

Egoism Vol. I. No. 5.

Georgia & Henry Replogle

September, 1890

Contents

Pointers.	3
Runners of The Editorial Gantlet.	6
An Important Point Cleared Up.	11
What will Society Do with the Thief under Freedom.	13
The Right of Ownership.	16
Press, Transportation, and Telegraph Censorship.	18
The Era of Egoism.	20
An Observer Who Sees.	21
Egographs.	23

Pointers.

Reverie is the exercise of mental indolence.

Moralism is the social expediency of our grandparents' prejudices.

Habits, with their in adaptation of means to ends may be laughed at, but what are we to say of the equally absurd institutions which the laughers themselves support.

Most women are kept so busy preserving a legal virtue and maintaining conventional lies that they get no time to think out better means for the attaining of greater freedom and pleasure, but torture themselves into the grave of the foolish.

We have consulted a map of San Francisco, and find that EGOISM exerts a wide, but not dense influence in this city. Its ten subscribers here are located in widely separated parts of the city, and nothing now remains to complete its influential success but the filling out of the intervening spaces.

"Fair Play" has removed from Valley Falls, Kansas, to Sioux City, Iowa. All mail for it should be sent to Lock Box 353 at that place. It may be admitted that EGOISM would not object to "Fair Play's" abundant financial success in its new home; as to editorial success that it already has.

The article on another page, by F. B. Parse on "What will Society Do with the Thief under Freedom," is a synopsis of a lecture recently delivered by him before a progressive meeting of some kind in San Diego. There was a politician in the audience who tried to reply, but we are told that Comrade Parse "laid him out" in short order, and yearned for yet more victims.

In the "Individualist" of August 30, Editor "C" publishes section 3&12 of the revised statutes of the United States 1878, and section 866 of the general statutes of Colorado 1883, showing in a nut-shell the source of privileges greatest robbery today. The first of these and that of their respective states regarding the issue of currency, should be kept standing in reform papers.

A temporary break in his good health, prevents the appearance in this number of Tak Kak's usual contribution, but to the full-fledged Egoist his communication of the fact will be worth more than the earlier appearance of one of his excellent articles. It reads: "I have had a troublesome sore throat which makes exertion unpleasant this warm weather... Getting well. Not writing anything for your next issue... In again by October number. T. K."

EGOISM is later this time than before. This is partly due to the finishing of the pamphlet, "Citizens' Money" hanging over into this issue's time. This opens the way to say that not a solitary order for it has reached us, which indicates that there is a great scarcity of money, and a corresponding reason why the pamphlet should be circulated, or that the readers are not interested in that which instructs rather than amuses. If the money lender and profit taker share the fate of the pamphlet, we say Amen. If not, we know why they will not for a long time to come.

Faces that seemed beautiful to someone, have undoubtedly existed from far back in the unrecorded history of animal consciousness, and will probably exist to its end, but the waxen face of the present dude ideal, with its inexperience, absence of any traces of thought—an infant face on top of five or six feet of flesh and bones, would in some circles of association be the source of more mortification than the most angular visage cast from the mould of hereditary mental and

physical slavery. Dude and dudine of today, prepare for the beauty of tomorrow by adding the line of a complex emotion to your sea of blank plateau countenance, or the light of an intelligent thought to your dollish eyes. Beauty, like virtue is the ideal of conception, which changes with the resulting complexity of experience.

California's admission day was celebrated the 9th of this month. The display of bunting was so ridiculously gorgeous that it put the efforts of the heathen Chinese' celebrations to shame. It was a Native Sons' affair throughout and the city was full of visitors. To take advantage of the fact that the most talented and brightest people will not march in parades or be labeled, and thus cast an unfavorable reflection upon the whole fraternity as lacking in preponderance of brain and character because labels may have been lacking to locate that which really existed, would be as ungenerous as is the alleged pledge of the Native Sons to boycott the Easterner because he was not born on this soil. At any rate, in this, as in all celebration war-dance exhibitions, there was little that is pleasurable to the more complex mind. It is to be hoped that the day of crowing will soon be past. Achievement is, as a contemporary has said of genius, the result of prior conditions, and the achiever the instrument of these as is the mediocre of the same in his unapplauded function.

The weary monotony of the Egoists' life among God and government worshipping people was pleasantly broken a few days ago by the arrival of "Lucifer," which announced the release of Moses Harman from prison, on a writ of error, procured by David Overmyer, Mr. Harman's present counsel. He will now have a new trial in November. It is to be hoped that his emotional friends will be judicious enough this time to give him as much advantage before the court as a criminal would have at least. This latter movement is another object lesson of the advantage of Egoistic methods of expediency over the storming of emotional fanaticism. These would have declaimed, and worshiped their hero, while they allowed him to remain during the five years if he could have survived the term. If the matter is left in his attorney's hands there is a fair probability of his acquittal. Mr. Tucker's successful blow at the censors will be a marked advantage, as will the public sentiment that has developed through the circulating of petitions during his imprisonment. The safest contribution that can now be made is dollars. These will be much needed.

To emphasize the conclusion of the comment in another column on Ida U. Craddock's appeal to the Anarchists to turn their efforts to the separation of church and State, we refer the reader to the production of a Bismarckian German criticising in "Freethought" of Sept. 13, George Macdonald's Observation on the marriage question, which among others will be found on another page of this paper. This typical Secularist seems to believe that people should be content with such sex association as can be maintained by the State's club, and fears if this guarantee be removed that helpless women with children would be deserted by a "husband and father who is a brute, for a younger and handsomer woman." Even this might be preferable to being landed in the grave before the younger and handsomer woman comes in as is now the case. At any rate it would be too bad to deprive a woman of the fostering care of a brutal husband. Then it is of course certain, that if legal ties were removed, "young and handsome" women would at once turn out and search for brutal men with helpless wives, just as Abolitionists were years ago supposed to want to marry their daughters to negroes because they wanted the negroes freed. But this is not the worst of this militant gentleman's fears. He thinks that if the State club did not keep a wife to her duty of bearing and caring for children she might desert her post and leave the husband to assume the incidental responsibility of his sensory pleasure himself, and that is the rub. Man has a hard enough time to get all the pleasure he wants, without women selfishly withdrawing their

lives' efforts from him and directing them to the attainment of their own pleasure. Let whoever is content with the fidelity the sheriff can maintain for him, make the best of it now, for there is a growing taste for spontaneous affection which is sure to succeed forced servitude.

