

THE FIREBRAND

For the Burning Away of the Cobwebs of Ignorance and Superstition.

VOL. I.

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THE FIREBRAND

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ANARCHY: A social theory which regards the union of order with the absence of all direct government of man by man as the political ideal; absolute individual liberty.—[Century Dictionary.

IN THE LAND OF POETRY.

HAIL, laureate enchantress Poetry,
Immortal flower of the human mind!
Thy clement heaven is the rosiest.
Of purest rainbows are thy temples

wrought,
And paved with rubies are thy peaceful
streets.

Eternal inspirations breathe thy springs,
And brilliant fancies bloom upon thy fields.
Gods, ages, peoples, heroes, kings,
All sleep embosomed in thy floral vales;
Engraven on thy crystal arches is their
fame.

Past, Present, and Posterity salute
Each other on thy gem-embellished paths.
Within thy realms my soul expatiates;
My earthly fetters sink and melt like snow
While I ascend thy adamantine cliffs,
And gaze on distant, veiled eternities.
Through thee, as through the oracles, I'll
speak

To nations long subjected and enslaved;
And with thy magic wand I will unveil
The Future's golden shores before mankind,
And sing of brighter, sunnier days to come.

J. BOWSER.

"MERRIE ENGLAND."

THIS is the title to a new book which is having a most remarkable run among social reformers in this country, the author being Robert Blatchford, a Socialist. So far as I know, it is the best expositor of Socialism extant, and by Socialism I mean that bundle of social doctrines which are summed up in the contention of the Social-Democratic party of this country and Europe. That this work is recognized by Socialists generally as a fair statement of those doctrines is indicated by the diligence with which it is being circulated by professed Socialists. At least two publishing houses in this country have out special editions,

which are meeting with deserved popularity. I think it would be impossible for any fair-minded person to read that book without being struck with the absolute justice and necessity for the changes advocated. While it does not advocate, as a principle, the absorption of private rights and interests in the public interest, it does so in detail when it insists upon the nationalization of the railroads and other sources and means of production.

The book is one that every social agitator and reformer should read and digest, no matter by what name he is known. In its statement of the injustice, the waste and the absurdity of the present system; in answers to current objections to Socialism, and in its portrayal of the possibilities of the new order, it is inimitable. It is only when it comes to prescribing the necessary steps out of the present into the future that it is weak. But it is just here that the author recognizes his own weakness, for he says: "The establishment and organization of a Socialistic state are the two branches of the work to which I have given least attention. I can lay claim to no special aptitude for such a task."

This is as if an inventor had a clear knowledge of the cumbersomeness and inutility of the old stage coach as a means of travel along with a fairly good conception of the possibilities of the modern railroad, but who at the same time, should be forced to admit his own inability to invent a railroad and set it running. And that is just where almost all, if not all, modern Socialistic writers have failed. The author says further: "I have no system ready cut and dried. I don't think any sensible Socialist would offer such a system. Socialists are practical people in these days, and know that coats must be cut according to cloth."

And yet, no matter how practical Socialists may be, this is precisely the problem that requires solution. No amount of yearning after Socialism will bring Socialism any more than the same yearning after a railroad would build and operate a railroad. The mechanism must be devised, developed and perfected until the parts work harmoniously. It is a good thing to stimulate a desire for Socialism, to agitate for it and create a public sentiment in favor

of it, because until its need is sufficiently felt invention will not be turned to the construction of the required mechanism. So that Mr. Blatchford is right, in a sense, when he says: "On one point I am quite certain and that is that the first thing to do is to educate the people in Socialism. Let us once get the people to understand and desire Socialism and I am very sure we may safely leave them to secure it."

This is true in the sense that when any special want becomes urgent invention is turned in that direction and ultimately the want is satisfied, but in no other. The necessary steps from private property to common property, from individualism to collectivism, from competition to co-operation, must be found and taken before the evils of the competitive system can be overcome. But unconsciously mankind is and has been trying to construct the mechanism which will bring this change. Every scheme of social reform and every plan for a more equal distribution of wealth are but efforts toward the realization of Socialism. Free trade, single tax, the labor exchange, the reforms in the currency, social democracy, co-operation in all its multitude of forms and degrees, and every reform, great and small, are but crude and imperfect experiments looking to this one end, and are made in response to this blind but almost universal yearning after better conditions.

