

The Firebrand: Vol. 1, No. 1 (January 27, 1895)

For the Burning Away of the Cobwebs of Superstition and Ignorance.

Firebrand Publishing Committee

January 27, 1895

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The Patriotism of Bondmen.

By J. H. Morris.

I.

The land of the free, ye have called it—
The land of the brave and the true;
And proudly have sung, "Hail, Columbia!"
And cheered for the red, white and blue.
Ye have marched and worshipped afar off
And chanted the names of great men;
And while ye have worshipped and chanted
What they gained ye have lost again.
Patriotic are ye, as they were,
And true to the emblem they gave;
But flags mean little or nothing
When floated by traitor and knave.
And the robbers have winded your bunting
About their treachery and lies,
And the stars and the bars have hallowed
Their doings in your foolish eyes.

II.

PATRIOTISM! thou bait of the death-trap!
Thou relic of loyalty to kings,
That ledest the steps of the millions
Into dire, calamitous things!
How long wilt thou hold thy possession
Of the minds of the hosts of toil,
That they cheer the power that robs them
Of sunlight, the air and the soil?

III.

I sing not of flags nor of emblems,
If they to the Fates should succumb
And trail in the dust of the highway,
For them I should ever be dumb;
Nor yet of the deeds of our great men—
Extol not, defend not, nor blame—

I seek not the favor of nations,
I kneel at the shrine of no name!

IV.

Ye see men slaves of men's avarice,
And women the slaves of men's lust,
And children by taskmasters driven—
All victims of law most unjust!—

Why call this a land of freedom?—
That which it is not, nor was!
Nay, nay! know ye not that freedom
Exists not by virtue of law?

For where the law is, there is serfdom;
Aye, "governed" a "governor" needs,
And to sustain the law and the ruler
The governed, the laborer, bleeds!

Truth about Switzerland.

Being present last week at a meeting of the so-called Academy of Socialism, I was agreeably surprised when the speaker, Mr. L. A. Ward, announced that after the United States shall have adopted the system of the Initiative and Referendum everybody in this country will be happy. Furthermore, he said that the republic of Switzerland had adopted this system and consequently had reached the acme of economical happiness.

I do not want to contradict so distinguished a speaker as Mr. Ward, but in the face of this assertion of his I cannot help reflecting wonderingly on the statistical fact that many Swiss yearly emigrate to other countries in order to better their economical condition. To satisfy myself on this point, I consulted an eminent Swiss historian, who gives us the following facts in regard to the question:

The population of Switzerland was in 1884, 2,846,102, including the foreigners; of these 234,045 live in foreign countries, leaving in Switzerland a total of 2,611,057. This small population has from tourists a yearly income of 52,800,000 francs through hotels alone, not including private houses, restaurants, etc. Add to this the income which steamship, railroad and other transportation companies must necessarily derive from the same source and the sum must be more than doubled.

In spite of this exceedingly rich source of revenue, which if distributed properly should insure a comfortable living to the masses, eleven hours constitutes a legal working day; and when last year the laborers of Zurich went on strike for shorter hours and better pay, they were brutally maltreated and clubbed while parading the streets. Last year an election was held on the issue, "The right to work." The proposition was rejected. How is that for a beneficent result of the initiative and referendum?

I quote again from the historian cited above:

"The arts and sciences are widely and zealously practiced. The state, indeed, has done very little, so far, but much is accomplished by voluntary association."

Again he says:

"After all Switzerland, in consequence of the stoppage of several branches of industry and the over-indebtedness of the agricultural classes, finds herself at present occasionally in a rather oppressed condition, which manifests itself most clearly in the extraordinarily large emigration."

In 1884 the number of emigrants was 9608 persons.

The Sun of the 30th of December, last year, brought news of twenty-one suicides during one week in the city of Geneva, nearly all of which left a note stating that they sought death on account of starvation.

All these things show clearly that you may theorize at will about this or that way of social reform, but the fact remain that where there is legal ownership there is exploitation; where there is exploitation there is government, and where there is government there are rich and poor, oppressors and oppressed.

One fact, therefore, stands out clearly above all others. First free yourself from prejudices handed down by tradition. Do not regard a written title higher than the natural right to exercise your abilities. Make the land, and the tools wherewith to work it, the property of none and the right of all. Then, and not until then, will people have liberty to strive for comfort and happiness at will. Then will authority tumble from its pedestal, be relegated to the collection of past ideas. Then nothing will be regarded higher than individual freedom, and only to yourself will you look for authority to control your actions.

Herman Eich.

A New Island Story.

