

LAST WORD.

THE METHODS OF ANARCHY.

"MAN'S BIRTHRIGHT" goes to press just as America is startled and shocked by information from England that the House of Parliament and the London Tower have been shattered by dynamite, while crowded by holiday visitors, and that several persons, including women and children, have been killed or maimed by the explosion. This outburst of indiscriminate homicide is supposed to come from the spirit of retaliation against England, for the poverty and the political wrongs put upon Ireland,

At the close of a book devoted to the most radical interests of mankind, both in government and property, I feel it incumbent upon me to utter a word of warning against the methods of anarchy.

I say nothing of Russia, where "there is no press, no debate, no explanation of what government does, no remonstrance allowed, no agitation of public issues," -- nothing but the dead silence of unmitigated tyranny, long known as "a despotism tempered by assassination." But in countries like England and America, where peaceful agitation is a part of daily life, and where the masses are really getting about all they know enough to demand, it is a frightful experiment and an inexcusable blunder to seek reform through murder. Such a course must necessarily lead, on the one hand, to despotism; on the other, to chaos. Grievous as are the ills of present society, they are not yet so utterly bad but that the majority of the people would rather live than die. Hence governments -- even free governments -- must, in self-defence, adopt whatever measures may be necessary to restrict the persistent votaries of dynamite. Yet, under modern conditions of independence and comparative intelligence, a little overdoing of general repression may end in the very anarchy resisted -- a new phase of what followed the downfall of the Roman Empire.

But again, the so-called "better" or "upper classes" of our civilization may not be really so heartless and mercenary as the struggling and harrowed millions imagine. Who can say that the ruling forces of Britain and the United States would not be willing to do substantial justice to the people, even in the rights of property -- on which now depend all other rights, -- if the way to do it were perfectly clear and certain? No system of "socialism" or "communism" -- no attempt to level the human race and run mankind in a given mould -- has ever had sense enough in it to stand up in front of practical criticism. British legislation, at this moment, does not question, *in theory*, the right of the British people to the common possession of their territory, but holds that individual possession of property is necessary, *as it certainly is*, to the best maintenance and the fullest productiveness of the people's estate. The specious theory

that land is any exception to property in general has nothing to rest on, as I trust I have finally made clear.

The Fenian percussionists are, perhaps, past the reach of suggestion; but it will be well to let it in the exploding of dynamite until somebody is altogether sure, at least, that he is right as to the end to be achieved through such ghastly feats.

The higher law of property is before the world. Under this law the people can learn to what they are entitled, and by what their title is limited. Let them take what belongs to them, in all countries; but in most countries they will find that the disruption of law and order will be their hardest and longest road, only to be traveled at the greatest cost.