Runners of The Editorial Gantlet.

Indiana White Caps are a geographical expression of the general doctrine of Moralism. They know what is “right,” and noble martyrs that they are, risk even legal penalties in carrying it out. With an inclination, Moralists could get a pointer from this.

Recently a half dozen customs inspectors “shadowed” the Oakland jail for seventy-two hours to detect the exchange of some Chinamen who wanted to go to China passage free, for some Chinese prisoners that had been captured while attempting to cross the line near San Diego, and were to be sent back to China. They succeeded and survived the patriotic plaudits of the press, while Labor stood gleefully by and stupidly believed itself protected by the very agency that is employed to exact a robber’s tribute from it for every protected article of food or clothing it consumes whether produced at home or abroad. With due consistency, it hopes to “vote itself free.”

R. B. Westbrook, president of the American Secular Union, when last heard from was at the sea-side “weeding” a “book of morals” from the manuscripts of the contestants for a thousand dollar prize offered by himself and others for the best “moral guide.” The product of this new theological venture we await with curiosity. It will undoubtedly be a great relief to the Moralists of the country to have a bible for authority, and have no longer to be taunted with the suggestive fact that morality like other religious creeds is only geographical and without a standard “authority.” Weak indeed is the mind that begs to have its pleasure prescribed to it; and who save orthodox fanatics pretend to live for anything else. Such superstition at such a place should be very encouraging to the church if she wishes to see her principal features preserved.

In the August number of the “Arena” is an otherwise excellent article on hypnotism or mesmerism, but has the usual law foolery at the end, for which purpose it was written by Emily Kempin with the LL. D. attachment, who is secretary of the New York Medico-Legal Society. It is argued that the State should have control or a monopoly of hypnotism. That “the practice of hypnotism should not only be forbidden to all but licensed physicians, but these even should not be allowed to use it without having authorized witnesses present.” That is, the average citizen, who according to the writer’s theory is too ignorant and criminally inclined to safely practice it is to be competent judge of the operations of the licensed physician, who was granted the privilege only by virtue of his acknowledged superior intelligence to the balance of the community that is now to be his judge. This is typical popular government logic.

The preponderance of chaffy matter that fills the popular magazines mirrors an almost hopeless stupidity on the part of the public that buys it, if not on that of the publishers who, knowing of the ability in depth of thought as well as artistic style of other writers, allow them to earn their livelihood by almost mechanical pursuits. That such writers' productions would be too radical cannot be consistently maintained, for in these magazines' purported function of presenting every phase of thought, lies before the public, ample justification for the appearance of every well-defined departure in thought.

H.

Another crowd of women "made it up" and went to the "proper authorities" in Oakland recently to demand their names placed on the Great Register, which would entitle them to participate in the coming election. They of course failed in securing their unquestionable right to the exercise of tyranny equal with men. To those who consider the "right to vote" the ultimate of freedom this attempt is encouraging. But to those who have discovered it to be the ultimate of tyranny, to thus see the women attempting to enter the political swamp in which men have floundered and mired for generations, is only another indication of how far we are from even a desire for real freedom.

The ostensible object of the aforesaid crowd of Christian Temperance Women was their "right to vote," but their subjective and real idea was to obtain power to regulate the affairs of men who manufacture and those who drink intoxicants. The slave's ideal ever is to be master.

This "right to vote" is like other mirages of life, not what it appears to be. Not until one has studied the origin of "rights" and given up the idea of their existence otherwise than as the supposed expediency of each stage of social development, can they realize what the right to vote involves. Its central object is to gain the power to force the actions of others to conform to the ideas of those to whom power falls. What do they want to vote for? Is their mental world then, such a reflection of man's false ideals that they must struggle for the brute force that enlightenment is about to cause him to throw away in disgust? Can they not see one step farther, that of their social and industrial independence?

These women never having even dreamed of economic and social independence naturally attempt to avail themselves of the only means known to them by which women might possibly avoid the unpleasant invasions of drunken husbands. The fact is their trouble lies not in the manufacture, sale, or drinking of liquors, but in their industrial dependence on the men who drink them. In a condition of industrial independence it would matter but little to women whether the consumers of their products drank liquors or ate beefsteak. If such men were incongenial there would be nothing to do but decline to associate with them just as women do with unpleasant individuals of their own sex. Let them acquire the idea of individual freedom and responsibility; take their stand with the most enlightened men and women of the age and agitate for the opportunity to earn a livelihood, and for the removal of the monopolies that rob labor and the ignorance that consecrates social slavery. Let them do this kind of work, and every stroke will be toward equal *freedom* instead of toward *unequal slavery* as at present. Let them study out the

fundamental relation of themselves to other things generally and learn the object of conscious existence, and cease to be mere apers of barbaric brutality.

G.

So blind does the intensity of man's subjectivity make his selfishness that with any emotion-alism it is next to impossible for him, even having traced conduct to its real basis, to always make applications in accordance with and reason from such irrefutable deductions.