Once there were a number of people living on a sunny island in the sea. The island was their world, for the great rolling ocean was like mere space to them, seldom bringing them anything but waves and seaweed and balmy breezes. A storm or a ship sometimes happened, but at very long intervals. So these people lived their own lives, uninfluenced by the conditions and characteristics of other races. They could read and write, and a country newspaper was actually published somewhere on the little spot of ground in a primitive way very satisfactory to all parties concerned; they cherished a sort of traditional religion which time had mellowed into a practical mixture of idealistic Christianity, Pagan mysticism and natural ethics, and they never disagreed as to points of faith or the orthodoxy of doctrines. They knew nothing of politics. They must have been taught it some time in the past, but they had become fearfully benighted in this regard as time went by. They had no elections; they had forgotten that a governor was necessary, that they were in the depths of chaos and confusion without a secretary of war, secretary of state, treasurer and lord high executioner. An old flag, of a nation important among other important nations but of little moment here, floated from a flagstaff down by the unused landing. A legend of a regularly appointed ruler prevailed and a few coins with a foreign stamp upon them lay in the museum or office of the traditional governor. But this was all these people knew of government. When they wanted a thing done they came together and agreed upon the best plan of doing it. Otherwise they tended their gardens and goats assiduously, traded produce with each other without interference of any outside power, and never thought of quarreling. Few could remember when anything had been stolen; but the last story was of a man who purloined his neighbor's garden rake and did not bring it back. Before noon the use of twenty rakes had been tendered him with apologies that his lack had been overlooked. There was little need of money; but pieces of paper promising the bearer a bushel of wheat or whatever else he might want, on demand, circulated among the simple Islanders. Often mere verbal promises answered every purpose; for when things needed for consumption were plentiful no one cared enough about accumulating them to withhold from any who might need, and in time of scarcity none could be happy when some of their neighbors might be needing the necessities of life. When a genuine scarcity of productions occurred the custom was to hold a convention, determine just what the supply was, just what the actual demand would be, and apportion it out with equal favor to all.

No one was wonderfully rich, though some possessed silks and jewels so old as almost to have lost the story of their origin; but these were looked upon as articles of curiosity, which every inhabitant was privileged to look upon sooner or later, and which afforded about as much pride and pleasure to one as to another. Goatskins and goathair furnished the raw materials for their clothing; their houses were made of bamboo and palm-leaves; their food was the fruits, vegetables and grains easily grown on the island.

And so these people lived, loved and were happy and peaceful. Their social life was free and peaceful—poetry and romance entered into their lives as naturally as the breezes, the beautiful,

boundless ocean, the radiant

dawns and lovely sunsets. There was no tax gather, assessor or rent taker to come and make them afraid.

But one day a great armed ship, floating a flag similar to the one at their harbor, swept into view and bore down upon the quiet little island. It sent a boat load of uniformed officers off to land at the simple wharf, where only a few-curious men lounged about to receive them. A grand looking man addressed them in a sonorous voice:

“Where is your governor? Where are your officers? Why is not some one in authority here to meet-us? Surely you must have sighted our ship long enough ago?”

Some one in authority! Who was? What ought to be done with these magnificent creatures? Now they saw the lack of properly organized government, if never before. The few men on the beach consulted with one another and remembered that one of their number had a long time ago received an appointment as governor of the island, but that he had laid the papers away and kept on at work with the rest of them, not finding anything in his official capacity to do. He was hunted up now and brought with the soil of the earth still clinging to his coarse garments to do the honors of the island to the visitors. There was no display; no officers to parade, no public offices to show, no treasuries, no red tape, no militia, no jails to bring out for investigation; nothing but a few simple people, living quietly and contentedly among themselves, without laws or lawmakers. Naturally the visitors were shocked. What barbarism! What confusion! What anarchy!

But they would soon change all this; indeed that is what they had come for. They would organize a government, establish the authority of the mother country, open up a new market and make the island a source of revenue. All this as soon as possible the great men proceeded to bring about.

A governor who appreciated the advantages of a privileged position, one from among themselves, was appointed at a high salary. Other officers were chosen, some by the people themselves; different departments were established; a financial system set up, taxes levied, arrangements for strict order and obedience were made. As it would require a class would be required to execute these plans on the others, the class was naturally a privileged one, and the land principally was given over to them to rent out or sell. Everything being thus thoroughly organized, ships began to arrive with foreign goods, and the island was flooded with stylish new spring materials, bibles, whiskey and opium. Nothing was now needed to complete their onward march toward civilization, but a war and a spirit of patriotism and these would come in good time.

