that neither shall be endowed with privilege, that the source of production and the means of exchange cannot be subject to letters patent.

With freedom of access to land, to hold for occupancy and use, resting upon this common title, common needs will draw occupants and users to co-operate to secure what is beyond the power of the individual to obtain. The common title would produce independence, mutual reliance and organization, and precisely as privilege was eliminated fraternity of spirit and common aims would naturally arise. Co-operation would not have to be invented, it would be evolved; common needs would require common efforts, and whenever union would present benefits unattainable to divided efforts that moment steps toward co-operative unity would be taken.

But freedom of land is not enough. Capital, clad in the legalized armor of monopoly, holding in its power the medium of exchange and thus imposing a tax upon its use as a means to further production, can well afford to laugh at the puny effort to co-operate and make it also tributary to its gains. Again anarchism says to secure perfect co-operation there must be freedom in financial as well as in other matters. The privilege bestowed upon gold, by bestowing upon it as if by divine right a royal crown over other products of labor, has made it the despot of exchange. Anarchy declares that it has no natural right to the exclusive discharge of this social function over any or all other products; that so far from facilitating exchange it fastens upon industry the clog: of interest, causing all other wealth to pay tribute to it and at the same time regulating values by a speculative standard. Anarchy asserts that in the

overthrow of this old superstition, exploded everywhere else save in financial matters, men will be thrown upon their own resources to organize mutual credit; that in co-operation a medium of exchange can be issued based upon any and all forms of wealth as security, and that in this ability to capitalize products for purposes of production of increased wealth there will be no monopoly to command interest for use. Anarchy, therefore, sees in emancipation from the monopoly of land and credit the opportunity for complete and perfect co-operation. Not a governmental scheme by which our functions are prescribed but a free alliance to achieve common ends; not necessarily a unity in one national association, but co-operation for local or national ends, just as the need arises, confident that under equal opportunities that which best discharges its social function will best commend itself for support.

The great trouble is that we have so long been nursed that we are not yet fully aware of our own capacities. So much have we been dominated by the state that we have not encouraged self-reliance. If, however, freedom is preferable to restrictions co-operation can only be secured by the joint efforts of free individuals, and just so far as the social units are emancipated from restriction so far will society reflect that liberty; just so far as the individuals are happy, prosperous, and moral, so far only will society be happy, prosperous, and moral. Social virtues are results, not causes.

Liberty, therefore, is the basis upon which true co-operation rests. To remove the shackles from individual activity in order that co-operative activity may have natural genesis is the mission of anarchy. It looks to the state only to abolish privilege; it looks to the freeman for the co-operative unit. It lays its foundation at the bottom, rather than beginning at the top to build downward.

In co-operation it sees that which will supplant the state, which will open avenues to every faculty, provide supply for every demand, and furnish to all the fullest and freest scope for the development of individuality, without the necessity of pleading a "baby act" to invoke guidance or desire to compel others to follow our co-operative lead and example.

# I AM AN ANARKIST

## (The Better Part)

Elbert Hubbard

1899

I AM an Anarkist.

All good men are Anarkists.

All cultured, kindly men all gentle men; all just men are Anarkists.

Jesus was an Anarkist.

A Monarkist is one who believes a monark should govern. A Plutokrat believes in the rule of the rich. A Demokrat holds that the majority should dictate. An Aristokrat thinks only the wise should decide; while an Anarkist does not believe in government at all.

Richard Croker is a Monarkist; Mark Hanna a Plutokrat; Cleveland a Demokrat; Cabot Lodge an Aristokrat; William Penn, Henry D. Thoreau, Bronson Alcott and Walt Whitman were Anarkists.

An Anarkist is one who minds his own business. An Anarkist does not believe in sending warships across wide oceans to kill brown men, & lay waste rice fields, and burn the homes of people who are fighting for liberty. An Anarkist does not drive women with babes at their breasts and other women with babes unborn, children and old men into the jungle to be devoured by beasts or fever or fear, or die of hunger, homeless, unhouseled and undone.

Destruction, violence, ravages, murder, are perpetrated by statute law. Without law there would be no infernal machines, no war ships, no dynamite guns, no flat nosed bullets, no pointed cartridges, no bayonets, no policemen's billies, no night sticks, no come-alongs, no hand-cuffs, no straight jackets, no dark cells, no gallows, no prison walls to conceal the infamies therein inflicted. Without law no little souls fresh from God would be branded "illegitimate", indelibly, as soon as they reach Earth. Without law there would be less liars, no lawyers, fewer hypocrites, and no Devil's Island.

"The Cry of the Little Peoples goes up to God in vain,  
For the world is given over to the cruel sons of Cain;  
The hand that would bless us is weak, the hand that would break us is strong,  
And the power of pity is nought but the power of a song.  
The dreams that our fathers dreamed to-day are laughter and dust,  
And nothing at all in the world is left for a man to trust.  
Let us hope no more, nor dream, nor profesy, nor pray,  
For the iron world no less will crash on its iron way;  
And nothing is left but to watch, with a helpless pitying eye,  
The kind old aims for the world, and the kind old fashions die."

I do not go quite so far as that—I 'm a pessimistic-optimist, Dearie,—I believe that brutality tends to defeat itself. Prize fighters die young, gourmands get the gout, hate hurts worse the man who nurses it, & all selfishness robs the mind of its divine insight, and cheats the soul that would know. Mind alone is eternal! He, watching over Israel, slumbers not nor sleeps. My faith is great: out of the transient darkness of the present the shadows will flee away, and Day will yet dawn.