Hugh O. Pentecost has already admitted that we have no duties as such to God or man, and that what we do is actuated by purely selfish motives, but not having digested this fullness of the principle of Individualism is found, unconsciously enough, invading Benj. R. Tucker by bringing upon his head a storm of ostracism and abuse from people who share Mr. Pentecost's superstitions, because Mr. Tucker's utilitarian principles failed to conform to these people's Moralistic creed. They no doubt believe him to be a bad man in refusing to be questioned regarding his private affairs, and perhaps imagine that he daily and without provocation cruelly beats his dog, allows his horses to suffer for food, and does not water his cow. Besides these things he may pi his forms of live type, tear his clothes, go without his dinner, work late at night, pay taxes or patronize the post-office, buy protected articles of food or clothing, kiss a pretty woman, and do many other things of this kind, all of which are private affairs, which kind of affairs Mr. Pentecost believes subject to public criticism.

In the midst of all this ruin (?) stands Mr. Pentecost as innocently triumphant as a well-meaning but injudicious juvenile canine who has tugged cloth, dishes, victuals and all from the table down upon the floor. He does not seem to realize that what he regards as morality, justice, and goodness is nothing other than the order equality, which itself is relative, being absolute per head only as individual resistance makes it so, and therefore is only social expediency, varying in its expression with the intelligence of the social units. That the ideal social expediency is equality or equal conditions is due to the fact that men happen to be approximately equal in the possibilities of defensive capacity; that an Ego consists of a certain combination of desires the gratification of which makes up all existence means to him or her, and whatever opposes that gratification will meet with resistance from that Ego to the point of that opposition's removal or its equal resistance, by which is determined the limit of subjective gratification or private right, and not by some abstract rule deduced from the number of times a given number of noses are contained in a like number. Therefore when Mr. Tucker "did the wisest thing possible under the circumstances," if his fellowmen do not. boycott him for it he did the most expedient thing possible under the circumstances, and Mr. Pentecost's ready rejoinder that every politician and privileged robber can offer the same excuse, will not hold in this case before even those of us who do not share equal benefit in privilege's expediency. For Mr. Tucker, in marked contrast with these, is doing everything in his power to *change* the *circumstances* which necessitate the use of such an expedient, thereby becoming a cooperator in the resistance which each of our Egos' desire for gratification offers against the common opposition of ignorance. If Mr. Tucker continues to get financial advantage through privilege, with which to fight our enemy, until public opinion be such that he or no one else can secure the benefit of privilege, we will not, so long as he is

thus healing us, be stupid enough at any time to cry out, “Physician heal *thyself*.” Consistency has yet another element, that of consistent consistency.

As Mr. Pentecost himself has shown in his ablest Sunday address, the spreading of knowledge is the effective factor of progress. It has a constant tendency to make social expediency become scientific, which induces conformity to our social ideal as rapidly as its general acceptance will admit of without sacrifice of one to the stupidity of the rest, the exaction of which would clearly be an invasion, and exactly what Mr. Pentecost’s Moralism did exact from Mr. Tucker. Thus the difference between Moralism and Egoistic ethical policy, is the difference between superstitious slavery and enlightened spontaneity.

With the following, written by Mr. Pentecost sometime ago, I heartily concur:

There are superstitious Roman Catholics, superstitious Presbyterians, superstitious Methodists, and superstitious freethinkers. And when a Freethinker is superstitious he is, in that respect, exactly like any other superstitious person—it is very difficult to convince him that his superstition is a superstition.

In a politically composed appeal to the various divisions of the reformers of the Liberal element of the country, Ida C. Craddock, corresponding secretary of the American Secular Union, says this to the Anarchists:

Anarchists! You who preach the gospel of Individualism, and who believe in co-operation only when it is voluntary! Do you not see that every refusal of yours to help your fellows in separating church and State results only in tightening the cord around your own necks? Are you not today, because of the exemption of church property from taxation, supporting the churches by compulsion? You are continually declaiming against having to pay taxes against your will. Help us to do away with the exemption of church property, and you at once lighten the burden of your own taxation. Moreover, you must remember that the Individualism which is your goal is not possible while the false standard of church authority is set up for the community to conform to. Ecclesiasticism in the State is your most deadly enemy—you know it well; and only when the church and State shall be forever separated, will you, or any of us, be quite free to work out an individual development without persecution.

Considering the absolute innocence of any understanding of the principles of Anarchism that the above paragraph displays, it is quite certain that a State run by people of that status would be little improvement over the present so far as the hopes of Anarchism are concerned. We may “declaim against having to pay taxes against our will,” but are not so foolish as to direct our whole effort against our least grievance. And as for the “false standard of churchly authority,” it is no more dangerous to Individualism than that authority which Miss Craddock’s language implies is not false: it is with authority as a justification for invading the individual at all, that we do battle, and one authority is no more false than another so long as it tyrannizes, as the State does and would without church domination.

This appeal is not for an expression of sentiment or a vote for the repeal of laws connecting church and State, for there is nothing like an approach to a majority in favor of it, which

Anarchists could complete and carry by that means, and if there were the laws would be too dead to need repealing, to say nothing of the false impression thus created that voting is a justifiable method of disposing of any question. But the appeal means a contribution of money and time—dollars and labor, which, in the circumstances of the average Anarchist means food of a poorer quality if not less in quantity, poorer clothes, and a corresponding abandoning of his own agitation, the importance of which is incomparable both as regards plundering of property and restriction of personal liberty.