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Ten years later, the promise of civilization was fulfilled.

A great, bustling, monstrous growth of a city stood on the site of the simple wharf. Palaces gleamed down one street and hovels groveled in their shadow on another. Corruption, greed, power rioted in the city halls; want, hunger, petty thievery ran riot among the people. pomp, splendor, piety, gilded vice and ostentatious charity reigned in the palaces; poverty, ignorance, degradation, bitterness, despair, rebellion reigned in the its and throughout the despoiled lands. Pestilence and drunkenness were now well known and the newly built jails were never empty. Officialism found plenty to do, and the workers when they saw their productions taken for rent and taxes constantly planned how they could escape the terrible specter—poverty. All were fearful; none were secure. But this was civilization, fostered under a strong government.

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This is not an allegory reader. It has happened several times in the history of the world.

Cause of Sex Slavery.

Still, I hold now, as I have ever held, that the economic is the first issue to be settled; that it is woman's economical dependence which makes her enslavement to man possible. The case you cite of the bride being raped by her husband, only strengthens me in my position. Let us examine the case (I believe you will agree with me, that that was, if it ever happened, an extreme case). I consider the man a saint compared with the girl's unnatural parents, who refused to rescue her from such a monster! What was she to do? was asked, after her appeal to her parents fell on deaf ears. Perhaps the answer the same that might be given nine times in ten: Why, not having, any means of making a living, she remained and prostituted her body according to law! Monstrous thought, but nevertheless true.

How many women do you think would submit to marriage slavery if it were not for wage slavery? I have too much faith in the purity of my sex, to believe there are any considerable number of them, who would submit to men's domination, if it were possible for them to make an independent living, without having to submit to the debasing factory rules of today? I, personally, know a half dozen women now living with their husbands, have no love for them; they can find no avenues open to them, whereby they can enter and make an independent existence; hence, having to choose between two slaveries, i. e. wageslavery or marriage-slavery they choose the later as least objectionable.

These are in brief my views upon the sex-question, and it is for this reason I have never advocated it as a distinct question.

Lucy E. Parsons.

The Price of Love.

I loved him; he had made more sweet
The wine of life for me:
I loved him, but the price of love
Was loss of liberty.

He liked me not for what I was,
Or what I hoped to be:
He had an ideal self and gave
It me as livery.

I wore it, was his lackey, dumb
For his dear sake, one year,
And then the dread of losing him
Was lost in larger fear.

“You love me not; I am the peg
On which you would suspend
Yourself; a glass to mirror you,
An adjunct, not an end.

“You have a gilded cage, with seed
And water set for me;
I droop and pine; how can I sing,
With birthright to be free?

“You worship your own image; I
Am needed but for shrine:
See, for your sake I starve my soul,
Equal with yours, divine.”

He smiled, remote, amused, as one
Upon Olympus set,
And answered: “Why think silly thoughts?
Kiss me, and then forget.”

To him I said one day: “Anew
Let’s fashion marriage.” He
Regarded me as mad. The price
Of love was liberty.

He loves me not, nor ever did,
Methinks; nor can I cry,
Since I belong no more to him,

But have my liberty.
And yet I can conceive a love
That seeks not to possess,
That is itself, and lets you be
Yourself, not more nor less.

—[Miriam Daniell, in *Liberty*]

The poor plutes are really to be pitied. After all the murdering, wholesale imprisonment, clubbing and browbeating in general of the workers last year; they had a right to expect to be able to enjoy hard-earned wealth in peace, for a while anyway. But their infernal stiff-necked slaves are on a rampage again, in the dead of winter besides. It beats everything. These strikers are like mosquitoes; you may kill some, drive others away by the strong smoke of court-decisions, the cold may benumb some, but the stagnant pool of our rotten society continues to breed them, and tantalize the righteous.

Notwithstanding the results of the Lexow Committee's investigation, the New York Board of Estimates has provided \$700,000 for an increase of policemen's salaries.—[Coast Seaman's Journal.

This increase will make nearly six millions per year taken from the worker and given to the bluecoat thieves.

The Bitter Truth

THE BITTER TRUTH: It's bad medicine, but directions say take it. No matter how bitter it may be, the world needs a series of doses of the truth. The plain, uncoated truth. What little truth the people of this vicinity have been treated to lately has come in small, broken and sugar-coated doses.

The regular plutocratic press may find our presentation of the truth rather bitter, for they have carefully avoided the truth for so long that they cannot relish anything to which they are such total strangers. It will be like one accustomed to candies and sweet meats trying to eat fresh olives.