I am an Anarkist.

No man who believes in force & violence is an Anarkist. The true Anarkist decries all influences save those of love and reason. Ideas are his only arms.

Being an Anarkist I am also a Socialist. Socialism is the antithesis of Anarky. One is the North Pole of Truth, the other the South. The Socialist believes in working for the good of all, while Anarky is pure Individualism. I believe in every man working for the good of self; and in working for the good of self, he works for the good of all. To think, to see, to feel, to know; to deal justly; to bear all patiently; to act quietly; to speak cheerfully; to moderate one's voice—these things will bring you the highest good. They will bring you the love of the best, and the esteem of that Sacred Few, whose good opinion alone is worth cultivating. And further than this, it is the best way you can serve Society—live your life. The wise way to benefit humanity is to attend to your own affairs, and thus give other people an opportunity to look after theirs.

If there is any better way to teach virtue than by practicing it, I do not know it.

Would you make men better—set them an example.

The Millennium will never come until governments cease from governing, and the meddle is at rest. Politicians are men who volunteer the task of governing us, for a consideration. The political boss is intent on living off your labor. A man may seek an office in order to do away with the rascal who now occupies it, but for the most part office seekers are rank rogues. Shakespeare uses the word politician five times, and each time it is synonymous with knave. That is to say, a politician is one who sacrifices truth and honor for policy. The highest motive of his life is expediency-policy. In King Lear it is the "scurvy politician," who thru tattered clothes beholds small vices, while robes and furred gowns, for him, covers all.

Europe is divided up between eight great governments, and in time of peace over three million men are taken from the ranks of industry and are under arms, not to protect the people but to protect one government from another. Mankind is governed by the worst—the strongest example of this is to be seen in American municipalities, but it is true of every government.

We are governed by rogues who hold their grip upon us by & thru statute law. Were it not for law the people could protect themselves against these thieves, but now we are powerless and are robbed legally.

One mild form of coercion these rogues resort to is to call us unpatriotic when we speak the truth about them. Not long ago they would have cut off our heads. The world moves.

Governments cannot be done away with instantaneously, but progress will come, as it has in the past by lessening the number of laws. We want less governing, and the Ideal Government will arrive when there is no government at all. So long as governments set the example of killing their enemies, private individuals will occasionally kill theirs.

So long as men are clubbed, robbed, imprisoned, disgraced, hanged by the governing class, just so long will the idea of violence and brutality be born in the souls of men.

Governments imprison men, and then hound them when they are released.

Hate springs eternal in the human breast.

And hate will never die so long as men are taken from useful production on the specious plea of patriotism, and bayonets gleam in God's pure sunshine. And the worst part about making a soldier of a man is, not that the soldier kills brown men or black men or white men, but it is that the soldier loses his own soul.

I am an Anarkist.

I do not believe in bolts or bars or brutality. I make my appeal to the Divinity in men, and they, in some mysterious way, feeling this, do not fail me.

I send valuable books, without question, on a postal card request, to every part of the Earth where the mail can carry them, and my confidence is never abused. The Roycroft Shop is never locked, employees and visitors come and go at pleasure, and nothing is molested. My library is for anyone who cares to use it.

Out in the great world women occasionally walk off the dock in the darkness, and then struggle for life in the deep waters. Society jigs and ambles by, with a coil of rope, but before throwing it, demands of the drowning one a certificate of karacter from her Pastor, or a letter of recommendation from her Sunday School Superintendent, or a testimonial from a School Principal. Not being able to produce the document the struggler is left to go down to her death in the darkness.

A so-called "bad woman "is usually one whose soul is being rent in an awful travail of prayer to God that she may get back upon solid footing and lead an honest life. Believing this, the Roycroft principle is to never ask for such a preposterous thing as a letter of recommendation from anyone. We have a hundred helpers, and while it must not be imagined by any means that we operate a reform school or a charitable institution, I wish to say that I distinctly and positively refuse to discriminate between " good" and "bad " people. I will not condemn, nor for an instant imagine that it is my duty to resolve myself into a section of the Day of Judgment.

I fix my thought on the good that is in every soul and make my appeal to that. And the plan is a wise one, judged by results. It secures you loyal helpers, worthy friends, gets the work done, aids digestion & tends to sleep o' nights.

And I say to you, that if you have never known the love, loyalty & integrity of a proscribed person, you have never known what love, loyalty and integrity are.

I do not believe in governing by force, or threat, or any other form of coercion. I would not arouse in the heart of any of God's creatures a thought of fear, or discord, or hate, or revenge. I will influence men, if I can, but it shall be only by aiding them to think for themselves; and so mayhap, they, of their own accord will choose the better part-the ways that lead to life and light.

—Fra Elbertus.

# A LITTLE MANUAL OF THE INDIVIDUALIST ANARCHIST

Emile Armand

1911

## I

To be an anarchist is to deny authority and reject its economic corollary: exploitation—and to reject it in every domain of human activity. The anarchist wishes to live without gods or masters; without bosses or directors; a-legal, without laws and without prejudices; amoral, without obligations and without collective morality. He wants to live freely, to live his own idea of life. In his heart of hearts, he is always asocial, insubordinate, an outsider, marginal, an exception, a misfit. And obliged as he is to live in a society the constitution of which is repugnant to his temperament, he dwells there as a foreigner. If he makes unavoidable concessions to his environment—always with the intention of taking them back—in order to avoid risking or sacrificing his life foolishly or uselessly, it is because he considers these concessions weapons of personal defense in the struggle for existence. The anarchist wishes to live his life, as much as possible—morally, intellectually, and economically—without concerning himself with the rest of the world, exploiters or exploited, without wanting to dominate or to exploit others, but ready to respond by all means against whomever would interfere in his life or would prevent him from expressing his thought by the pen or by speech.