To the liberty-loving individual, who through money, land, “protection,” and other artificially created monopolies is kept out of labor six days in the week, or obliged to labor for so small a proportion of his product that he cannot have both recreation and subsistence when unemployed; who must be taxed more on his home every time somebody moves into his neighborhood; who must pay for the education of other people’s children; who must give a certain sum annually to the poll tax collector for existing; who must submit to the censorship of ignorant and unprincipled politicians the thoughts he publishes; who, if he desires the pleasure of the mutual caresses of love, must buy, with the condition of monotonous monogamy, the permission from parties disinterested in the matter, or be subjected to a long term of imprisonment—to such an individual thus oppressed, an appeal calling him from the fundamental uprooting of tyranny to give his means and efforts to the agitation for relief from the infinitesimally greater proportion of taxation arising from the exemption of church property, or from the restraint of Sunday recreation for which he would have no money to pay, is necessarily ridiculous. Between the superstition that supports all oppressions, and that which seeks only to throw off the latter, there is practically too little difference for the serious consideration of those who have been over the whole ground as Anarchists have. It is too much like a woman screaming to her neighbor for help to fish a hair-pin from the swill barrel, when his child has fallen into the well.

If Miss Craddock should by some circumstance be brought to take the time to study economics and individual freedom, she would not only learn that her cause is of comparatively small importance, but that such as it is, the Anarchists’ agitation is the only step toward its effectual remedy. Over any save its willing subjects, with the superstition of political authority dispelled, the superstitions of the church are powerless. It is the State, the political State itself that furnishes the power to oppress and plunder both you and us, and would continue to do so in all the more important points after its separation from the church, as before. The lord would be as powerful in exacting interest by his monopoly; the land lord by his; the protected producer higher prices by his; the tax gatherer an increase when a neighbor moved into the community; the neighbor to make you educate his children; the poll tax collector to get his two dollars for letting you live if you can, and Mother Grundy’s State club with which to meddle in your private affairs would be as potent as now, for the political superstition which fathers all these and kindred oppressions, the average Secularist holds in common with the church, and unwittingly looks to the cause of his oppression for relief.

H.

An Important Point Cleared Up.

In his Observations in “Freethought” of August 30, its office editor observes as follows:

The editor of a San Francisco monthly paper of great typographical beauty, called “EGOISM,” has many original thoughts. The doctrine of Egoism is what has been more or less known heretofore as “enlightened self-interest.” I quote one of its editorial paragraphs. Be it understood that the editor of “Egoism” repudiates as a superstition the idea of sentimental love between the sexes. He says:

If you don’t “fall” in love with anybody but yourself, and love wisely enough to do it well, you have the advantage of the situation; for the object of your affection will never die or forsake you while you live, and when you die you will not miss it.

There is one other consideration which the editor has neglected to call attention to, namely, that the person who falls in love with himself or herself, as a general rule, is not troubled with rivals.

The implication is, that to be without rivals in such self-love might be undesirable, but in these days of rampant paternalism much depends on whether such rival in one’s pursuit of his welfare has in view the gratification of a mutual desire, or a subjective one which has no probability of becoming so. In the latter case the absence of a rival would be immeasurably desired, and it was to cover this point that the perhaps somewhat obscure clause, “love wisely enough to do it well,” was introduced in the sentence quoted by the friendly critic, and which it is now the purpose to clear up.

Now the condition known as “love,” is a subjective state of mind consisting of an intense desire to exercise upon and have exercised upon us, for our own gratification, various caresses and interest in our pleasure by a certain object desired to be in a similar state of mind. The object is usually determined by circumstances of proximity and favorable impressions on the semi-intellectual faculties by form or actions or both. The desired state of similar subjectivity on the part of the object of our subjective condition is, if at all, accomplished by suggesting to that object *our* subjective state so gradually and evasively that the object becomes reciprocally conscious of it without direct verbal communication of the fact, and is a process which admits of a skill the subtle delicacy of which taxes to despair the psychologic resources of the subjectively entranced lover. This incontented ordeal passed, the similarly subjective state between two such persons finds pleasant exercise in continually suggesting each to the other such state. The writer has sometimes witnessed this exercise between two in mixed company, and noted the entire absence of rivalry they enjoyed. The same is true in self-love. If the suggesting to self is marked, a corresponding absence of rivalry will accompany it, and the wisdom of thus loving depends upon judiciously making the *suggesting* conform to the desire for rivalry. This un-“fallen” in-love-with-another condition, leaves us ever free to sip the proffered sweets of the fair, as of the field, with the positive assurance of not paining our original lover with the ventures of the ever

passing opportunities, one of which ordinarily is the occasion for the usual “fall” into—obligations of mutual slavery in which these sweets are seen only as the necessary bait to a trap that seldom opens save to take out the dead rats. It is an advantage, the taking of, which relieves all from obligation.

What will Society Do with the Thief under Freedom.