There is not a paper in Portland, and but few in the world, that dares to tell the truth on every subject and at all times. Some of them never tell the truth if it can be avoided. Others suppress the truth when telling it would militate against their interests. Others lie when by so doing they hope to strengthen the position they hold or the cause they advocate. But we have used it as a regular diet for so long that anything less strong is unpalatable. We don't like sugar coating and propose to leave all sugar out of the doses we prescribe for lie-sick society.

We have been told that we are a free people, prosperous people, happy people, etc., and have been expected to believe it. The truth is we are an enslaved, poverty-stricken and miserable lot. Nowhere, except in France, have the policemen any such power as is constantly exercised by the police of the large Eastern cities of the United States. Nowhere, except perhaps in Switzerland, do people die of starvation as quietly and unprotestingly as in our Eastern cities. Everywhere in the United States complaint is heard from all the people save the privileged classes and a few fools who hope some day to be numbered with the millionaires. The bitter truth is, few nations are less free, less prosperous or less happy.

Fifty-two percent of the people own only three percent of the wealth they have created, while nine percent own seventy-one percent of the total wealth of the country. The next man that tells you we are a prosperous people ask him what constitutes prosperity. The public sink-hole commonly called the public treasury, is so stricken with poverty that the borrowing of gold is said to be necessary semi-occasionally in order to keep it from becoming bankrupt. We are a lot of paupers, fifty-two per cent of us, and the government is bankrupt.

As to being free, when a man cannot sell a load of hay or a widow take in washing without being fined for it, which is the case in many of our large cities. The bitter truth is, we are free to die of starvation, and that is about all the freedom there is left us. We are not free to commit suicide—that is prohibited by law.

WHO is happy? Happy people are like hen's teeth—exist only in imagination. Suicide (in spite of the law), divorce, insanity and every other evidence of unhappiness are constantly on the increase, while the expression upon the faces of those you meet is far from indicating happiness.

ALL wealth is the product of labor. It is time the laborers claimed their own.

THAT which may properly be claimed may properly be taken.

IF cleanliness is next to godliness it is a pity the “committee of one-hundred” tax-dodgers do not try to become godly.

THE dear clergy are playing into the hand of the ring, as usual. DeLashmutt is out of the ring now and his houses on North Fourth street must be emptied, and those of Corbett and Failing on Second, Taylor and Fourth streets must be filled. So the dear clergy make war on “White Chapel,” and the girls move. I believe the Bible says something about whited sepulchres.

IF nobody had too much everybody would have plenty.—[Ingersoll.

Help yourselves—there is plenty for all.

Henry Addis.

God, Government and Greed.

Nomen est omen, is a latin proverb, meaning that a name is an indication. It has given the publishing committee of this paper no little concern to find a name which will clearly express its tendencies. Comrade Addis suggested "The Red Flag," it being a symbol of universal brotherhood. "Free Society" was favored by myself, while comrade Morris favored "Dive's Lament," our object being to give the oppressed an opportunity to express their views and wishes. "The Bitter Truth" was also favored by some, but Mrs. Squire, woman like, had made up her mind that the baby which soon would make its first entrance into this cold and wicked world of ours should come into it with a fighting name; a name which indicates aggressiveness and would strike terror to the hearts of devil doers, and therefore decided on "Firebrand." So be it. May it burn until the last vestige of oppression has disappeared. Let it be a true beacon to those who are on the dark and troubled waters of error, but striving to reach the light of truth. May it brand, as with a mark of Cain, all those who exploit and oppress their fellow man. Be it a merciless destroyer of all the lying, degrading and enslaving superstitions about the sanctity and holiness of God, Government and Greed.

In order to subjugate a people successfully, to make patient and willing slaves out of rebels, out of men and women fighting for their freedom, the rulers of this world have ages ago learned the lesson that it is absolutely necessary to enslave the minds of the people first, to direct their thoughts and ideas into such channels as will best further their ends. For this reason was the creed invented of the sacredness of this holy trinity, God, Government and Greed; and woe to those who dared to rise up and question the authority or doubt the truth of these "revelations", or actually revolt against them. With fire and sword, with gibbet and gallows have they been exterminated from the face of the earth. From the far away dawn of history in the traditions of men we read of rebellions against the authorities and their cruel oppressions. Even the very heavens, the celestial abode of the gods, have not been free from this ever raging battle between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, freedom and oppression. The uprisings, the revolts of the slaves of the ancient empires, tell their story; the persecution of those who assailed the belief in the gods, the death of the Christian martyrs, Hypatia, Giordano Bruno, the extermination of the Albigenses, the burning at the stake of innumerable heretics, of witches in our own country, up to the death of Spies, Parsons and their comrades in Chicago, the shooting down and wholesale imprisonment of strikers, the garroting of the anarchists in Spain, the shooting of Pallas, the atrocities committed after the overthrow of the Commune in Paris, the guillotining of Ravachol, Vaillant, Henry and Santos in France, the wholesale banishment and incarceration of Socialists and Anarchists in Italy, the same in Germany, the sad fate of the Nihilists in Russia, in short the hounding and persecution of all men and women suspected of rebellious ideas in all countries, prove clearly that our masters fear nothing more than the dissemination of ideas by word or deed antagonistic to their creed of the holiness of God, Government and Greed. It has been erected on the corpses of the slain, cemented with the blood of the martyrs of freedom and upheld by brutal force.