The author of "Merrie England," after modestly admitting his inability to deal with the practical side of the question, does suggest two things which he deems essential. "The first thing we need education, and the second thing we need is a Socialist party." And by a Socialist party he makes plain that he means a political party, in order to elect a Socialist parliament. In other words, he would bring about a Socialist society through political action—though the enactment of laws. But reforms never come in that way. One might as well set congress or parliament to invent a mowing machine or an electric dynamo as to construct the mechanism which will realize the Co-operative Commonwealth. The old forms of business, of social methods and of property rights have been handed down from generation to generation. To nine-

teen persons out of twenty they seem perfectly natural and proper, it never having entered into their heads to question their rightfulness. Those forms and rights are protected by laws which are only the outward expression of the thoughts which govern the minds of the people. To change the statutory enactment would not change the thoughts or habits of men. It is utter foolishness to think of bringing about reforms by law. Those who believe in Socialism must practice Socialism, and in its practice must perfect its mechanism, that is, its forms and methods. When these have been developed—perfected, if they prove better than the old, they will be accepted because they are better, just as the mowing machine superseded the scyth, and just as the railroad superseded the stage coach. This is the way, and the only way, in which real reforms are brought about. This is the current of human progress. Socialism will come, but it will come voluntarily. It will need no laws to establish it. It will be accepted because it is better than that which it supplants. It will come as a relief, like rain after a long drouth. The thirsty soil will drink it in, and be glad. It will bring new life and vigor to all who come within its influence. Such will be its coming; and then men will see that Socialism is but a voluntary co-operation on terms of equality and freedom, which will extend until it embraces all the people. It will not need, nor brook any state, as we now know the political machine which assumes to govern us and to exercise a paternal control over the people; and no laws except the few business forms required in the production and distribution of wealth.—[W. H. VAN ORNUM, in the Twentieth Century.]

TORTURING ANARCHISTS IN SPAIN.

PREACHERS and politicians rant continually about the "blessings of our christian civilization," and speak with terror of the "dark ages." As an example what our present civilization really is, and that we are not so far ahead of the dark ages, we take the following from "Liberty," London:

In May, 1894, six Anarchists were shot, or rather "done to death" at Barcelona. There were rumours at the time that the prisoners had acknowledged themselves guilty of the crimes with which they were charged, but nothing positive or definite was known. Now however the facts are being published, and we learn how the so-called confessions were obtained by tortures which may take their place alongside the diabolical deeds of an earlier age.

A small Spanish pamphlet by Juan Montseny, "El Proceso de un Gran Crimen" (The trial of a great crime), La Caruna, 1895, 50pp., contains a number of letters from our imprisoned or dead comrades, from which we glean the following extracts and particulars.

Francisco Villarubias (a carpenter, 45 years of age) tells the tale of the sufferings, and his letter is confirmed by the signatures of nine other comrades; he was himself sentenced to penal servitude for life and may now be, if he survived the new sufferings in the transport ships—(a picture in *La Idea Libre*, of June 15

shows how our comrades are treated on these ships—like so many others transported on the Phillipine Islands in the extreme Orient. From this long letter we take the following:

Alberto Saldani, arrested in the Liceo Theatre, is not acquainted with our ideas, a sculptor in marble, an Italian, 50 years of age. He was a victim of the grossest indignities, and never-ending blows, until he was left for dead. In the Governor's Palace (the offices of the civil Governor of Barcelona, Larocca) he was flogged with oxhides and taken back to the prison apparently dead. The Governor's secretary gave him three violent blows in the face. And he was not even an Anarchist. Needless to say, that he knows nothing of the crime that caused his arrest.

Juan Arago, a baker, and a native of France and an Anarchist; blows every day were his lot, his beard was torn off and one of his teeth was knocked out by a violent blow in the face.

