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Congratulations-Plus

Adeline Champney

March 1915

It is a time honored custom to offer congratulations and good wishes upon the occasion of a birthday anniversary; one of the few accepted customs which Time has not rather dishonored and outworn. Hence in availing myself of this observance I experience something of the joy peculiar to the careful housewife who in the course of her spring cleaning discovers among the odds and ends which must be relegated to the rubbish barrel a piece of perfectly good material which she can utilize.

In the periods of intellectual house-cleaning which no life should be too busy to afford, old valuations may often profitably be reviewed and hasty judgments corrected, for a wise conversation of all which, though old, rings true, is often as important as the discovery of the new. With the consciousness that since the advent of MOTHER EARTH I have made such a revaluation comes the feeling that some new declaration of myself is necessary in the renewed assurance of friendship implied in this presentation of congratulations.

Truly something more than congratulations are due MOTHER EARTH, for while I know that the magazine has not been all that its publisher and editor hoped to make it, while it has not done all

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they have dreamed for it, it has in some ways accomplished more than their plans for it contemplated. While the ultimate effect of those activities originating in the MOTHER EARTH ASSOCIATION and centering around it are too subtle, too far reaching to be measured or even adequately conjectured, the traceable things are such that we may reasonably become enthusiastic even as to probabilities beyond our ken. Who can declare how much of the liberality of thought, freedom of discussion, and tolerance of action which we see increasing every day may be directly due to these coast-to-coast tours, to the spoken word delivered, and the printed words disseminated? Emma Goldman has "toured exclusively for MOTHER EARTH," but in so doing she has scattered broadcast the seed of liberty throughout the land, and the harvest is not yet. They who have ears to hear have heard, and hearing, pondered. For Emma Goldman does not set empty echoes rolling through vacant minds. Her intrepid personality, fired by a noble ideal, energizes and vitalizes. At her touch we vibrate, we breathe deeper, we feel ourselves more fully alive, we are stirred and spurred to action.

When I would write of MOTHER EARTH I find myself thinking of Emma Goldman; not that I would belittle her co-workers, but because her tremendous personality puts its own stamp on the work and proclaims it hers. Nay, more! She has put her stamp on the whole country. Not so long ago a community which received Emma Goldman hospitably merited a gold star for its liberalism, while now the community which attempts to interfere with her work is marked down in black. From Emma Goldman hunted and hounded to Emma Goldman commanding respectful attention from colleges, exclusive clubs and scientific societies is a far cry, — but it is not Emma Goldman who has changed. Her courage and determination have forced recognition and respect, changing the attitude of the people.

Thus has Emma Goldman, in the indefatigable pursuit of her own work for the support of MOTHER EARTH, and the propaganda of Anarchism, been enlarging and conserving the liberty of the whole

dom lovers everywhere; and a better perspective, a broader view of existing conditions and a less doctrinaire interpretation of them; especially a keener appreciation of the trend of things in this country, and of the services to progress of some whose work is great, even though they may not see its full import.

Last, and heartiest of all, Roadway and Good Speed!

the Social Revolution is not catastrophic but cumulative. It is a movement which gathers speed and momentum as it goes, unless checked and thwarted by premature upheavals.

Here is where we part company, MOTHER EARTH! Your Anarchism is stressed in its political value, mine in its psychological necessity. This value you also discern, but you clothe it with a material structure. Seeing the soul, you dream of a body incorporating it. You would institutionalize Anarchism, but an ideal cannot be institutionalized. Once imprisoned in form, it dies, and decay sets in.

Your dream is not my dream. Anarchism to me is a dynamic social factor, not a political expedient. I do not foresee the State overthrown and Anarchism established. Any violent overthrow of the State is but temporary. The State is an historic economic development which bears within itself the elements of its own metamorphosis. I foresee the State becoming a Fellowship approximating a pure democracy. I doubt if government can ever utterly be abolished. Purely Anarchistic groups there will doubtless be, and some of them will be successful; but the span of human life on the planet is limited. I doubt it can endure long enough to inake Anarchists of the entire human race, certainly not Anarchists capable of living harmoniously together. Nations will persist, but woe betide the nation which has no Anarchist movement! Such a nation would dry rot and be cast out from the World-Fellowship; or it would petrify and be fit only for a Museum of Horrors. A pure democracy vitalized by an Anarchistic ideal—this is my vision of the future.

This is why I love you, MOTHER EARTH. Though your dream is not as my dream, you are doing my work. You are awakening the soul of humanity. You are spurring it on to that future which neither you nor I can see. And though we vision it otherwise, here are my congratulations for the work you are doing, and my heartfelt thanks.