That old bugaboo, “What will you do with the thieves and criminals under economic freedom, liberty,—Anarchy, with no government of force, no restraint, no control; would not the criminal be uncontrollable? would he not steal, murder, and destroy wholesale, the moment governmental restraint was lifted?” is a question that is continually confronting the advocate of self-government. Now this is a question that cannot be answered by the positive and negative of yes or no. We must first inquire into the nature and character of the thief, and criminal. If we analyze him, reduce him to the last analysis, we will find him to be the product of the present monopolistic state of society, divided into two classes, the legal and illegal thief or criminal, each having reflected in himself the spirit, character, and principles of the government and society under which he is born, and under which his character for aggressive acts is formed. The thief is thus what his predominating environment makes him; therefore society is responsible for its own devils, for there would be no devils if there were no hell. Conditions are always first, results follow. Man did not put in an appearance upon this earth until the climatic conditions were favorable to his advent. The devils (criminals) of society will not disappear until our present social atmosphere is purified by liberty—the liberty to *practice* self-government. Then the criminal will commence to disappear, for the simple reason that the socialistic climate under economic freedom will not be congenial for the production and growth of thieves of either class. Then the honest man will no longer be “crucified between two thieves”—the legal and the illegal thief. As society is now organized, the small thief, the committer of petit larceny, breaks the law while the legal, wholesale robber (speculator) both observes and respects the law; one is a law-breaker, the other oftentimes a lawmaker. Both obtain their desires by diametrically opposite methods, and yet, contradictory as it may appear, both are the products of the same authoritarian state of society, that of brute force—majority rule. One lives in virtue of the existence of the other, while the honest man lives not in virtue of either, but in *spite* of both. The small thief stimulated by the successes of his legal brother in crime makes feeble efforts to ape him in the magnitude of his stealings, but owing to his ignorance of legal and political methods, succeeds only in committing petit larceny; as a law-breaker he is a success, but as a thief he is a failure. Now in this monopolistic state of society nothing excites contempt like failure; the failure of the nickle thief to steal a “million” is the signal for society to “let slip the dogs” of law, and during the hubbub and excitement of the chase, trial, and punishment of the small thief, the legalized criminal escapes notice and conviction. All eyes are turned upon and attracted toward the liliputian thief, while the giant malefactor, the product of special privileges is elevated to a position of respectability, popularity, and authority, bearing upon his political coat of arms the monogram, “PPP”; Privilege, Power, and Pelf, or Pockets Picked Professionally. Over his place of business is the Sign, “Rents Collected, Interest taken, and Poverty enforced according to Law.” Here are the two classes of thieves, “look on this picture then on that.” Both are chromos *given* away by society to the student

of economic liberty; both painted by the same artist, one of the “old masters”—Monopoly. Of the two classes of thieves and criminals the Individualist and Anarchist fears the legalized offender a thousand fold more than the illegal outcast pariah of society, whose stealings and criminal acts sink to a ridiculous minimum in comparison with the legalized speculator and monopolist. Nothing but an intellectual rape committed upon the public mind by the superstitious god of political authority could blind “the people” to a clear conception of this important distinction between the two classes of criminals; a distinction and difference which the ignorance of, causes society to build jails and gibbets for one class, and Wall street castles and halls of congress for the other. If anyone who is enamored with brute force government—majority rule (whether he is a State Socialist or advocate of the present system), will analyze their lust for political authority they will find that they want it as the church wants eternal punishment, not for themselves, oh no! but always for that “other fellow,” and that other fellow is the average voter whose attention is attracted to the small thief by the hue and cry raised against him while the legalized plunderer gets away with the interest, rent, and taxes.

It will be readily seen that the Individualist does not look upon the illegal criminal as being by any means the worst product of society, nor the most to be feared. Neither do we believe that the legalized speculator and monopolist is always conscious of his own criminality, for he has yet to learn that *equity* is a law superior to majority rule and special privilege; he is ignorant of the glorious truth that equity is the “principle of liberty applied to trade and commerce.” If he were not thus ignorant, he would see that the word, “criminal” in the true sense would be more justly applied to himself than the ordinary law-breaker, and that the small thief will commence to disappear when the power of example set by the privileged plunderer is removed. This removal “so devoutly to he wished for” cannot be accomplished by threats, gunpowder, or dynamite; physical force will expensively and needlessly retard our objects and give the lie to our declaration that we are opposed to brute force.

For the sake of argument and truth we will suppose that the illegal criminal, all there is left of his peculiar species out of the present civilization, will be there when equal freedom is attained. Now, no thief, no murderer, no warrior ever risks his life or person in any aggressive act of violence unless he thinks there is a reasonable chance for success and .his subsequent escape from the consequences of his invasive acts against his fellowman; it is only with the chances more in his favor than against him that he does commit them. In a free state of society—the absence of political authority where mankind enjoyed the liberty to voluntarily associate for purposes of defense against criminal encroachments, the aggressor and invader would see that the chances for success were overwhelmingly against him owing to his numerical weakness, which is even now the fact in the present thief producing state of society; and the solidarity which an economically free people would thus present to his invasion, would convince him of the utter futility of attacking society at such a great disadvantage. He would then see that as a matter of self-preservation it were more expedient to gain a living, and even wealth by working for it than to steal it.

Soon as we can obtain freedom from governmental monopoly of land and money we will not only be in a position to practice self-government, but in a condition to convince men that it is easier to work than it is to steal. Then the criminal as well as the thief will in time become an honest man both from *choice* and *necessity*.

But before these favorable conditions prevail we have a certain amount of educational work to perform; we must teach men and women the art of *minding their own business*. This is one of

the “lost arts,” but its revival and restoration is not impossible, and it is an easy accomplishment for an Anarchist and Individualist, as they are not cursed with the governmental itch, nor a lust for control over their fellow beings. While we are teaching self-government let us *practice* self-control and self-reliance. We are striving for the liberty to practice what we teach, ours is an intellectual battle with political authority, and our battle ground is the public mind. We have no patent medicine, no governmental pill, plaster, or panacea to cure the social ills that now exist, we plead only for *conditions*, the condition of liberty—equal freedom; freedom from that old dogma that the collectivity rises higher than the individual; that society enjoys a monopoly over the stream of rising higher than its source. We look upon the present unequal and unhealthy condition of society as we would upon a sick patient to whom medicine will no longer do any good, and nothing but a complete change of climate and *conditions* will cure.

F. B. PARSE.

The Right of Ownership.

To the Editor of *Liberty*:

Will you permit me to ask you for the definition, from an Anarchistic standpoint, of the Right of Ownership? What do you mean to convey when you say that a certain thing belongs to a certain person?

