

## ANARCHISM.

BY THE EDITOR.

ANARCHY means lawlessness,<sup>1</sup> and anarchism is the theory that there ought to be no laws, no government, no ruler. Now, in the original sense of the word, the tendency of the American political ideal is anarchistic, for liberty and independence are the keynotes of our history. The underlying principle of our political institutions is that the men to whom the public affairs of both the several States and the United States are handed over, are not the rulers but the servants of the nation. Properly speaking, we have no government but an administration. The president of the United States is not a sovereign, and the citizens are not his subjects, but he is the chosen leader, the *primus inter pares*, entrusted to attend to certain duties which are in the interest of all but can in their very nature be performed only by one person.

The people of the United States never found fault with anarchism so long as anarchists merely expounded their theories, and we must state here that there are quite a number of avowed anarchists who are opposed to law on account of the *compulsion* to obedience which the idea of law implies, and are therefore consistently opposed to all violence as a matter of principle. These anarchists, the peaceful anarchists so called, long ago gained a hearing and preached their doctrines to limited audiences. They were, however, ridiculed by some of their own friends as milksops and sissies, and the word anarchism, as commonly understood, accordingly denotes with the large masses of the people a defiance of the law by assassination and destruction.

The American people are very patient and are always inclined to allow every theory to be put into practice to show the results to which it leads. Anarchism cannot complain of not having had a

<sup>1</sup> Derived from ἀρχή, a first principle, a rule, government, and a privative, meaning *not*.

fair trial. The anarchist papers were not suppressed, and anarchist speeches were tolerated. But now that violent anarchism exhibits dangerous consequences, the people become indignant and feel like stamping it out as a nefarious weed that threatens to choke the harvest of good citizenship.

But if we love liberty and abhor government, why are we not all anarchists and why do we believe in law? The old conception of law is the view that law is the ukase of the government and serves to maintain the machinery that keeps the people in subjection. What, then, is the American conception of law where the term government has ceased to mean sovereignty over the people and has actually become the administration of public affairs? How can law, which inevitably means compulsion, be united with liberty?

Kant said that the principle of ethics consists in laying down maxims of conduct, and all those sentiments or motives to action are moral which can be made universal maxims. Now as to liberty, we mean to assert our own liberty and, as a matter of moral consistency, respect the love of liberty in others. For the sake of maintaining liberty as a general principle we deem it wrong to trespass upon the rights of others and recognise the necessity of self-restriction. If all men were truly honest, well-intentioned, and moral, there would be no need of enforcing self-restriction by law, because every one would as a matter of course refrain from wronging his fellow beings, and the truth is that the higher a civilisation the more lenient the laws can be. Progress implies a wider scope for individual liberty and a relaxation of legal coercions. American civilisation has actually reached the point where law has ceased to imply the idea of suppression and indicates the order which *for the sake of preserving our liberty* must be maintained. Our laws are not imposed upon us by rulers but are established by the legally chosen representatives of the people. Law in this sense is nothing but Kant's principle of morality applied to the domain of social life. Law empowers the authorities of the administration to employ force against those who do not possess sufficient self-control to abstain from trespassing upon the rights of others.

It is true that there are laws which are neither wise nor just, and frequently there are men in authority who are unworthy of their trust and abuse their office for personal gain. But we ought to be wise enough to remember that the world is nowhere perfect, and that we can improve conditions only by constant vigilance and by the repeated endeavor to correct our mistakes. There are

hours in which we feel desperate about the slowness of progress; but we should not lose patience. *Eppur si muove!* Liberty has been increasing slowly but constantly and its progress would be quicker but for its false friends who identify liberty with lawlessness.

The world would gladly accept the gospel of freedom were it not for the skeleton in the closet, the grinning sham freedom of violent anarchism, with its gospel of hatred, its bloody deeds of darkness, its contemptible treachery, its narrow-minded and stupid logic, and its insanity-begotten aspirations.

Anarchism (i. e., the violent anarchism that would sanction assassination) is as erroneous as it is immoral. Its doctrines can never become universal maxims. The anarchist's notion of liberty is licence, his ideal of progress is the destruction and ruin of his betters, his propaganda consists in preaching hatred and spreading terrorism, the methods he commends are felony and murder. Should his ideas gain a foothold in the minds of our people it would not lead us onward to a higher civilisation but back to barbarism, to a state of society in which the hand of every one is against that of every other and war is the general rule.

Happily we need not be afraid of anarchism, but though we must deeply deplore the erratic deed of a criminally insane individual who figures as an exponent of this dangerous doctrine, there is no need of being alarmed or resorting to means of repression that would make the remedy worse than the evil.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>It is generally expected that Congress will pass a bill for the protection of the lives of our Presidents and other high officials. No doubt the step is justified. But would it not be proper to extend the same protection to all people. If the murderer's intent has been proved by a deed beyond the shadow of a doubt and the victim has escaped only by good luck or by the skill of physicians, the law should, under aggravating circumstance, empower the judge or jury to treat the assailant as a murderer. There are cases in which the victim of an attempted murder becomes a cripple for life and leads a miserable existence ever afterwards, while the assailant escapes with a comparatively light punishment. Humane laws are a blessing, but leniency toward and a consideration of the interests of the criminal should not be bought by a withdrawal of the protection to law-abiding citizens.