The anarchist's enemies are the State and all its institutions, which tend to maintain or to perpetuate its stranglehold on the individual. There is no possibility of conciliation between the anarchist and any form whatever of society resting on authority, whether it emanates from an autocrat, from an aristocracy, or from a democracy. No common ground is possible between the anarchist and any environment regulated by the decisions of a majority or the wishes of an elite. The anarchist combats, for the same reasons, the teaching furnished by the State and that dispensed by the Church. He is the adversary of monopolies and of privileges, whether they are of the intellectual, moral or economic order. In a word, he is the irreconcilable antagonist of every regime, of every social system, of every state of things that involves the domination of other men or the environment over the individual, and of the exploitation of the individual by another or by the group.

The work of the anarchist is above all a work of critique. The anarchist goes, sowing revolt against that which oppresses, obstructs, or opposes itself to the free expansion of the individual being. It is proper first to rid brains of preconceived ideas, to put at liberty temperaments enchainé by fear, to give rise to mindsets free from popular opinion and social conventions; it is thus that the anarchist will push all comers to go along with him to rebel practically

against the determinism of the social environment, to affirm themselves individually, to sculpt their internal image, to render themselves, as much as possible, independent of the moral, intellectual and economic environment. He will urge the ignorant to instruct themselves, the nonchalant to react, the feeble to become strong, the bent to straighten. He will push the poorly endowed and less apt to draw from themselves all the resources they can and not to rely on others.

In these regards, an abyss separates anarchism from all forms of socialism, including syndicalism.

The anarchist places at the base of all his conceptions of life: the individual act. And that is why he willingly calls himself anarchist-individualist.

He does not believe that the evils men suffer come exclusively from capitalism or from private property. He believes that they are due above all to the defective mentality of men, taken as a bloc. There are only masters because there are slaves and the gods only remain because the faithful kneel. The individualist anarchist has little interest in a violent revolution, aiming for a transformation of the mode of distribution of products in the collectivist or communist sense, which would hardly bring about a change in the general mentality and which would not bring about the emancipation of the individual being at all. In a communist regime the individual would be as subordinate as he is presently to the good will of those surrounding him: he would find himself as poor, as miserable as he is now; instead of being under the thumb of the small capitalist minority of the present, he would be dominated by the whole of the economy. Nothing would properly belong to him. He would be a producer or a consumer, put a little or take a bit from the communal heap, but he would never be autonomous.

## II

The individualist-anarchist differentiates himself from the anarchist-communist in the sense that he considers (apart from property in some objects of enjoyment extending from the personality) property in the means of production and the free disposition of products as essential guarantees of the autonomy of the person. It is understood that this property is limited by the possibility of putting to work (individually, by couples, by familial groups, etc.) the expanse of soil or the engines of production required to meet the necessities of the social unit; with the condition that the possessor not rent it to anyone or turn to someone in his service to put it into use.

The individualist-anarchist no more intends to live at any price—as an individualist exploiter, for example—than he would live under regulation, provided that he was assured a bowl of soup, and guaranteed a dwelling and some clothing.

The individualist-anarchist, moreover, does not claim any system which would bind future relations. He claims to place himself in a state of legitimate

defense against every social atmosphere (State, society, milieu, grouping, etc.) which would allow, accept, perpetuate, sanction or render possible:

a) the subordination of the individual being to the environment, placing the individual in a state of obvious inferiority, since he cannot treat with the collective totality as equal to equal, and power to power;

b) the obligation (in whatever domain) of mutual aid, of solidarity, or of association;

c) the deprivation of the individual of the inalienable possession of the means of production and the complete and unrestricted disposition of the product of his labors;

d) the exploitation of anyone by any one of his fellows, who would make him labor on his account and for his profit;

e) monopolization, i.e. the possibility of an individual, a couple, a familial group possessing more than is necessary for its normal upkeep;

f) the monopoly of the State or of any executive form replacing it, i.e., its intervention—in its role as centralizer, administrator, director, or organizer—in the relations between individuals, in whatever domain;

g) the loan at interest, usury, agio, money-changing, inheritance, etc., etc.

### III

The individualist-anarchist makes “propaganda” in order to highlight individualist-anarchist dispositions which have been ignored, or at the very least to bring about an intellectual atmosphere favorable to their appearance. Between individualist-anarchists relations are established on the basis of “reciprocity.” “Camaraderie” is essentially of the individual order; it is never imposed. Those “comrade” whom it pleases him to associate with, will be those who make an appreciable effort to feel life in themselves, who share in his propaganda of educational critique and his choice of persons; who respect the mode of existence of each individual, and do not interfere with the development of those who march forward with him and who touch him the most closely.

The individualist-anarchist is never the slave of a formula-type or of a received text. He admits only opinions. He proposes only theses. He does not impose an end on himself. If he adopts one method of life on one point of detail, it is in order to assure himself more liberty, more happiness, more well-being, but certainly not order to sacrifice himself to it. And he modifies it, and transforms it when it appears to him that to continue to remain faithful to it would diminish his autonomy. He does not want to let himself be dominated by principles established *a priori*; it is *a posteriori*, on his experiences, that he bases his rule of conduct, never definitive, always subject to the modifications and to the transformations that new experiences can suggest, and to the necessity of acquiring new weapons in his struggle against the environment—without making an *absolute* of the *a priori*.