Before directing my attention to the study of the social question, I had a rather confused notion of the meaning of this term. Ownership appeared to me a kind of amalgamation of wealth with the individual. This conception could, of course, not be sustained in an analysis of the social question and the distribution of wealth. For some time I could not obtain a clear notion as to what the term, as popularly used, really signifies, nor could I find a satisfactory definition in any of the books I had at command. The writers of dictionaries content themselves with quoting a number of synonyms which throw no light on the subject, and the writers on Political Economy seem not to bother themselves about such trifles. They need no solid foundations for their theories since they build their castles in the air. It is said that ownership is the exclusive right of possession, but this explanation fails to meet the inquiry of him who can nowhere find a satisfactory explanation of the import of the term right.

It is clear that a radical distinction exists between possession and ownership, though these concepts are in a measure related to each other. It seems reasonable, therefore, to expect to find a clue by examining the distinction that exists between the possessor and the owner of a thing. And this examination is not difficult. The owner of a thing which for some reason is in the possession of some one else may demand its return, and, if it is not returned willingly, *the aid of the law can be invoked*. This leads to the conclusion that the right of ownership is that relation between a thing and a person created by the social promise to guarantee possession.

This is the only definition that appears satisfactory to me. But it implies the existence of a social organization, however crude it may be. It implies that a supreme power will enforce the command: Thou shalt not steal. And in the measure in which this social organization gains stability and in which this social power gains a more universal supremacy, the right of ownership will assume a more definite existence.

Now I can perhaps repeat my question in a way to be better understood. Has Anarchism a different conception of the right of ownership, or is this right altogether repudiated, or is it assumed that out of the ruins of government another social organization, wielding a supreme power, will arise? I can at present see no other alternative.

HUGO BILGRAM.

In discussing such a question as this, it is necessary at the start to put aside, as Mr. Bilgram doubtless does put aside, the intuitive idea of right, the conception of right as a standard which we are expected to observe from motives supposed to be superior to the consideration of our interests. When I speak of the "right of ownership," I do not use the word "right" in that sense at all. In the thought that I take to be fundamental in Mr. Bilgram's argument—namely, that there is no right, from the standpoint of society, other than social expediency—I fully concur. But I am equally certain that the standard of social expediency—that is to say, the facts as to what really is socially expedient, and the generalizations from those facts which we may call the laws of social expediency—exists apart from the decree of any social power whatever. In accordance with this view, the Anarchistic definition of the right of ownership, while closely related to Mr. Bilgram's, is such a modification of his that it does not carry the implication which his carries and which he points out. From an Anarchistic standpoint, the right of ownership is that control of a thing by a person which will receive either social sanction, or else unanimous individual sanction, when the laws of social expediency shall have been finally discovered. (Of course I might go farther and explain that Anarchism considers the greatest amount of liberty compatible with equality of liberty the fundamental law of social expediency, and that nearly all Anarchists consider labor to be the only basis of the right of ownership in harmony with that law; but this is not essential to the definition, or to the refutation of Mr. Bilgram's point against Anarchism.)

It will be seen that the Anarchistic definition just given does not imply necessarily the existence of an organized or instituted social power to enforce the right of ownership. It contemplates a time when social sanction shall be superseded by unanimous individual sanction, thus rendering enforcement needless. But in such an event, by Mr. Bilgram's definition, the right of ownership would cease to exist. In other words, he seems to think that, if all men were to agree upon a property standard and should voluntarily observe it, property would then have no existence simply because of the absence of any institution to protect it. Now, in the view of the Anarchists, property would then exist in its perfection.

So I would answer Mr. Bilgram's question, as put in his concluding paragraph, as follows: Anarchism does not repudiate the right of ownership, but it has a conception thereof sufficiently different from Mr. Bilgram's to include the possibility of an end of that social organization which will arise, not out of the ruins of government, but out of the transformation of government into voluntary association for defense.—Benj. R. Tucker in "Liberty," Boston.

Press, Transportation, and Telegraph Censorship.

One feature of President Harrison's crusade against the lotteries may serve to illustrate the process by which encroachments on individual and local freedom are usually made. The postoffice was established without a moral censor to preside over it or any indication that it was intended to serve as a handle to control the speculations or private conduct of the people. But the growth of a considerable sentiment against lotteries enabled the moral coercionists and the government extensionists to make a combination of forces agreeable to both. The first contention was limited to this; that the United States mail should not be used to aid in carrying on the lottery business. That proposition was admitted to some extent by law of congress, but the line was drawn at any interference with newspaper advertisement, for this would involve the tremendous issue of a censorship of the press. Now, however, President Harrison proposes a distinct aggression upon the express companies and a curious supervision of the press. If his policy should be embodied in law the federal government will be committed to prohibition of any communication or transaction which congress disapproves on moral grounds and an instance will be offered in the application. Besides this he recommends action which would necessitate an official examination of all newspapers sent by mail or other conveyance. Then of course all telegrams must next be placed under alike censorship or the line of precaution will be ludicrously incomplete. Did many persons think of such a result when they assented to the proposition not to allow letters to be delivered to lottery companies? Probably not, but the progress being made in this agitation is as natural as in every other development of the policy of encroachment or the policy of exclusion. It is accompanied and hoped to be accomplished by loose and inaccurate description with an inflammatory tendency. Mr. Harrison must know that a bargain freely entered into, by which persons, whether rich or poor, pay a dollar knowing that 40 cents of it will be swallowed up in expenses and profits, is not robbery. But he viciously perverts language to arouse passion, pander to excited Moralism and intrusive benevolent paternalism and gain the consent of citizens and congress to an extension of federal authority such as must, if granted, have effects far overtopping all that directly concerns lotteries. There are other things which congress hereafter may be persuaded to control by prohibitions upon express companies and publications if congress can be induced to assume such control for any purpose which the majority thinks to be in the interest of good morals. With the masses, however, interest in the question will probably be confined to a narrow view. It is one of the singularities of militant legislative Moralists that they will seldom scruple to risk truth in bearing witness against a neighbor when that course is necessary to carry their point. Every objection to their plan will be assumed to be inspired by some lottery company. The moral reformers never credit any objectors with any moral and intellectual grounds of objection. Most newspapers and congressmen, if objecting honestly, nevertheless fear the scolding tongue of intolerance loaded with suspicions and ready to discharge a mess of virulent and blighting accusations. It is still safe and reputable for men in office to ask

extravagant increase of powers for moral purposes, though a fair examination of their argument should convince any sane person that if they are correct the United States government was a mistake from the beginning and the country should have been organized as a theocracy.—Galveston News.