God! What is it, but the creation of unscrupulous men who have invested their demon with the power of even punishing after death with unspeakable horrors those who will not bow down before it, who deny its existence. God, the absolute ruler of the universe, who is said to hold the life and death of every living being, nay, of the universe itself, in his hand, is the prototype of all the tyrants on earth. “Victoria, by the grace of God, queen of England,” “William the Second, by the grace of God, Emperor of Germany,” and so on down to every official from the president to the club-swinging policeman in this great and glorious country of ours. Innumerable atrocities have been committed in the name of God; the earth has been drenched and saturated with the blood of those slain for his glory.

Government—what is it, what has it been, but a conspiracy of the rich, the mighty, the few, to exploit the poor, the weak, the masses? To protect their ill-gotten gains, the vast machinery of the State, with its courts and judges, the army, militia, sheriffs and policemen, is always at their command. Freedom has been banished from the earth; republics and monarchies, presidents and emperors have joined hands to uphold this institution; relentless persecution, imprisonment and death has been and is the fate of those who rebel against it.

Greed, or the acquisition of private property—what is it but the offspring of the former two? The earth, the mother of us all, has been divided among the few, and the words hold good to the present day with the many. Foxes have their holes and the birds of the air their nests, but the son of man has not where to lay his head. Greed, the mother of private property, has turned men into ferocious beasts. Instead of all working for the good of all, the many work and fight like brutes for the destruction of each other. In vain do they seek an escape from this heartless struggle, seek for an opportunity to exercise their better and nobler aspirations. It cannot be. The institution of private property holds them down. There is no hope but in the complete overthrow of the system. Though Nature is ready to supply all her children with an abundance of all the necessities and so-called luxuries of life, man cannot make use them so long as this superstition holds his mind in bondage.

Therefore, let us wage an unrelenting war against the superstition of the holiness, the sacredness of God, Government and Greed.

Ezekial Slabs.

A Muzzled Press.

Muzzle the press, and freedom dies.

We have reason to believe that every press in Portland is either partially or wholly muzzled. What better evidence could we wish for than that Joe Simon dared make a new city charter and refused to have it inspected, and that not one of our great daily papers make any comment, and that Mr. Corbett, the chairman of the “committee of one-hundred,” indorsed such a crime against the people? This should be positive evidence to every thinking person that Corbett is the Tallyrand and Simon the Napoleon; or, in other words, that Corbett makes the bullets while Simon fires them.

Now the question arises, How long will the people stand the Corbett-Simon shooting, or how long will they sit still and swallow the Corbett-Simon sugar-coated pill?

We think, Mr. Corbett, that you kicked over what would have been your other nice, well filled bucked when you called Simon our master. If he be master what be we? Slaves!

The two men named are as inseparable as the Siamese twins, and we as American citizens must arise up and destroy this system that makes slaves of the many and masters of the few. This we must do peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must.

Senator Ingalls was right: when he said in the United States Senate, January 14, 1891, “When discontent changes into resentment, and resentment into exasperation, one volume of a nation’s history closes and another opens.” Be we not in an age of discontent, when such damnable schemes as the above are being perpetrated upon the people by the ring at the seat of government, and it is done in the name of statesmanship. Call it by its right name—speculators speculating in the people’s hearts’ blood. For when you take from a man that which sustains lie you take his life.

It seems but yesterday I heard the cannon’s roar and witnessed the ravages of shot and shell, men falling like autumn leaves, with no tender assistance, no friendship, no mother, wife, sister or loved one to give one drop of water to quench the dying thirst or to close the eyes in death. All this was done to wipe out two words, Master and Slave. And now again we hear the word Master falling from the lips of one who no doubt has an evergreen spot in his memory for Lincoln and thinks of him as the first master of the grand old party he champions. And yet Lincoln surrendered his life that the right of property in man should die. But the new masters cry, Let us have our property added to ten fold, even though human beings perish!

