ANARCHISM AMONG PRIMITIVE PEOPLES.

Anarchism is as old as and indeed older than human civilisation. Primitive man was so weak that he could not face the surrounding dangers of life alone, and so he had to apply for mutual help to his fellowmen. Thus an association of all the members of the tribe became a necessity; but property was communistic, because it belonged to everybody and to every one alike. The anarchic state of mankind lasted for a long time, and underwent a change only when the institution of private ownership of property was established.

There are, however, still a number of peoples living to-day whose social conditions are anarchic in the true sense of the word.

A few extracts from the writings of prominent ethnologists will prove the truth of this contention.

Schoolcraft says of the Chippewayans: "Though they have no regular government, as every man is lord in his own family, they are influenced more or less by certain principles which conduce to their general benefit."

Of the unorganised Shoshones, Bancroft writes: "Every man does as he likes. Private revenge, of course, occasionally overtakes the murderer, or, if the sympathies of the tribe be with the murdered man, he may possibly be publicly executed, but there are no fixed laws for such cases."

From the Nagas of India we learn that they acknowledge no king among themselves, and deride the idea of such a personage among others; their "villages are continually at feud." . . . "Every man being his own master, his passions and inclinations are ruled by his share of brute force." And then we read that "petty disputes and disagreements about property are settled by a council of elders, the litigants voluntarily submitting to their arbitration. But correctly speaking, there
is not the shadow of a constituted authority in the Naga community, and, wonderful as it may seem, this want of government does not lead to any marked degree of anarchy." That is to say, anarchy is well at hand, but not in the form of a state of disorder.

The Greenland Esquimaux too are entirely without political control; having nothing which represents it more clearly than the deference paid to the opinion of some old man skilled in seal-catching and the signs of the weather. But an Esquimaux who is offended by another has his remedy in what is called a singing-combat. He composes a satirical poem and challenges his antagonist to a satirical duel in face of the tribe: "He who has the last word wins the trial." Indeed, a very simple and harmless way to settle quarrels!

Of one of the tribes of the northwest coast we read that "the Salish can hardly be said to have any regular form of government," a fact that has been confirmed by Professor Boas of New York.

Besides that form of "government," which indeed reminds us of "anarchic principles, we find among primitive peoples another form of "law," which stands in a certain connexion to the facts mentioned. After the death of a tribal chief it is customary among many West African peoples that for quite a while a state of lawlessness and liberty prevails in such a way that everybody does as he pleases until a new chief is elected, who re-establishes the old order. It was the same in the Middle Ages, when after the death of the pope people were allowed to sack the papal palace, the Lateran. A similar outburst we may also recognise in the right given in Africa to young men who are to be circumcised, to steal and to plunder for a couple of weeks.

Among the natives of New Zealand, called Muru, people are in the habit of plundering everything in the house of a family where a crime has been committed or an unhappy event has occurred. This curious fact can, however, not be considered as a "punishment" or "revenge," because nobody sees any harm in it, nor does the house-owner conceal the names of the plunderers. The pillage reaches also sometimes those who had nothing to do with the crime, as it is reported by Captain Brown, who says that the home of a chief was sacked because his wife had committed adultery.

In Japan the legalised "sacking" is called "Harai." It was formerly practised in the houses of those who had lost a friend or a relative, until the custom was suppressed by an imperial edict.

These examples, which can be multiplied by many others, may suffice to show that a certain form of anarchism existed all over the world and still exists among many peoples.

There is but one way of dealing with the anarchism of a propaganda by action, viz., by means of an open and fearless discussion of the social problem, and not by violent measures and speeches, or by a suppression of free speech.

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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES.


The perplexing problems of household labor in America have received exhaustive treatment in this large work. Miss Salmon's investigations rest upon informa-