The Era of Egoism.

Will the world ever come, by progress and evolution to such a life? "But," says the thoughtless civilizee, "do you want such a life of selfishness as that would be?" It is not long since I fully realized what true Egoism means, and its possibilities and potencies. The true Egoist says to every other Ego, or combination of Egos, "hands off" from my individuality and personality. When all are developed up to that status, then, and not until then will there be entire freedom of mind and body for "man, woman and child."

Every growing, living plant, or animal strives and struggles to perpetuate itself, and one organism has the same or as much right to its Egoism or existence as another. When a man constructs a complex machine, he has the form and relation of the parts in his brain first. He is particular to give each part its individuality, that it may be joined to and co-operate with every other individualized part. He knows that if the parts are right, the whole machine will do its desired work easily and harmoniously. This to me, illustrates the only way in which it is possible to have a true order of life on earth. There has never (?) been a society, or government on earth, based upon, or that has acted upon that principle. The parts of the man-made machine, are all of equal importance to the whole; but the subjects of governments are mere passive instruments, and their Egoism is practically ignored. Happily for humanity, the arrangements, laws and, results of nature, in spite of man are in the direction of equality, justice, and humanity, so that when Egoism prevails, war, conquest, legal robbery, and anti-Egoistic governments and despotisms will cease, all wants will be supplied, and "peace on earth and good will to men" be realized. It seems to me that a true, practical Egoism will supply all human wants and give liberty to all as far as they can appreciate it.

PROF. J. H. COOK.

An Observer Who Sees.

I registered at the City Hall the other day as a voter in the city and county of San Francisco, though what in the name of common sense I want to vote for is more than I know. City and State affairs are going along as well as ever, to all appearances; every vacant stool in all our public buildings seems to have an intelligent Milesian to hold it down and draw his salary; the present officials come around to collect some sort of a tax or license as often as I have money enough to pay it, and I see no reason to expect that anew set of stool-occupiers and tax and license gatherers would do any better. There is a youth at the City Hall who will take two dollars from me if I should ever desire to get married again or keep a dog, which I don't. Either of a hundred other clerks will take a tithe of my possessions once a year if I continue to stay in this office. Others will gather from me an annual poll tax of two dollars and allow me to live. Others will see that I pay them a license for handling merchandise, and still others will reach out their hands occasionally for the cigar license. Why not let these present incumbents stay there until they either die or get enough and retire? Better, saith the hard, to bear the ills we have than to fly to others we know not of.

I have often wondered what would happen if the president of the United States should seclude himself somewhere and be heard of no more forever and his office remain vacant; if our national and state legislatures should adjourn sine die; if our customs officials, our internal revenue gatherers, our supreme and superior court judges should go away and become gentlemen farmers; if our statute books should perish in the flames of our state houses and city halls; if our chaplains should all go to Africa as missionaries to the heathen; if, in fact, the greater part of our government machinery should become rusty and refuse to move, and election day should never come around—I have often wondered whether the people would miss anything except the expense; What would happen if every voter stayed away from the polls for ten years? Let him that is without sense among us cast the first vote.

If we find upon investigation that the most enlightened persons neither attend church nor political conventions; that the tendency of civilization is toward indifference or disgust with both religion and politics; that the men best fitted for teachers are not in the pulpits, and that the ablest political economists are not office-holders; and if on the contrary we find the church and State supported by the most unenlightened and unprincipled classes; the most enthusiasm among the most abandoned; the pulpits filled by men who are fit for nothing else, and public offices crowded with the dishonest, the fanatical, and the incompetent—what conclusions are to be logically drawn from these facts? I draw nothing except attention to things as they are in our centers of population.

I have been paying some attention to the doctrines of the newer lights of political and social economy, and these are the lessons I learn:

The shortest way to settle the Woman Suffrage question is to let the women vote. Mischief may follow; but mischief follows from marriage sometimes, and we do not therefore argue that only men should marry.

The shortest way to settle the liquor question is to remove license and tax from the traffic. This would make liquor so cheap that drinkers could get all they want for little expense and would have something left for other purposes.

The shortest way to settle the marriage question is to abolish legal ties. Then if people unhappily mated continue to live together in misery they would do so upon their own responsibility and have no one to blame but themselves.

The shortest way to settle the religious question is to withdraw legal privileges from the churches. Tax these as other property is taxed, protect their meetings only as other meetings are protected, pay no state money to religious institutions.

The shortest way to abolish land monopoly is to give monopolists no title whereby they can hold in possession more land than they use.

The shortest way to settle the financial question is to make coinage and currency free, so that every man may coin his own metal and issue his own paper money, and put his credit in competition with the credit of others.

The shortest way to settle all other questions is by the same simple methods, the only objection to which is that their adoption is a long way off—Paragraphs from George Macdonald's "Observations" in "Freethought."

KEMMLER was put to an awful death but a few days before Charles Crumley, in a fit of jealousy, killed Robert McNeil, in this city. The killing, after careful premeditation, was done with great deliberation. Crumley knew he would risk suffering the horrors of the electrical chair, but that knowledge had no deterrent effect on him. In spite of such demonstrative illustrations it requires an almost incredible time for most persons to learn that punishment has no tendency whatever to prevent crime.—Hugh O. Pentecost.