Yes, property more sacred than life. Ye lovers of ill-got gains, ye robbers and despoilers of the people, beware! Or we will not only repent the never dying words of Patrick Henry when he said “Give me liberty or give me death!” Yes my friends, death! Better a thousand times be dead heroes than living slaves, shall be our motto.

Shall we allow this charter to go to the legislature and then hope, as the editor of the Leader says, that it won’t be rushed through? No, no. Let the people rise up like men and say his charter shall not go through; the will of the people shall rule and not the will of the few. We have no

time to wait hoping. We must be up and doing—don't lose a day. Let Freedom her loud drums be beating and calling her sons to the fray.

Mary E. Squire.

The Labor Movement of the World.

SO FAR AS IS KNOWN TO THE WRITER.

In our own country, the strike of the employes of the surface roads in Brooklyn is attracting general attention, by the stubbornness of the men and the extraordinary brutality of the soldiery. The usual tactics are employed by the men to gain their ends—obstructions placed on the tracks and moral suasion coupled with intimidation for those unfortunates who are willing to take the places of strikers. The corporations have called to their aid the municipal, state and federal authorities, and police, militia and regulars are beating and shooting the idea into the workingmen they must either submit and be willing slaves henceforth or arm themselves with weapons at least the equal, if not the superior of those of their adversaries in order to defend themselves and their cause. It is strange that after all the experience the toilers have had the past year they still try to oppose well armed men with the weapons of primitive man—clubs and stones. In time of peace prepare for war. If the money yearly squandered in the salaries of so-called leaders, who are generally in league with the enemy, and for delegates to labor powwows, was used to buy arms and amunition the workers would control the country tomorrow, and instead of merely a slight increase in the pittance allowed them by their masters, they would enjoy all they created.

Since the destruction of the orange crop in south Florida by heavy frosts, an army of about 1000 men, who expected to find work at orange picking, are said to me marching north and committing depredations—that is, they are helping themselves. If this army was armed it would be quite sufficient to start a little revolution for a change.

The flint glassworkers, nothing daunted by the failure of former strikes, are considering the advisability of protesting by striking against a reduction of wages. Let the plutes take note that the spirit of resistance is far from being dead among the workers. They are inexperienced in the use of means, but they'll learn after awhile.

Everywhere are laws being proposed for the suppression of vagrancy. The enemy is afraid a second Coxey army might use something stronger than staves and flags of peace as a means of persuasion.

France seems to be ready for a revolution or a coup d'etat. The moneybags want a dictator, an emperor to protect them from the reds, and the reds are determined to send their taskmasters to sheol and set themselves free. The silkweavers near Lyons are on strike and conflicts with the authorities are the order of the day. These French may be the firebrand by which the whole world may be set aflame. The conditions are favorable for it everywhere.

Our cousins the Englis are kicking and growling as usual and bottling up their wrath for future use, when they, after once having got the notion thoroughly imbedded in their brain, will make a clean sweep, and send in the sea all the parasites, who are at present sucking their lifeblood.

The Italian government has dissolved all Labor-Unions, educational and benevolent societies imprisoned and deported several thousands of men; the effect of which will be, that the hotblooded Italian, instead of depending on leaders and organisation, will more zealously than ever spread the gospel of freedom and prepare for the coming revolution.

In Germany the Government, under orders of Billy the Fool, is pushing a bill in the Reichstag, to increase the power Government to check the revolutionary spirit among the masses. Even the old hidebound Social Democracy is trying hard to get back to its former position, as a purely Labor movement instead of a middle class party into which it has degenerated.

Russia is quiet at present, but it may be the quiet before the storm.

Ezekiel Slabs.

Parasites Oppose Vagrancy.

The Plutes' Bugle advocates more stringent laws for the suppression of vagrancy. The proposed law in California, according to which it will be a misdemeanor if more than three men beat their way and burn their chuck, is not strong enough to suit the old owl in the tower. It wants a fence around the earth and every man tied to a picketrope. Soak your head awhile old Granny, and then read up in English history, the treatment of vagrants during the reign of Queen Mary. You like to have your name coupled with Pole, Bonner, Jeffrey and the rest of the forever infamous crowd, don't you?

Your blasted bigotry blinds your blooming brain, Scotty, old boy, otherwise you would see, that according to Karma, as the Theosuckers call the law of cause and effect, you must first remove the cause of this evil, you complain of, before it itself will disappear, and the cause, sonny, is enforced idleness, brought-about by your friends and supporters, the Plutes. Catch on!