The individualist-anarchist is never accountable to anyone but himself for his acts and deeds.

The individualist-anarchist considers association only as an expedient, a makeshift. Thus, he wants to associate only in cases of urgency—and always voluntarily. And he only desires to contract, in general, for the short term, it being always understood that every contract can be voided as soon as it harms either one of the contracting parties.

The individualist-anarchist decrees no fixed sexual morality. It is up to each to determine his sexual, affective or sentimental life, as much for one sex as for the other. What is essential is that in intimate relations between anarchists of differing sexes neither violence nor constraint take place. He thinks that economic independence and the possibility of being a mother as she pleases are the initial conditions for the emancipation of woman.

The individualist-anarchist wants to live, wants to be able to appreciate life individually—life considered in all its manifestations. He remains meanwhile master of his will, considering his knowledge, his faculties, his senses, and the multiple organs of perception of his body as so many servitors put at the disposition of his *self*. He is not a coward, but he does not want to diminish himself. And he knows well that he who allows himself to be led by his passions or dominated by his penchants is a slave. He wants to maintain “the mastery of the self” in order to advance towards the adventures to which independent research and free study lead him. He will willingly advocate a simple life, the renunciation of false, enslaving, useless needs; avoidance of the large cities; a rational diet and bodily hygiene.

The individualist-anarchist will interest himself in the associations formed by certain comrades with an eye to ridding themselves of obsession with a milieu which disgusts them. The refusal of military service, or of paying taxes will have all his sympathy; free unions, single or plural, as a protestation against ordinary morals; illegalism as the violent rupture (and with certain reservations) of an economic contract imposed by force; abstention from every action, from every labor, from every function involving the maintenance or consolidation of the imposed intellectual, ethical or economic regime; the exchange of vital products between individualist-anarchist possessors of the necessary engines of production, apart from every capitalist intermediary; etc., are acts of revolt agreeing essentially with the character of individualist-anarchism.

# AN ANARCHIST MANIFESTO

## The London Anarchist Communist Alliance.

1895.

### FELLOW WORKERS,

**W**E come before you as Anarchist Communists to explain our principles. We are aware that the minds of many of you have been poisoned by the lies which all parties have diligently spread about us. But surely the persecutions to which we have been and are subjected by the governing classes of all countries should open the eyes of those who love fair play. Thousands of our comrades are suffering in prison or are driven homeless from one country to the other. Free speech—almost the only part of British liberty that can be of any use to the people—is denied to us in many instances, as the events of the last few years have shown.

The misery around us is increasing year by year. And yet there was never so much talk about labor as there is now, labor, for the welfare of which all professional politicians profess to work day and night. A very few sincere and honest but impracticable reformers, in company with a multitude of mere quacks, ambitious place-hunters, etc., say they are able to benefit labor, if labor will only follow their useless advice. All this does not lessen the misery in the least: look at the unemployed, the victims of hunger and cold, who die every year in the streets of our rich cities, where wealth of every description is stored up.

Not only do they suffer who are actually out of work and starving, but every working man who is forced to go through the same dreary routine day by day—the slavery and toil in the factory or workshop—the cheerless home, if the places where they are forced to herd together can be called homes. Is this life worth living? What becomes of the intellectual faculties, the artistic inclinations, nay, the ordinary human feeling and dignity of the greater part of the workers? All these are warped and wasted, without any chance of development, making the wretched worker nothing but a human tool to be exploited until more profitably replaced by some new invention or machine.

Is all this misery necessary? It is not if you, the wealth producers, knew that there is enough and to spare of food and of the necessaries of life for all, if all would work. But now, in order to keep the rich in idleness and luxury, all the workers must lead a life of perpetual misery and exploitation. As to these facts we are all agreed; but as to the remedy most of you, unfortunately, have not given up trust in Parliament and the State. We shall explain how the very nature of the State prevents anything good coming from it. What does the State do? It protects the rich and their ill-gotten wealth; it suppresses the attempts of the workers to recover their rights, if these attempts are thought dangerous to the

rich. Thus idle electioneering, labor politics etc. are not suppressed, but any effective popular demonstration, vigorous strikes as at Featherstone and Hull, Anarchist propaganda, etc., are suppressed or fought against by the vilest means. Moreover, the State, pretending thereby to alleviate the sufferings of the poor, grants Royal Commissions on the Sweating System, the Aged Poor, on Labor in general, or Select Committees on the Unemployed—which produce heaps of Blue Books, and give an opportunity to the politicians and labor leaders, “to show themselves off.” And that is about all. If the workers demand more—there is the workhouse; and if not satisfied with that, the truncheons of the police and the bullets and bayonets of the soldiers face them:—not bread, but lead!

All political promises are of the same value: either they are not kept, even if it could be, or they involve social changes which can only be effected by a revolution, and not by mere votes cast in Parliament. This applies to the promises of Socialist candidates, even if it could be admitted that these candidates could remain uncorrupted by the demoralising influence of Parliament.

There can be no true humanity, no true self-respect, without self-reliance. No one can help you if you do not help yourselves. We do not promise to do anything for you, we do not want anything from you, we only appeal to you to co-operate with us to bring about a state of society which will make freedom, well-being possible for all.

To do this efficiently, we must all be imbued with the spirit of freedom, and this—freedom, and freedom alone—is the fundamental principle of Anarchy.