Alfredo Bacherini, an Italian Anarchist, 29 years of age, was beaten and gagged and not allowed to sleep or to sit down for five days. During all this time he was given dried codfish and not a drop of water. Feverish and utterly prostrated he had to be removed to the hospital—and all for not saying what he did not know; being as innocent as the others.

Alfredo Ruggiero Rinaldi, an Italian, age 29, knew nothing of Anarchism, was extradited by the generous French Republic! He had to walk quick for a long time, was beaten, and in the night of December 5th, 1893, was led to the seashore in the vicinity of the fortress of Montynich (where they were all kept prisoners) and threatened to be drowned if he did not name the accomplices of the Liceo Theatre outrage. He was twice submerged in the water and taken back to his cell where, in the midst of winter, his clothes had to dry on him.

Emilio Navarro, a shoemaker, age 36, an Anarchist; blows and the gag, dried codfish without water for a number of days, and was not allowed to rest. On the way to the Governor's House he was told he would be shot if he did not confess; the police pointed their rifles at him, and as he gave only negative replies to all questions he was terribly beaten with the butt-ends of their rifles.

Domingo Frutos, Spanish wool-weaver, had to eat dried codfish for several days without water, until the extreme thirst drove him to drink his own urine which, as with most of the other victims, consisted of blood. He was not allowed to rest, and then to intensify his sufferings they tied his testicles and inserted a stick which they twisted, inflicting such agony that he fell senseless to the ground; the flesh was torn in a most brutal manner, irons were heated and they threatened to place them on the wounds if he did not make such declarations as suited their purpose.

We pause here to reflect whether the beasts who inflicted those tortures were simply madmen; yet we have no doubt that they only acted according to international police practice. Thus at the time of Ravachol's execution it became known that the executioner pinioned him in such a way as to make every step he had to walk cause the most extreme pains in the genital parts, this was done to make him look frightened and faltering in his last moments, in which however, they did not succeed. And

in the "Nineteenth Century", March 1894, p. 481, we find a quotation from a Russian book, relating to the torturing of a girl of eleven years—in order to extort a declaration concerning some crime committed by her father. The girl, who was a prisoner in Siberia, "was suspended in the air and the executioner flogged her from the head to the soles of her feet. She had already received severall lashes with the cat-o'-nine-tails, when she asked for something to drink, a salted herring was presented to her. The torture would have gone on had not the executioner refused to do his work." We have of no such scruples on the part of the Spanish torturers. Shortly after the Spanish events the torture of codfish was renewed with the Belgian Anarchist at Liege. Thus we have not only single acts by maddened brutes, but systematic acts by the international police. Is it to be wondered at that the instigator of all this, the infamous Laroca was shot at by Ramon Murall shortly after this; he escaped and had Murall tortured to make him denounce his accomplices though his was a purely individual act. Still some unfortunate friends of his were arrested, among whom was Ramon Felips: they put chips of wood under his finger-nails and resorted to other acts as barbarous as those above mentioned until he lost consciousness.

Villarnbias goes on to tell of Jose Bernat, age 22, an Anarchist who was executed in May, 1894. There was a letter of Bernat's printed on April 3, 1894, in which he says that after eight days detention, when he expected to be liberated, he was brutally fettered and brought before Laroca, who for two and half hours tried to make him confess. Then he was led into a cell on the second floor. "Here (he says) my martyrdom began. They began by beating me for more than an hour; tiring of it they forced me to walk, which I did under constraint. I was feverish and had burning thirst. After some hours, I do not know how many, the warden brought me a bit of bread and a large slice of dried codfish which I ate with avidity. I asked again for water when he told me that it was prohibited. I passed the night in walking up and down the cell, and when I stopped the miserable cur at the door ordered me to continue to march. Morning came and at the same hour I was again led before the Governor. Our interview ended with the same result as the day before; having gone back I received more blows, but nothing to drink and was not allowed to sleep. All that day and through the night that followed I walked about the cell until I dropped from sheer exhaustion. The next thing I was conscious of was that a cup of broth was being given me. The Governor began to interrogate me again; my sufferings were so fresh on my memory that I replied affirmatively to his questions; but they were not satisfied because I did not denounce others. Then they struck me with their fists, they kicked and pinched me, spat on me, and treated me as only police can do. Imagine what my declarations were worth! In vain I asked for the Public Prosecutor and judges. . . . I have since learnt that I was among those who suffered least.