Independence or Semi-Slavery. Which?

“There are some people,” said my friend to me, “who must have a boss.”

Is it true? And if true is the condition natural or acquired? If the latter, will these persons who walk with a chair gain the courage for independent locomotion so long as support is thrust before them?

We act in concord with our thought. Servility and submissive slavery show the will to be in subjection. We bow and smirk before our divinely appointed but incompetent overseers—and starve! The starving proves the incompetency. Arrogance and cunning have never yet been allied with sufficient wisdom to both rule and feed the entire world. As to divine instrumentality in the appointing of bosses, whether of hereditary monarchies, the chosen of “the people,” commercial magnates, or “holy men,” that is still, with many, an open question!

In this age what we choose to call democracy is the fashion. The democratic tendencies of the time intrude themselves into everything in comical and pathetic ways. We are democratic in our obsequiousness and in our robberies. The road to greatness is open to all, you understand. The black magic of profit in trade, profit in labor, speculation, politics, priestcraft, rent, interest, etc., etc., is our common inheritance—have we but the ability to use it!

Did the readjustment of social conditions imply merely the sweeping away of a distinct difference in classes, such as is apparent in the system of chattel slavery to the dullest vision, the task would be comparatively easy. But the tangle commercialism has drawn us into is a difficult one to straighten out. There is no idea tangible or intangible, nor object animate or inanimate, which the trade jugglers do not buy and sell and “corner”. The combination that controls the land, the means of production and distribution, has the world at bay. It graciously or superciliously, as policy or temper directs, accords to some of the human race the privilege of laboring and living, and denies it to others; thus we have the employed and the unemployed. The interests of these people are identical; but the workers are so mystified by the intricate connections by which they are for the time being bound that they do not, as a rule, recognize the fact. The employed who are not wage laborers are engaged in a small way, doing a part or all the work themselves, in the same lines of business as are the manipulators of industry. They trade, hold small notes bearing interest, possess an extra house, farm or store which they rent, speculate, etc., etc. They indulge in similar but petty exactions, cheats and tyrannies; in truth, they are provided with “just enough rope to hang themselves.”

Now the question is: Will they use the rope for the purpose the powerful expect and intend it shall be used?

A revolution is upon us. Those revolting at the present “order” desire a better one in its place.

We wish to be civilized; can that which in the doing degrades one portion of our fellows produce results that will be civilizing to the other? How can the elevation be permanent that

does not lift all? Must one part of humanity overwork and endure privation that the other part may have leisure for culture?

Are any of the old methods of accumulating wealth be retained? Accumulating wealth be retained? Accumulations of wealth mean the control of bread, and the control of bread means the control of individuals. Shall we assume that mankind, regardless of sex or nationality, has a right to walk alone? Suppose some stagger and fall, do they not do so now, never having had the opportunity to do otherwise? Is it better to depend upon society as a body, giving to it and from it receiving, or upon individuals who have power to give or to withhold? Which will be the most productive of brotherly feeling, the free union of efforts as equals, or the working for wages with its ever present implication of the inferiority of the working man? Have we the ingenuity to produce and exchange the necessities and comforts of life with no political supervision? Without courts to enforce them, contracts could be broken with impunity. Confusion would reign. Would a contract which was mutually beneficial be broken! And if one of the contractors received benefits to the detriment of the other, ought it not to be broken? Does the multitude require a system of bosses? When will the fear of everlasting punishment and the fear of the law be necessary to preserve order? What shall be our new declaration of independence?

Viroqua Daniels.

Special Announcement.

The publication of *The Firebrand* is undertaken by a voluntary association of a number of persons of radical ideas, in this city; they agreeing to, furnish “copy” and see that the printer gets something for his labor. In this association are no constitution, rules, officers, privileges, duties or dues. It is a free association *The Firebrand* has not even an editor, in the ordinary sense. No person is vested with the power to exclude those ideas which do not agree with his own. We do not believe in a censorship. We have aimed to establish an untrammelled press.

The persons interested in this venture are of very limited means—working people—and few in number. Therefore we appeal to all who see in it an opportunity to further the great cause of human freedom and happiness, not only to become subscribers, but to donate what money they can toward increasing the circulation by free distribution. Such persons as do this will be regarded as members of the association on an equal footing with every other member; and we assure them there will be neither incentive nor opportunity to trim their literary contributions to fit any person’s ideal.

All monies received will be accounted for in these columns.

The Committee.