Freedom is a necessary condition to, and the only guarantee of, the proper development of mankind. Nature is most beautiful when unfettered by the artificial interference of man. Wild animals are stronger and more harmoniously developed than their domesticated kind, which the exploiting mind of man makes mere instruments of profit by developing chiefly those parts of them which are of use to him. The same threatens to be the case with the human victims of exploitation, if an end is not put to the system which allows the rich and crafty exploiters to reduce the greater part of mankind to a position resembling that of domestic animals—working machines, only fit to do mechanically a certain kind of work, but becoming intellectually wrecked and ruined.

All who acknowledge this to be the great danger to human progress should carefully ponder over it, and if they believe that it is necessary to ensure by every means the free development of humanity, and to remove by all means every obstacle placed in its path, they should join us and adopt the principles of Anarchism.

Belief in and submission to authority is the root cause of all our misery. The remedy we recommend:—struggle unto death against all authority, whether it be that of physical force identical with the State or that of doctrine and theories, the product of ages of ignorance and superstition inculcated into the workers' minds from their childhood—such as religion, patriotism, obedience to

the law, belief in the State, submission to the rich and titled, etc., generally speaking, the absence of any critical spirit in face of all the humbugs who victimise the workers again and again. We can only deal here briefly with all these subjects, and must limit ourselves to touch only on the chief points.

Economic exploitation—the result of the monopolisation of the land, raw materials and means of production by the capitalists and landlords—is at the bottom of the present misery. But the system which produces it would have long ago broken down if it were not upheld on one hand by the State, with its armies of officials, soldiers and police—the whole machinery of government, in one word; and on the other hand by the workers themselves, who tamely submit to their own spoliation and degradation, because they think it right, owing to a superstitious belief in a divine providence inculcated by their masters, or because they desire, by sneaking means, to be exploiters themselves—an object which only one in a thousand can succeed in—or because they have not lost faith in political action or the capacity of the State to do for them that which they are too ignorant to do for themselves. Under these protections the rich classes are enjoying their spoil in safety and comfort.

It is evident that this system, if to be destroyed at all, must be attacked by the workers themselves, as we cannot expect those who profit by it to cut their own throats, so to say.

Many still consider the State a necessity. Is this so in reality? The State, being only a machine for the protection and preservation of property, can only obstruct freedom and free development, being bound to keep up the law and every statute law is an obstacle to progress and freedom.

Laws are of two kinds. They are either simple formulæ, derived from the observation of phenomena as the so-called laws of nature, the phrasing of which is open to revision with the progress of human knowledge and the accumulation of fresh material to draw deductions from. No authority is required to enforce them, they exist; and every being arranges his conduct in conformity with his knowledge of their action. The phenomenon of fire burning is the result of such a natural law, and all pay attention to it though there is no policeman posted behind every match and fireplace. Here again Nature gives us an example of free development and Anarchy, and in a free society all social facts and necessities would be equally well recognised and acted upon.

But there is the other kind of law. That which is the expression of the will of an unscrupulous minority, who, owing to the apathy and ignorance of the majority, have been able to usurp the means of power and purport to represent the whole people at the time of the enactment of the laws.

The fact that a great number of persons is in favor of something is evidently no guarantee that it is right. Experience, on the contrary, shows that progress is usually brought about by individuals. New discoveries, new lines of human activity are first found and practised by a few, and only gradually adopted by the many. The majority that makes the laws or abides to them will almost always lag behind progress, and the laws made by it will be reactionary

from the very beginning. How much more so as time proceeds and new progress is made!

Of course, progress itself laughs at the puny efforts of the usurpers of power to stop its triumphant march. But its apostles and advocates have to suffer much and severely for the enthusiasm and the hope that is within them. Prison and often death itself is their doom, the penalty for having raised the standard of revolt against authority and law, the embodiment of the spirit of oppression.

And the very makers of these laws are forced to admit that their work is useless. Is not the continuous manufacture of new laws going on in the Parliaments of all countries throughout the greater part of this century, and in England for many centuries, a proof of the fact that the laws never satisfy anybody, not even those who make them. They know, however, that their legislating is mere mockery and hypocrisy, having no other object but to make the people believe that something is being done for them, and that the public interest is well looked after. The people obey all these laws, whilst the State, in the alleged interest of all, in reality in the interest of the property owners and of its own power, violates them all and commits numberless crimes—which are glorified as deeds of valor committed in the interest of civilisation.

This principle, kept in the background in time of peace, is paraded before the eyes of so-called “rights” in some savage territory, plunders and provokes the natives until they return force by force. Then the State steps in, in the pretended interest of religion and civilisation, slaughters them and annexes their land. The greater the slaughter, the greater the glory for these “heroic” pioneers. Or it may be in a war on a greater scale with a European State, when the workers of one country are let loose against those of another, to murder, plunder and burn homes and villages, and perform such like patriotic deeds of valor and chivalry.

We Anarchists are internationalists, we acknowledge no distinction of nationality or color. The workers of all countries suffer as we do here, and our comrades have everywhere to fight the same battle for freedom and justice. The capitalists are internationally unanimous in persecuting the defenders of freedom and in fleecing the workers. Even England is brought more and more under the sway of a continental police system, the dangers of which the British masses do not see at present, as it is used chiefly against friendless foreign refugees. They are regardless of the fact that it is but the forerunner of an attack on their own liberties.