Villarnbias tells of Jose Codino, a young Spaniard, one of the six executed Anarchists; when arrested he was struck in the face before the eyes of his wife while the police had their

revolvers pointed at him. Then bribery was tried, but all in vain. He was thrice thrown into the sea in the end of December and left the wet clothes on him. He was further tortured in a way that will not admit of description. This torture was conducted by three police officers, one of whom was the inhuman Pena. The prisoner was nearly dead, but was brought round and addressed in this manner: "Your life is in our hands; we have to account for it to no one; we have been ordered to obtain your confession by any means." Codino being silent was ordered to kneel to be shot, but his tormentors would do him no such kindness; he was put on the fish diet for seven days instead, without water, sleep, or even a seat; drinking his own urine. No wonder that he resolved to declare himself the author of the Liceo explosion (the real author being Salvador Franch). He declared himself the author of everything they asked him in order to die.

Codina, even when torture forced him to speak, defeated the fell purposes of the police, and made his declarations of no value to them except for his own distraction. Not all, however, possessed this courage, for Zerezuola (who was also executed in May, 1894) implicated other comrades. In a letter (which was not published) to the bourgeois Barcelona paper *El Pais* he tells how the "confessions" were wrung from him.

He was threatened to be shot by the police, continuing to deny, he was stripped and the grossest cruelties practised on him to induce him to make declarations. This was done on the seashore; Zerezuola threw himself into the sea but was pulled out. Then followed the fish diet for five days without water and without rest. During this time they often inflicted personal injuries by which he was both crippled and maimed. He was beaten with sticks and sometimes hung on the door of the cell for more than an hour. Finally, in a moment of despair he made a declaration, which they put upon paper and forced him to sign.

And on the strength of this and similar declarations, six men were shot and many others imprisoned and transported; when they did not commit suicide, or die by some other means in prison.

We will not conclude this article amidst these scenes of utter human degradation, which might make one despair of the future of humanity, but will close it by translating in full, the letter of farewell of one of the Anarchists who was shot at Barcelona. As long as we have among us men who, after all their sufferings, in the final of their martyrdom, give utterance to such sentiments, we have no reason to despair and the future is with us.

My Dear Son, Read with attention these badly penned lines of your father. I shall soon be nothing more than dust. The account, that I have had pending with nature since the day of my birth, will soon be settled. It will not be nature what takes life from me, but the prejudiced inhumanities of men; the callousness and cruelty of the infamous bourgeois who, not content with having exploited my physical forces, have tried more than once to ruin me morally. More than once the bourgeois of Barcelona tried to settle with me, but as the character of your father cannot be broken or bent, they invented an infamous plot against me, using the tortures of the Inquisition to make unfortunate working men declare what suit their purpose. My son, they resorted to prac-

tices so absurd that they dared not give us a public trial. There was not even a jury. We shall be murdered. You must know, however, that your father will die content, convinced that during his life he has used his faculties to defend a great and just idea; and that his death and that of his comrades will show how the authorities commit crimes in utter disregard of the law. Perhaps to-morrow someone will tell you that your father was a criminal or a madman. Tell them and tell it aloud that I was innocent of the crime I was charged with; that I was murdered because I was an Anarchist and promulgated an idea which I thought to be noble and just, without anybody having been able to prove the contrary to me; though I always invited discussion. To those who tell you that I was a madman, reply that all the pioneers of modern ideas and scientific theories have been called madmen; but their ideas and theories are now adopted and admitted to have been true. I implore you to study the Anarchist ideas as soon as you are old enough; compare them with others and I believe that you will see that they are capable of emancipating the world. The Anarchist ideas are based upon freedom and equity; that every individual shall be able to enjoy the offerings of nature and the products of human intelligence. When our doctrines are understood by the people they will hasten to put them in practice, and they will then reap the reward after so many centuries of sufferings. I hope that end of your father will not frighten you, but serve as an incentive to spread everywhere the principles for which I lay down my life. Die as your father did, if necessary, but be useful to your fellow-men, and do your utmost to help the emancipation of the proletariat. I charge you also to watch continuously over your sister, giving her all the instruction that you can, and before all keeping her away from religious fanaticism, because this is the greatest obstacle to progress. With the help of your dear mother make of your sister a woman who will be useful to mankind; to-day a good daughter and sister, to-morrow, a good wife and mother. I die convinced that you will do this, as I die convinced that I always did my duty. Long live progress! Hurrah for Anarchy! Your father Castillo de Montynich, May 17th, 1894.