Egographs.

The selection of matter often expresses a taste for thought, though not fully defined, yet with its germs in the appreciator's mind.

The pruders of Detroit have dragooned the directors of the Detroit Museum of Art into putting drapery over the nude figures of a Venus and the Dying Gladiator. It will now be in order for these angelic beings to pray to their "God" to provide Opaque coverings for all flowers and animals, for he, shameless old thing, neglected to do so "in the beginning" and the result is that the purists, his poor helpless children, can not step out of doors or into a greenhouse without having their dear modesty torn into little bits of pieces—E. C. Walker, in "Fair Play."

A man and a woman were imprisoned last week in this city for attempting to kill themselves. Society is so ordered that people become so poor and miserable that they do not wish to live, but the State makes it a crime to try to die. The point is that the supply of poor people must be kept as large as possible in order to keep wages down. Hence, also, the church teaches that it is a duty to have children. With vacant land and money monopolized and the labor market crowded with helpless applicants for work, the capitalists have things all their own way. The more births and the fewer suicides there are the better it is for the land lords and the lend lords—Hugh O. Pentecost.

"It is a matter of the simplest demonstration that no man can be really appreciated but by his equal or superior. His inferior may overestimate him in enthusiasm, or, as is more commonly the case, degrade him in ignorance; but he cannot form a grounded and just estimate." So says Ruskin; and herein we have the true explanation of the doubtless correct statement that "Liberty" is uninteresting to many, and "Fair Play" unreadable, and both worthless as missionary literature among certain classes. The old Greek philosopher was wise when he inferred from the fact that the crowd noisily cheered him that he had emitted some silly remark. "Liberty" expects to be abused, neglected, and misunderstood, for it is radical and philosophical and progressive. In the end, however, it and its real allies must obtain due recognition and triumph over all opposition. Let Ruskin explain this apparent paradox: "If it be true, and it can scarcely be disputed, that nothing has been for centuries consecrated by public admiration without possessing in a high degree some kind of sterling excellence, it is not because the average intellect and feeling of the majority of the public are competent in any way to distinguish what is really excellent, but because all erroneous opinion is inconsistent, and all ungrounded opinion transitory, so that, while the fancies and feelings which deny deserved honor, and award what is undue, have neither root nor strength to maintain consistent testimony for a length of time, the opinions formed on right grounds by those few who are in reality competent judges, being necessarily stable, communicate themselves gradually from mind to mind, descending lower as they extend wider, until they leaven the whole lump."—Liberty.

It appears that the censorship is already in operation. As noted in a press dispatch, an assistant attorney general is the censor, and one of Tolstoi's novels gets the free advertising. As the czar of Russia has not succeeded in preventing his subjects from getting the forbidden book, it remains to

be seen whether the administrative machinery of the postoffice, supplemented by any that President Harrison's message may induce congress to provide for controlling express companies, will suffice to give the Russian government winning points in the matter. The czar has the advantage of controlling printing offices (or those above ground), also type foundries (known). Still nearly every Russian gets to read what he wants. Prohibition is perhaps the greatest appetizer known. Those who favor it are constantly confronted with the absurd inconclusiveness of the present measures. Whisky is made. After that it is sure to be sold. Novels are printed. After that they are sure to be read. If prohibition is to be anything evidently the United States must control the prohibited article. The Russian government has all that power, and yet the Russian people read manuscript books and import the works of republicans and socialists under false title pages and binding. They also get drunk on fluid contained in cologne water bottles. But our prohibitionists apparently think that they can succeed where Russian officialism fails. The experiment can be tried. It however involves delegating a good deal of arbitrary discretion to somebody. With a clear understanding of the condition American citizens may prepare for a show of hands on a test question. But if decided one way there will be no room for inconsequential complaints about the necessary means of enforcement by prevention, which is the only real prohibition, and there will not long be standing room for men occupying an illogical middle place.—Galveston News.

A case was tried in the police court the other day which the papers have not reported. It was the case of the People of the State of California against James Mehaffey, aged 9. The defendant, accompanied by his mother, sat in a chair with his feet dangling eight inches from the floor. The judge, the prosecuting attorney, all of the police officers, and a hundred spectators gazed sternly upon the culprit as the clerk, ordering him to stand up, read the indictment in a terrible voice. "Statefcaliforny, ci 'n count' Sanfancis," yelled the clerk, and then rattled on: "Personally 'peared before me this steenth day of August, 1890, Peleg Yohansen, who on oath makes complaint, and deposes and says that on the blankety-blank day of August, annie domino, 1890, in the cit '11 count Sanfuncis, State of California, the crime of ROBBERY was committed, to wit, by James Mehaffey, who then and there did feloniously, and with force and arms make an assault upon Peleg Yohansen, and with violence to his person and against his will, did then and there feloniously and violently steal, take, and carry away by force from the person of the said Peleg Yohansen ONE POCKET KNIFE of the value of TWENTY-FIVE CENTS, good and lawful money of the 'Nited States, and of the personal property of said Peleg Yohansen. All of which is contrary to form, force and effect of the statute in such cases made and provided, and against the peace. of the People of the State of California. and their dignity." When the clerk got through with what "this complainant" alleged, said, deposed, and prayed, little Jimmie Mehaffey, who had violated the peace and offended the dignity of all California, was broken in spirit and ready to ask the state to forgive him. I did not stay to learn how the case terminated; but who ever heard of a two-bit offender going unwhipped of Justice?—George Macdonald in "Freethought."

Misfortunes will increase to one who deplores the selfishness of others.—The Sturdy Oak.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Georgia & Henry Reppole
Egoism Vol. I. No. 5.
September, 1890

Retrieved 02/19/2023 from catalog.hathitrust.org

theanarchistlibrary.org