

Anarchism and Violence.

What? bomb-throwing--killing--violence, useful? What sort of Anarchists are those who say that? Where is their Anarchism, their belief in freedom, and the right of every living man to his own life and liberty? Anarchism is not bomb throwing, violence, incendiarism, destruction. Odd that anything so self evident should need saying. Odder still that one set of Anarchists should be obliged to turn round in the thick of battle against the common foe to say it to another set. Real Anarchists too, not hybrids, with one eye on freedom and the other on property. Of course the capitalist press has naturally found it convenient to identify Anarchists with bombs, and equally of course, some of our "social" democratic friends have said within themselves, "There, there! so would we have it." All the same, Anarchism not only is not, but in the nature of the case cannot be, bomb throwing. An "ism" is an abiding body of principles and opinions--a belief with a theory behind it. The throwing of bombs is a mechanical act of warfare,--of rebellion, if you like;--an act likely to be resorted to by any and every sort of "believer" when the whole of his environment stands forearmed against the practical application of his creed. The two cannot anyhow be identical; the question of the hour is--Is one of them ever a rational outcome of the other? Can anyone professing this particular "ism" resort to this kind of act, without forfeiting his consistency? Can a real Anarchist--a man whose creed is

Anarchism--be at the same time a person who deliberately injures, or tries to injure, persons or property. I, for one, have no hesitation in saying that, if destitute because of monopoly, he can.

I go even further. It seems to me that under certain conditions, (within and without the individual) it is part and parcel, not of his Anarchism but of his personal whole heartedness as an Anarchist, that he feels it impossible in his own case not to abandon the patiently educational for the actively militant attitude, and to hit out, as intelligently and intelligibly as he can, at that which powerfully flouts his creed and humanity's hope, making it (for all its truth, and for all his integrity) a dead letter within his own living, suffering, pitying, aspiring soul. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that there are now and again conditions under which inaction on the part of the Anarchists amounts to virtual partisanship with the "reaction", and this, even though the only kind of effectual activity left open to them be of the directly militant kind.

The extraordinarily rapid spread of our Ideal during the past few years seems to me to have been indirectly but clearly traceable to the quickening effect of the militant but generally intelligible acts of a few maddened individuals upon the thousands of minds in all countries which were already unconsciously hungry for the Idea, and which found themselves thus compelled to closer reflection and aroused to definite self-recognition as Anarchists.

For what is Anarchism? Belief in Anarchy as the ultimate solution of all social and economic

difficulties. A belief, that is, that Anarchy (or freedom from laws made and fixed by man for man,) is the ideal state in which alone complete harmony and a self adjusting equilibrium between our individual interests and our social instincts can be secured and maintained. A belief that nearly all human depravity on one hand, and nearly all human wretchedness on the other, have been brought about through men's bondage to the coercive regulations imposed by fallible, purblind humans on one another, in the interests, not of general progress and universal friendship, but of this or that imposing class. Anarchy, which claims the full release of the majority from the dictation of the minority, and likewise the full release of the minority from the dictation of the majority, means, further, the removal of all the enervating restrictions and excuses which have hitherto hindered the individual from developing his self-controlling tendencies in spontaneous obedience to the inevitably social and peaceful instincts of his own humanity, as a creature who from time immemorial has been incessantly dependent on his fellows for all the necessities and amenities of life. Anarchy means a life for man analogous, on a higher plane, to the life of bees, beavers, ants, and other gregarious creatures, who have not only all natural resources, but also one another's products freely and peacefully open to them, and who do but cooperate the more perfectly and happily in securing the common interests of all for the fact that they are free, as individuals to follow their inherent instincts and inclinations untrammelled by considerations so