When men die with words like these on their lips, the cause they die for is invincible, and, in spite of tortures and judicial murders, the time of freedom and happiness for all, the time of Anarchy will come.

GOVERNMENTS BEHIND THE AGE.

THE Twentieth Century in commenting upon the arrest of an editor in Germany for violating the press law says:

"The German government must, indeed, be timorous if it dreads mere language. — Besides, it renders the German government an object of contempt by revealing how totally behind the age it is and how abject are its methods."

Of course, such as that does not happen in "free America"; how much superior are we to the benighted and oppressed citizens of Germany!

The general government does not trouble itself about such small matters, but leaves it to the local authorities. The plutocrats of our glorious republic feared "mere language" so much that they had five men hung for mere language, not to mention other numerous instances. Comrade Isaak in this city was put behind the bars for five days for mere language, and a few days ago Mrs. Hobart, a well known populist agitator, was ordered by the police to quit speaking in public; "mere language" you see.

Of course, it is very pleasant to point to the

despotic foreign governments, and insinuate that we are far above such conditions. It is as the Peoples Party Post says, "if the people would resolve they were slaves there might be some hope," but so long as they rant about freedom and uncomplainingly submit to a despotism worse than Russia, there is no hope. Free speech has been virtually suppressed without any protest whatever from the free citizens. "Freeborn Americans" sounds very nice and flatters the vanity of the people, but this lie covers a multitude of sins. This delusion has prevented the people from recognizing their actual slavery.

Yes, the German government is totally behind the age, and so is the American government or any other for that matter, and so will be any kind of government no matter how "scientifically" constructed,

E. SLABS.

IDEAS.

OUR friends, the Socialists, talk much about "class struggle" and the "liberation of the proletariat." While that is the object of the Anarchists also, there is something I, for one, hold still more important, and that is to combat superstition and prejudicial ideas!

We do not fight persons and institutions as much as the ideas, of which the former are simply representatives. We might abolish the church a dozen times, but if we leave the God idea, no matter under what form, churches will spring up again like a Canada thistle from its root.

And I assert that as long as this superstitious idea holds the minds of men in bondage, that there is a supreme ruler whose subjects or slaves we are, so long will freedom be banished from the earth. No matter how free a people imagine themselves to be,—let the belief in God be spread among them, and in a short time they will submit to the first usurper who dares to assume authority over them. The baneful effects of the belief in a supreme ruler are that it destroys the initiative and self-reliance in man. Instead of depending each one individually upon themselves, they all imagine themselves to depend on the good will or favor of a supreme being, as they term the creation of their own mind.

The idea of being ruled, of having to submit becomes familiar to them, and such a people will readily succumb to any man with sufficient ambition and courage to play the king or emperor.

The Anarchists combat the government idea as related to the rule of man over man, but I consider the God idea of the same importance. Let people imagine they are ruled by a supreme being or spirits, and very soon we will find men who claim to have a monopoly of the knowledge of the divine will or the will of spirits and will rule their fellow man in that way. All the theocracies of the past are proof of my assertion.

The god, government and property ideas are closely related,—though the creation of man, they rule him like some pagan tribes imagine themselves to be ruled by idols, the product of their own hands.

E. SLABS.

A PROPAGANDA ASSOCIATION.