The workers as a rule are filled with an unreasoning dislike to the workers of other countries, whom their masters have succeeded in representing to them as their natural enemies, and herein lies one of the main sources of the strength of the capitalist system; a strength which has no other foundation than the weakness and the helplessness of the people. It is in the interests of all governments to uphold patriotism, to have their own people ready to fly at the throats of their fellow workers of other nationalities whenever it suits the

interests of the employers to open up new markets, or draw the attention of the people away from the contemplation of their own misery, which might drive them to revolt.

Patriotism and religion have always been the first and last refuges and strongholds of scoundrels. The meek and lowly servants of the one blessing—in the name of their God—the infamies committed for the sake of the other, and cursing in the same name the deeds they just now blessed if committed by the enemy.

Religion is mankind's greatest curse! It is absurd to expect that science, in the few years that the State and the priests have left it to a certain extent alone—the stake or the prison has been too often the reward of its pioneers—should have discovered everything. It would not be worth living in a world where everything had been discovered, analysed and registered. One fact is certain: all so-called religions are the products of human ignorance, mere phantastical efforts of barbarous people to reason out matters which they could not possibly understand without some knowledge of science and scientific methods. The opinion of the savage on the power that works a steam engine, or produces the electric light, is evidently worthless and could be refuted by anyone possessing elementary knowledge. In the same worthless way our forefathers, savages also, reasoned about the phenomena of nature, and came to the naive conclusion that somebody behind the curtains of the sky pulled the strings. This supposed individual they called God and the organic force of man the soul, and endowed it with a separate entity, although that organic force does not possess any more separate entity than that working a clock or a steam hammer. A dim consciousness of this has permeated the mind of most in spite of the fact that religion has been bolstered up by all the forces of authority, because it teaches submission to the law, and as a reward gives cheques drawn on the bank of heaven, which are not more likely to be met than the politician's promises of what he will do when he is returned for Parliament. Religion is the most deadly enemy to human progress. It has always been used to poison the mind and deaden the judgment of the young, thus making grown up people accept all its absurdities because they are familiarised with them in their youth.

Unfortunately, religion is not kept out of the labor movement. Priests and parsons, who should be a horror to mankind, as their presence adds an additional element of corruption, sneak into it, and labor politicians use their services as the Liberals and Tories do. There is actually in existence a body of persons who prostitute the noble word "Labor" by coupling it with the disgusting word "Church," forming the "Labor Church," which is looked upon favorably by most of the prominent labor leaders. Why not start a "Labor Police"?

We are Atheists<sup>1</sup> and believe that man cannot be free if he does not shake off the fetters of the authority of the absurd as well as those of every other

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<sup>1</sup> This open statement of our convictions does not imply any spirit of persecution on our part against those who believe in the absurdities of the different religions.

authority. Authority assumes numerous shapes and disguises, and it will take a long period of development under freedom to get rid of all. To do this two things are wanted, to rid ourselves of all superstition and to root out the stronghold of all authority, the State.

We shall be asked what we intend to put in place of the State. We reply, "Nothing whatever!" The State is simply an obstacle to progress; this obstacle once removed we do not want to erect a fresh obstruction.

In this we differ essentially from the various schools of State Socialists, who either want to transform the present State into a benevolent public-spirited institution (just as easy to transform a wolf into a lamb), or to create a new centralised organisation for the regulation of all production and consumption, the so-called Socialist society. In reality this is only the old State in disguise, with enormously strengthened powers. It would interfere with everything and would be the essence of tyranny and slavery, if it could be brought about. But, thanks to the tendency of the ways and means of production—which will lead to Anarchy—it cannot.

But whilst State Socialism is impracticable as a system of real Socialism, it is indeed possible if its advocates had their way, that all matters of general interest and more and more of private interest too would pass under the control of the State; whether it be a little more democratised or not, it does not matter, for we reject Democracy as well as Absolutism. Authority is equally hateful to us whether exercised by many, or by few, or by one. The last remnant of free initiative and self-reliance would be crushed under the heels of the State, and the emancipation of the workers would be as far off as ever. State Socialism has indeed strengthened the decaying faith in, and renewed the prestige of, the State.

All we Anarchists want is equal freedom for all. The workers to provide for their own affairs by voluntary arrangements amongst themselves. This leads us to a consideration of the economic basis of the state of things we desire to bring about, and here we avow ourselves Communists.

Everybody has different faculties and abilities for work, and different wants and desires for the various necessities of life and leisure. These inclinations and wants require full satisfaction, but can only receive it in a state of freedom. Everybody supposing his faculties to be properly developed can best judge what is best for himself. Rules and regulations would hinder and make him a fettered, incomplete being who necessarily finds no pleasure in work forced upon him. But under Anarchy he would associate voluntarily with others to do the work he is best fitted to do, and would satisfy his wants in proportion to his needs from the common stock, the result of their common labor.

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Persecution is essential to authority and religion, and fatal to freedom; we should destroy the basis of our own hopes and ideals, if we were ever carried away by the spirit of persecution, bigotry and intolerance, which is so commonly raised against us.

Cut-throat competition for the bare necessities of life would be done away with, leaving many matters of a more individual, private and intimate character, in which the free man would find opportunity for peaceful and harmonious emulation, and thereby develop his faculties in the highest possible degree.