And among the good wishes I would shower upon your birthday, I am “wishing on you” two things: more literary support from free-

people; for freedom of speech for Emma Goldman means freedom of speech for you and for me, and for every man and woman with a message. This constitutes a forceful example of the social value of enlightened individual selfhood, for Emma Goldman, in seeking her own ends, has been assuring the rights of all, and accomplishing more for free speech and free assemblage than any society organized for the purpose. This work alone is a notable achievement and in itself gives MOTHER EARTH high rank as a factor in social progress.

Another important work incidental to the MOTHER EARTH tours is the spread of sex-rationalism. The innate purity and beauty and the eminent common-sense of Emma Goldman’s lectures on the freedom of love and on limitation of offspring make her work along this

line of vital import. The abominations of existing sex institutions are sickening the pure in heart of all faiths, and the vision of clean, healthy, sane and happy lives outside the pale is a revelation of salvation to many. No propaganda is more fearfully needed, none more farreaching in its potentialities for human happiness than the propaganda of sex-rationalism, and MOTHER EARTH is not the least of its prophets. Among Anarchists MOTHER Earth has made toward narmony, toward breadth and fellowship. Standing for Communism, it has not been bigoted either in respect to the contributed matter in the magazine or with regard to the literature sold. It is looking toward the movement rather than insisting on the economicism. This is a tendency in the right direction. When Communists, Collectivists and Individualists can get together on their Anarchism they become an influence, not merely a nest of contentiousness.

Among the people in general — I speak now of the people of the United States. I admit I am an American, and glad of it. Let those to whom all patriotism is anathema sneer. I am quite sure my patriotism would not be acceptable to the political campaign orator, but I have an affection for America, a concern for America, passing

my interest in any other part of the globe. I find, moreover, an intrinsic reality in nationalism, fundamental, developmental, and valuable to world-progress. While not claiming that developments here are any more important than those of any other country, I am especially and keenly interested in American social conditions, in the peculiar process of transition going on here.

So I am glad that MOTHER EARTH is in America, that it is making Anarchism recognized and respected here as a world-fact; as a theory, an ideal, that must be reckoned with. Not so long ago it was the well-informed man only who understood the significance of the word; now it is the ignorant man who does not know something of it. The Anarchist is now seen as an idealist where but shortly he appeared a villain, a brute or a clown. MOTHER EARTH shows him, not as a menace of darkness but as a man and a comrade. He is no longer an anomaly; the causes of his thinking and his feeling are made plain. Agree with him or not, like him or not, one has to feel him human.

As for numerical propaganda, I doubt if the actual number of avowed Anarchists has very greatly increased. They are not standing up to be counted, but the increase of Anarchistic thought which does not bear the title is enormous. It is in this that the strength of the movement consists, in this undercurrent that is sweeping inevitably toward freedom. Insensibly, even while holding to the letter of outworn tenets and outgrown usages, men and women are inclining more and more toward liberty, and this inner transformation, this change in the feelings of the people, is *the Social Revolution*.

A liberty-loving people cannot be enslaved. A despotically-minded people cannot be freed. The instinctive feelings, the habits of thought of the peoples do not change catastrophically, are not to be changed by political overturnings. Spasmodic upheavals change nothing but temporary local situations. Haste, repenting itself, too often sinks into deeper lethargy. Violence provokes violence, begetting a train of petty hatreds, stultifying love from

which alone springs growth. Dynamite proves nothing, creates nothing but fear which is never constructive. The dynamiter, whatever his ideals, his motives, becomes temporarily but an instrument of destruction, checking development, — his own and all within his influence. Dynamite is but the stiletto thrust of Impatience, never the ocean sweep of Power. A liberty-loving people needs no dynamite, nor can dynamite profit a people who love not liberty. From the futilities of dynamite may you be freed, O MOTHER EARTH!

Likewise from that other petty obstruction, the personal animosity. Often, when receiving your monthly visits, have I longed to gather up all princes and potentates and tyrants, all money-kings and capitalists and exploiters whatsoever, and presenting them to you, announce in tones that must be heard “These, too, are men!” Intelligent, courageous, large-hearted men, many of them; as are peasants, laborers, agitators, many of them. Calloused and distorted and rotten altogether? Yes, many of them. So are the proletariat, many of them; likewise their advocates, some of them. And from the from the same cause institutions. And same cause. From the same cause! Your struggle, O MOTHER EARTH, is with the cause of misery, not with its victims; your battle is against institutions, against superstitions, not against their deluded victims. And these anti-social institutions, these baleful superstitions, that must be up-rooted and annihilated lest they throttle human progress — where are they? In the instinctive feelings and the habits of thought of their victims, the people, all the people. Be not deceived, O MOTHER EARTH, when you are awakening the love of liberty you are not merely “preparing the way for the Social Revolution,” you are conducting the Social Revolution. When these inimical institutions are fully undermined in the minds of the people, they will fall of their own rottenness. Until that time, though you could dynamite kings, capitols, bourses, monopolies, corporations, out of existence, yet would tyrannies, exploitations, miseries rise again, since their roots would remain. More than this,