COMRADES, why should not we Anarchist-Communists imitate the excellent example of single taxers and Anarchist-Individualists, and establish a letter writing corps? I can think of no better means of propaganda or more certain method of extending our influence. Judiciously managed and well kept up, such a campaign, participated in by able, energetic comrades ought to result in doubling the subscribers to THE FIREBRAND in a few months, as well as in distributing thousands of tracts, leaflets etc. where they will do the most good. The manner of conducting such a campaign is as follows: A conductor or secretary is chosen, to whom all comrades who desire to join the letter writing corps send their names for enrolment. Those who do so thereby pledge themselves to write when possible, a letter, or send literature at stated intervals to a "target," or to promptly notify said conductor of their failure to do so. These "targets" are to consist of Editors of papers, magazine writers, public speakers, preachers and others who publicly attack Anarchism, and may be selected by all readers of THE FIREBRAND. Members of the corps, for convenience, may be divided into sections or divisions, and members of a certain division could be notified, through THE FIREBRAND what "target" they would be expected to attack. Some suitable name might be chosen, as "Anarchist-Communist Propaganda Association," or "Anarchist-Communist Letter Writing Corps" or something equally as acceptable. This is merely in the way of a suggestion, to be acted upon or not, as the Editors and readers of THE FIREBRAND may see fit.

WILLIAM HOLMES.

Correspondence.

THE MEMORIAL DAY.

THE 11th of November, the day of the legal murdering of our five comrades in Chicago being at the door, the german group (the only one—I am sorry to say—we have here) is at work to arrange a mass-meeting and a grand memorial demonstration. It shall take place on Thursday the 14. of November at the Turn-hall. Chas. Mowbray and John Most are selected as speakers to address the audience. To cover the expense an admission of 10 cents will be charged.

In short, everything in our power will be done for the propaganda at this event, and we are quite convinced that it will turn out a success. It was resolved by the group to retain comrade Mowbray for at least one week in Buffalo, and to do everything possible to spread the principles of Anarchist-Communism among the English speaking workmen of this city. As things stand this also will turn out favorable. We have already received a report that some English speaking Unions have announced their desire of having comrade Mowbray to address a mass-meeting under their auspices. And I have also learned among organized workmen that the sentiment in behalf of comrade Mowbray is very favorable.

We also sincerely hope to be able to gain new subscribers for "THE FIREBRAND" and the

"REBEL", and soon to see the fruit of comrade M.'s work, which should be the awakening of the masses of American workmen, to a participation in the revolutionary movement; and that the last words of August Spies be realized at last: "There will be a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle to-day."

G. Lang.

Buffalo, N. Y., October, 1895.

The Letter-Box.

R. K., New York City.—No. we neither asked the "Freiheit" nor the Vorbote to have an ad of THE FIREBRAND. If they really cared for the propaganda in the English language they would have a standing ad of THE FIREBRAND and the REBEL without being asked about it. The extra copies will be sent. E. S.

E. P. H., Brodhead, Wis.—THE FIREBRAND will be sent regularly, but about the pamphlet you should write to comrade Fulton.

H. S., New York City.—Three copies have been sent regularly, and it would be in order to inquire at the Post Office about it. Inform us how many copies you can properly distribute and they will be sent with pleasure. We wish all readers would be as anxious to agitate as you. Our best greetings.

J. B., Winside, Nebr.—Letters like yours are encouraging. We see that our struggle is not in vain. The "freeborn Americans" begin to recognize that there is something rotten in America.

D. L., New York City.—Backnumbers are sent, but No. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 and 32 are exhausted. Friends will take notice!

R. N., Chicago.—The extra dollar would have been very welcome, for money is coming in very slow lately. But then we are satisfied to know that you have done your best, and wish you success in the work you mention.

J. H., Vineland, N. J.—THE FIREBRAND is sent to you with pleasure, and if you have use for some extra copies—please inform us.*

J. A., Elizabeth, N. J.—Very true! The oppressors tremble in all so-called civilized nations, and that is the reason of their baseness toward Anarchists and all those that are agitating for better conditions.

F. W. R., Georgetown, Mo.—We are with the same desire animated, but money—the idol of our christian era—prevents the poor to pursue happiness. A. I.

*A few days ago we got a letter from J. Hacker, in which he expressed his pleasure in reading THE FIREBRAND. To-day we heard that our friend died 95 years of age.

RECEIPTS.

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