One of the stock objections against Anarchist Communism is that no one would work. We reply that to-day work is viewed with disfavor and neglected by all who can possibly exist without it because it has to be carried on under the most disadvantageous conditions and is, moreover, looked upon as degrading. The worker earning his food by hard labor and ceaseless toil is a pariah, the outcast of society, while the idler who never does an hour's work in his life is admired and glorified, and spends his days in luxurious ease amongst pleasant surroundings. We believe that under Anarchism everybody would be willing to work; work being freed from the badge of dishonor now associated with it will have become a labor of love, and the free man will feel ashamed to eat food he has not earned. But as to some atavistic remnants of modern capitalist society that would only work if forced? Well, nobody would want us to retard the emancipation of the immense mass of mankind on account of these few unsocial beings who may or may not exist then. Left to themselves and scorned by everyone they would soon come to their senses and work.

We cannot further enter here into the arguments which show the tendency of a development into Free Communism, and we refer to our literature on the subject. (See Kropotkin's "Anarchism: its Basis and Principles." Freedom Pamphlets, No. 4, etc.)

Anarchist society will consist of a great number of groups devoted each to the production of certain commodities free of access to all, and in local and interlocal contact with other groups to agree and make arrangements for purposes of exchange. With regard to the first necessities of life, food, clothes, shelter, education, Free Communism would be carried out thoroughly. All secondary matters would be left to a mutual agreement in the most varied ways. There would remain in such a society full freedom for the Individualist as long as he did not develop any monopolistic tendencies.

These are our principles; let us consider the means to realise them.

Here we are met by the cry "Dynamiters," "Assassins," "Fiends," etc. Let us see who chiefly utter these cries.

The same people who, by colliery disasters, the ensuring of rotten ships, fires in death-trap-houses, railway accidents caused by overwork, etc., daily massacre more people than the Anarchists of all countries ever killed. The same people who are ready at any moment to have the natives of any country slaughtered, simply to rob them, who are overjoyed at the butchery of the Chinese war, which will enable them to make fresh profit, who are slowly starving and killing the millions of workers, whose lives are shortened by overwork, adulterated food, and overcrowding slums. These people have, in our eyes, no voice when the question of Humanity is considered. They may abuse and insult us just as they like. The worst thing that could happen to us, indeed,

would be to win their approbation, to be petted by them as the respectable labor politicians are.

Some well-meaning, but rather weak-minded people too, are misled by these cries. To these we say come and study our movement and gain a knowledge of its history and personalities, and you will find that every act of revolt is but a reply to a hundred, nay, a thousand villainous crimes committed by the governing classes against us and against the workers in general. You will find that those who did these acts were the very best, the most human, unselfish, self-sacrificing of our comrades, who threw their lives away, meeting death or imprisonment in the hope that their acts would sow the seed of revolt, that they might show the way and wake an echo, by their deeds of rebellion, in the victims of the present system.

With the specific mode of action of anyone we have nothing to do. Anarchists advocate the propagation of their ideas by all means that lead to that end, and everyone is the best judge of his own actions. No one is required to do anything that is against his own inclination. Experience is in this as in other matters the best teacher, and the necessary experience can only be gained through entire freedom of action.

Thus the means which we would adopt embrace all that furthers our cause, and exclude all that will damage it. The decision of what is good or harmful must be left to persons or groups who choose to work together.

Nothing is more contrary to the real spirit of Anarchy than uniformity and intolerance. Freedom of development implies difference of development, hence difference of ideas and actions. Every person is likely to be open to a different kind of argument, so propaganda cannot be diversified enough if we want to touch all. We want it to pervade and penetrate all the utterances of life, social and political, domestic and artistic, educational and recreational. There should be propaganda by word and action, the platform and the press, the street corner, the workshop, and the domestic circle, acts of revolt, and the example of our own lives as free men. Those who agree with each other may co-operate; otherwise they should prefer to work each on his own lines to trying to persuade one the other of the superiority of his own method.

Organisation arises from the consciousness that, for a certain purpose, the co-operation of several forces is necessary. When this purpose is achieved the necessity for co-operation has ceased, and each force reassumes its previous independence ready for other co-operation and combination if necessary. This is organisation in the Anarchist sense—ever varying, or, if necessary, continuous combinations of the elements that are considered to be the most suitable for the particular purpose on hand, and refers not only to the economical and industrial relations between man and man, but also to the sexual relations between man and woman, without which a harmonious social life is impossible.

These views differ immensely from those held by the believers in authority, who advocate permanent organisations with chiefs or councils elected by the majority, and who put all their trust in these institutions. The more they

centralise these organisations and introduce stringent rules and regulations to preserve order and discipline, the more they will fail to achieve their object. In such organisations we see only obstacles to the free initiative and action of individuals, hot-beds of ambition, self-seeking and rotten beliefs in authority etc. That means, we see in them agents of reaction to keep the people in continued ignorance of their own interests.

We do not therefore discourage workingmen from organisation, but such organisations could only be free groups of men and women with the same aims for identical purposes, disbanding when the object in view is achieved.

This brings us to the question of the advisability of Anarchists to join Trade Unions, not the question of the membership of Unions which may be a necessity for them as the case stands, but the question of propaganda in them. Anarchists do not wish to isolate themselves and Unions may be useful as a place to meet their fellow workers. But whether Unions should be formed by Anarchists is entirely dependent on the particular case. For we do not consider Trades Unionism as at present constituted as a serious force to overthrow the system, but only as a means to get a little better provision for the workers under the present conditions. Therefore they cannot be carried on without dealing with immediate so-called practical questions, which are never settled without compromises, as all members are not Anarchists.

In Unions the General Strike might form a proper subject to start the propaganda, and such a strike, though in itself not effective as a remedy, would probably bring about revolutionary situations which would advance the march of events in an unprecedented way. To speak plainly, we advocate the General Strike as a means to set the ball rolling: who knows whether it may not lead to the Social Revolution, which we all desire as the only thing that can help us.