An altruist colony at Gibsonville, Mich., has a treasury of \$21,665. Net profits during six months were \$1132, being 17 cents per hour for each member. Membership costs \$250, which carries with it a good home and care in old age.—[Coast Seaman’s Journal.]

Significance of Our Time.

Translated from *Der Arme Teufel* (The Poor Devil) by Ezekiel Slabs.

But our age is the age of steam and electricity. What formerly could not be produced in centuries is now done in decades. Therefore do we demand in moral and social respects rapid progress also. We are materialists, and if we ourselves cannot see the dawn of better days, it shall at least illuminate the existence of our children.

How can we help along, accelerate this progress—we the impotent, the isolated? Well, the remedy is a very simple one. It consists of the few words of our poet, applied not any more to a few individuals, but to a continually further and further extending circle of people; the simple words: Never will I leave off from the truth.

There is nothing more detrimental to progressive endeavors than half-truths. There is nothing more dishonorable to a true freethinker than a compromise. Whose heart would become inflamed at the example of Giordano Bruno if he had said to himself, “This Protestant church is, after all, a step in the line of progress; I will flee to its bosom, for there I can yet labor on for my cause”? And would Ulrich von Hutten be the pride of the Germans if he had died as the chancellor of a protestant prince?

We live in the age of hypocrisy, of the conventional lie.

The educated world has overcome religion within itself, but the uneducated world, identical with religion, is a mighty factor in social life, consequently compromises are made. The uneducated majority does not kill the educated minority anymore, for that does the educated minority feign a certain respect for the religion of the masses—call it tolerance. The honest thinking ones know that at this day the damnable system of exploiting the downtrodden is being driven to its climax, but instead of flatly condemning injustice, as it would be their duty, they make a compromise with the existing conditions and say, since a thorough change would bring about the overthrow of society and with it the taking away of our present reasonable reforms, with which every one can be satisfied. But why not cut down the tree if it is rotten? And what folly to prop up anew and water and fertilize the tree which only bears rotten fruit! Will you wait until it annihilates you in its fall? Never shall you leave from the truth! And yet you are not ashamed to borrow arguments from your worst enemies. Whenever an enraged people demand an immediate and thorough redress of an evil, you will answer them with those words behind which since time immemorial, the enemies of progress have hid their Jesuitical wolf's head, and say: The people are not ready for it. And there are still really some well-meaning persons who believe that good can come out of such compromises, which, as history proves, are insensate and damnable. To assert arguments, which the spirit of lie has brought forth, will forever serve the lie. It is with that as with the marble slabs which were presented by the popes, during the existence of the papal states, as altar stones, to different churches of other countries. These marble slabs had been quarried during the reign of the roman emperors by political offenders exiled to Africa—to be condemned “ad metalla” meant the same as at the present in Russia to be pardoned to Siberia. The marble slabs had been brought to Rome in such large quantities that no use could be found for them and

they were left lying on the ground in the environs of the city until they sank down by their own weight and were covered with a layer of soil, and were first dug up again in the present century. Quarried in Africa a thousand years ago, moistened by the bloody sweat of the oppressed and slaves, again brought out, and to the great glory of God used for christian altars—does not there tyranny clasp hands with religious lie? And is it different if one tries to keep down the growing demand for justice with the arguments which have been the refuge of tyrants and priests?

The Mail and Express says “the starving people of Nebraska are being advised to use prairie dogs for food,” and the Inter Ocean says “they (the dogs) are not bad eating.” It will be remembered that last summer and fall hogs in Indiana were fed on wheat! Hogs eat wheat; people eat dogs (they did last winter in Michigan); throw up your hat for “civilization!”—Freeland

The nerveless superficiality of most sermons in these days of triumphant plutocracy is equalled only by the arrogant coxcombry of most old party editorials. Scarce one sermon in a thousand in the past two weeks has told the truth about the mission of Jesus in this world, and not one editorial in a million—while making a prefatory use of Christian precepts—has dared to defend an oppressed people against an insolent plutocracy. It is clearly true that most ministers are moral cowards and most editors intellectual prostitutes,—Freeland

The Secular Union and Turn Verein will hold a joint celebration of Thomas Paine’s anniversary at Turner Hall, corner Fourth and Yamhill streets, on Sunday, January 27th, at 8 o’clock p.m. Mrs. Barker, Miss Nettie Olds and others will speak; good music will be rendered and after the regular program those who wish will engage in a social hop. Gents 25 cents; ladies free.

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Firebrand Publishing Committee
The Firebrand: Vol. 1, No. 1 (January 27, 1895)
For the Burning Away of the Cobwebs of Superstition and Ignorance.
January 27, 1895

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