The Social Revolution, as we conceive it, would consist in the paralysation of all existing authoritarian institutions and organisations, the prevention of new organisations of this character, the expropriation of the present exploiters of labor, and in the rearrangement of relations between men on the basis of voluntary agreements. This will appear to some to be rather a large program, but logical thinking will convince them of the fact that every one of these points is the necessary consequence of the others, and that they can only be carried out altogether, or not at all. For what is really impracticable are not full measures, but those half-hearted measures—so-called reforms—which pretend to do away with a part of the existing misery, whilst the root remains intact and makes the whole reform futile and useless.

These then are our means of propaganda, and we trust they are manifold enough to allow everybody full scope for his energies who chooses his place amongst us. The leading idea of our propaganda must always be defiance and destruction of the principle of authority in all its forms and disguises—full scope for freedom, the basis and condition of all human development and progress.

In conclusion, let us consider briefly the remedies proposed by the other parties—useless as they are, as the ever-increasing misery around us abundantly shows.

The State Socialist parties, apart from a few Socialists pure and simple who, if they were true to the foundations of their opinions, would come over to us, have of late become entirely parties for advocating political action. They believe in sending the right man to Parliament, and we have the choice between the chosen of the I.L.P., of the Fabians, and of the S.D.F. We do not consider their minor differences: what is the principle of political action worth?—is the question we ask. It is intended to bring pressure on the governing classes to effect social changes. We maintain that no amount of pressure exercised through political action can bring about these social changes. Some palliatives may be adopted, but the system will continue to exist; for these labor parties make the workers believe in constitutional means, in the leadership and worship of men; in short, they will destroy their self-reliance and self-respect, and do for them that which religion does—make them expect everything from others, nothing from themselves. The history of the labor movement in Europe and America shows the greater these parties become the less advanced their leaders grow and the less is achieved by these bulky, cast-iron organisations with no room for freedom left in them.

We have no more belief in Trades Unions as such than in political action, yet we prefer those Unionists, who rely upon their own action to those who cry for State help. Our propaganda might sometimes use this question as a starting point.

The Co-operative movement can only benefit a few who remain unnoticed among the general misery. Productive Co-operation on a large scale would have to compete with capitalism, which ruthlessly cuts down wages and gets a supply of cheap labor from the unemployed. Co-operators would have to work on similar lines, those of the greatest possible exploitation of labor and that will be no remedy for the needs of labor, or they would be crushed by the capitalist competition, being in fact the first victims of a commercial crisis. Thus on a large scale Co-operation is impracticable, and those who take part in it in its present form are only too often estranged from the general labor movement. So we consider Co-operators as workers who are no essential factor in the coming struggle.

The meanest and most repulsive “friends” of the workers are the Teetotalers, Malthusianists, and advocates of thrift and saving, who propound each his particular crochet as an infallible remedy for poverty. They want the workers to give up the small mites of, however adulterated and paltry, pleasure and enjoyment that are left to them. “Hypocrisy is the compliment vice pays to virtue,” the proverb says, and the other parties make at any rate promises of better things, but these want to make life still more dreary and cheerless. Economically they are utterly wrong. If all were content to live as Coolies do, on a handful of rice per day, wages would be lowered by competition down to the

level of Coolie wages—a few pence per day. We want the standard of the workers' living raised, not lowered, and all the things to which these "friends" object belong to a real, full, human life.

We need not dwell on all the cranks who have cut and dried remedies like the Free Currency advocates, who ignore the principle of every society with private property: "No property, no credit." To be benefited by money cheques, it would be necessary to possess some kind of portable or realisable property to be given in exchange for the cheques or to have them secured on. Nothing would be altered by them, they could simply perpetuate the worst evils of the present system in a more aggravated form. To the worker who has no property but his labor to dispose of, in times when work is slack and labor therefore not in demand, they would offer no resource whatever, and he would still be obliged to suffer and to starve. To make the remedy proportionate to the evil proposed to be cured, it would be requisite to abolish all private property and make the land and all it contains, together with all the implements of production, common property—that is, to introduce Communism, where money and money cheques will become equally useless.

As you will have seen, Anarchism does not preach anything contrary to the principles which have always inspired men to strive for freedom and right. It would indeed be absurd to try and impose something new upon mankind. No! Anarchism is nothing but the full acknowledgment of the realisation of the principle that freedom is at the root of sound natural development. Nature knows no outside laws, no external powers, and only follows her own inward forces of attraction or repulsion. Everything is the result of the existing forces and tendencies, and this result becomes again in turn the cause of the next thing following. In its childhood, humanity suffered from ignorance of this cause, and suffers still by being trodden under the heel of imaginary celestial and human authority (both arising from the same sources—ignorance and the fear of the unknown). All progress has been made by fighting and defying authority. Great men in history—men who have done real work, that is, work useful for the progress of the human race by breaking and defying laws and regulations apparently made for everlasting time—showed mankind new roads, opened new ground. These were rebels, and the last in this series—those who wish not only to be free themselves but who saw that which before them men did not see so clearly, that to be free ourselves we must be surrounded by free men; that the slavery of the meanest human being is our own slavery. Those last rebels for freedom and progress are the Anarchists of all countries, and in solidarity with them we appeal to you.

Study our principles, our movement, and if they convince you join us in our struggle against authority and exploitation, for freedom and happiness for all.

London, May 1st, 1895.



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